The Cracks

Brooke Richardson
ORCID # 0000-0002-2607-4935

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/SDmYfZTCuAk

Think – How
Feel – where?
Create – With what and with who?

Questions: findings or openings where none seem to exist?

The cracks: where the "lights gets in?"
~~The cracks: ruptures to be sutured~~
The cracks: sources of knowing?
Or breaking
Or both

But…
How do we come to know what we don't know we don't know?
Or
How do we unknow what we are told we (must) know?

Ruptures
Discomfort
Patching togetherings from scattered pieces

With no place to go
We come together
At kitchen tables
In Zoom rooms
Suturing togetherings out of our ruptured
Bodies
Minds
Souls
Constantly breaking
cracking,
under the deadly pressure of productivity
And superficiality
Keeping the story we had no hand in writing
Going
A story that fundamentally does not believe that
Those we love
All others
And the land we live with
Matter

A red piece of yarn
Can this bring us together?
More importantly, can it hold us together?
Weaving me
And you
And you
And them

Across widening cracks

Ga ps

Crevices
And pedestals
Divides between those that claim to know
And those who know we don't know
And can't know
But MUST
And what about the cracks we can't see?
The imperceptible cracks that we all walk over?
Every day
Not noticing
Not seeing
Even if we *are* looking for them

Questions rooted in humility
Honesty
Curiosity
And care

I struggle to question what I can't see
I struggle to see what I can't name
I struggle to name all that which remains unnamed
And therefore both omnipresent and impenetrable
In its elusiveness

I know we need new questions
New images
New imaginings
And I know it's in the cracks
That I'm only beginning to be brave enough to reveal
To myself
And to you

I don't know
None of us do
And that is terrifying
And overwhelmingly beautiful

Here we are
Materially often in direct competition with one another

Being challenged to
Think
Feel
Create
Together

I refuse to keep the neoliberal story going
Here
Today

And in early childhood spaces across the world
It would be so much easier to give in
To take the well-paved path
Of knowing

I watch my colleagues bathe in the accolades of “success”
While I fight with everything I have for my space here
It would be so much easier to join that story
But I can’t
I am literally incapable of it

This one tiny piece of yarn
And you
And you
And you
And you
And you
Us
Thank you for this invitation

To think
To feel
To create

Together

That sense of togetherness that day at that conference
That my words were taken solicited and actively contemplated
Mattered
A lot.
Today, it is several months later
Today I was walking down the street and saw that place where that purple flower – against all odds - pushed through in the spring
It was paved over.
Shiney new, perfectly flat cement marked with perfect circles by the machines that smoothed it over
Flood lights and orange tape drew attention to it – as if a crime scene to avoid
I was jolted
Sad
That flower, representing such hard fought for possibility - the mycelium networks, shoots and roots that met up, entangled and forged a path – probably over years - to its existence
Gone in an instant
Underneath
Perfect circles of cement

That day at the end of May, when we gathered, when I took pictures of that purple flower days before
Now feels so far away
So far away

I am back alone
Sitting under the cement that is now almost dry
My chisel out
Chip chip chipping away

I know hope cannot withstand isolation
Cynicism will inevitably set in
In my time away from work, I observe colleagues/friends
Who are tired
Refuse to be silenced
Their refusals then painted as "giving up"
Or asking too much – embracing those doing care labour as worthy human beings
This special issue is a genuine reaching out
Bringing together
Building up
Grasping at a coordinated effort to cracking the seemingly immovable concrete that traps children, families and educators – particularly those who don't fit white, western, heteronormative ideals - in increasingly corporate contemporary ECE "systems"
Concrete is so easy to pour
And flowers so difficult to grow
Concrete can be, and is, poured everywhere
Flowers? They're robust but they require the conditions to grow
Let this special issue be a space to let those conditions thrive
We might not grow any flowers
We might not even make any cracks
Not right away anyway
But to give way to cynicism is foreclose any possibility of generative experiences, let alone outcomes

Our community is small
But we exist
And we can't forget that