On Being Mute
By Chammi Rajapatirana

Being mute is like having your brain gouged out. Autism/apraxia took away my voice, and a world that equates muteness with stupidity took everything else. Yes it really is as if my brain were gouged out. It hurts so much I want to scream. Pouring all my pain into my voice I want to scream till that searing sound fills my body, my soul and my world shattering us all into a million fiery shrieking pieces.

As an experiment, just try keeping your mouth shut for a day. Just try keeping your mouth shut while they talk about you, telling your mother to put you away in an institution. You want to scream "no no no" but you are mute. Cursed pity is I am mute for a lifetime.

A system that focussed only on my disabilities deprived me of an education. Fortunately a determined mom salvaged me. She searched the world over until she found a way my voice could be as loud as yours. There are many of you who still deny me my brain, but there are more of us now. More of us mute people who have found our voices through facilitated communication (FC) and our awesome voices insist that you deny our abilities no more.

Denied my abilities I can only get a job that will feed neither my body nor my soul. Recognize my abilities, give me a computer and for now a Facilitator and I will be able to write. What could I write about? I could begin with traveler's tales. Yes traveler's tales. Traveler's tales not about slogging through jungles or sailing across uncharted seas. I am a traveler ebulliently engaged on a unique journey between worlds. Between the quirky world of autism that I inhabit and the wearying world of "normal" that I would like to explore.

When you judge me by my muteness and deny me the power of my intellect we all lose. Ignorance and the lack of assistive technology held us autistic people hostage in the past. How many people lived alone and abandoned, how many lives lost. Hear me now. Ignorance and prejudice still hold too many of us in that silent abyss.