

## Deniers

By Brandy del Río

I try really hard to keep it together. I try to walk in a straight line and not fuck up my knees any more than they already are. Juvenile little boys used to joke about my scraped-up knees and how I was probably really good at... you know.

My ankles aren't that great either. My physical body gets compliments, because I am not ugly. I simply say thank you and move on.

What never sits well are the stares when I am having a bad day. Or when I'm just tired. They are literal wide mouthed, jaw on the ground gawks and from people who literally can barely look up from their own palms and virtual reality messaging to see that I have a stick in my hand, a walking aide.

That stuff I can just brush off,  
because it really does not matter to me. That does not hurt.

What hurts is when I get calls from people that deny what is actually wrong with me. I am physically impaired and will be for probably the rest of my life.

I have an autoimmune disease that  
I have to live with.

Literal lesions of permanent damage pepper my brain. I have plaque buildup on my spine and I get plugged up to an IV every 28 days.

I treat my body like a temple and protect it with care because I know what can happen.  
And I don't want that.

When calls come in from those that say they want the best, but act in a way that doesn't reflect that, that's what bothers me. And angers me. It hurts more than the physical pain that I walk around with,  
a smile plastered to my face.

It hurts more that those people deny my heritage,  
what I come from.

My mom is fair skinned and... I'm not.  
She claims the European side of the family tree, denying that the riff raff was sent over to mix and settle the indigenous. And that they were Jews who abandoned the Torah for the cross. Really, they just wanted to fit in and survive.  
I can't fault them for that.

My dad says that I am lazy because I can't do much manual labor.  
Work on my feet is what I was meant for. I have to be able to bear the weight like he has.

Wimpy he calls me while parading around in his strong man image. Toxic masculinity that my brother inherited and was then validated by the Marines.

Dad has always donned a stereotypical American image.  
He wore Levi's and Ray bans when he met my mom.  
And she thought he was Chicano like her  
or maybe white...with a tan.

I come from people who deny themselves,  
and I accept that. But it is not ok.

The fact that I come from a history of women that literally settle for what men tell them.  
They normalize what they know is wrong and deny the fact that we are not white, but beautiful  
colored people  
that came from *La Diosa Tonantzin*.

We were raped by those men on horseback that called us *salvaje*  
because we were bare chested and tending the harvest.  
When they saw that,  
there was no thought of consent.

And there still isn't. We are still speaking their language and conforming to their ways.

My own grandmother supports the man that wants to bar the people which she came from  
from coming here and staying here, because *they* are dangerous.

We are a line of *liars, cheats, rapists and murderers*.

*Deniers,*  
but  
*they* are dangerous.