

Last night I dreamt that I was holding a baby. It was Candice's baby. In my dream, Candice was still alive, as vibrant and beautiful as ever, but having "a hard time."

So I was helping care for her baby. Often in my baby dreams, the baby has an unrealistic shape, or ways of being that are strange. So many times the baby is tiny, but can talk.

I'm carrying a baby around a party. I'm showing the baby— look at this food, look at these flowers, look at this art, look at this couch color—trying to help the baby have experiences. That seems like a big part of parenting. There's logistical care work like changing someone's diaper, bathing, feeding. There's emotional work like being responsive and sympathetic, kissing owies. There's taking kids places here and there.

But when I think about parenting the thing that I like the most is showing them stuff. I thought it would be fun to show my kid plants and rocks, to play outside with little things I love. Seeing roly polies and snails, adoring the frogs, worshiping horny toads.

possum kingdom

When I think of Possum Kingdom, I think of the front part and the people I met there who used names different from their regular names. I think of the outdoor kitchen. I wondered, "Are these foods being gone through, or are they just sitting here getting rancid?"

I remember the first aid supplies, the little library with zines I contributed. Seating areas. A birthday party where a queer punk band played, and I danced under the huge walnut tree.

My favorite thing was bringing flowers. At the time, I was living in community with my spouse Ming near the University. We had beautiful gardens as well as lawn that was full of wild carrot / Queen Anne's lace. When the lilacs were blooming I

would cut a lilac flower off the tree, put it with Queen Anne's lace and whatever dandelion-like yellow flowers were around. Then I would stuff the rest with mint and lemon balm, blooming or not, calendula, some rosemary for safety and protection. Sometimes I would put lavender. It was a gift and a spell.

I put the flowers in an old pasta sauce jar I found in the recycle bin. Then Ming and I would drive over to Possum Kingdom and drop off the flowers. Sometimes we'd go in to pick up previous jars and take the old wilted flowers. It wasn't just us; I would see other people's flowers sometimes.

That was the main way we checked in and gave love and support. Beauty is important. Happiness and moods are affected by flowers. I couldn't be part of organizing meetings and didn't want to directly resist cops. But I could bring flowers and food.

How deeply Possum Kingdom's values are part of who I am. I'm fascinated by community. I wish there was rent resistance on every block.

I'm exhausted and burned out from pain that I've endured in community, yet I can't stop trying. I cry and keep doing it—study power, look at relationship from all different angles, ask for help when it gets acute, and find ways to get along when our most tender, sensitive places are activated: money, respect, family, home.

disability in community

At Possum Kingdom, disabilities were a given. The disabled people who spent a lot of time at Possum Kingdom were loved and respected, I hope no less than anyone else.

The Disability Justice workshop that happened there made me believe it might be real—Possum Kingdom included disability justice at the center. Not just tacked on or lied about, the

way it's tacked on or lied about in most communities.

When I was bringing flowers to support the dream, support the rent strikers and everybody who was there trying to build a better world, the flowers were my small contribution to the sacred work.

Long ago I was a teacher; I taught community college and university, and I taught kids on a reservation. Last year a new friend and I were sitting on a bench at Maurie Jacobs park, talking about Waldorf schools because we're both into education, liberation, and alternatives.

A premise of Waldorf education is beauty. My friend said Waldorf education was developed for kids who survived World War 2. They needed rest and deep healing. The way students have to play recorder or some other instrument, have eurythmy movement that's not dance but like dance, and do art—that's all about nurturing their souls.

healing

Beauty is crucial for everyone. Children today are not survivors of World War 2 but have endured agonies in their families, in their schools, through systemic harm of racism, medical harm due to disability... We all need beauty in order to heal. I'm not talking about a beauty that belongs to capitalism in order to make more money, the scam of beauty that we can find in advertisements.

We deserve a type of beauty that makes sense for all of us. Beauty doesn't belong to money or hierarchies— high cheek bones, thin frames, small bones, and able bodies. Beauty is for all of us.

I'm happy I could bring flowers to Possum Kingdom— happy for the beauty of libraries, outdoor kitchens, and gathered medical supplies so that we can care for each other. Let's tend each other's wounds outside the confines of mainstream

medicine.

Most of all I'm grateful for the beauty of Candice herself. Her smile, the way she moved, her gorgeous body. She helped me learn another way of being. I'm sorry that in reality Candice is on the other side, but I'm grateful I can help care for her dream baby. The last thing the baby said to me is, "I trust you."

On my altar at home I keep Candice's picture tucked behind something else, because it hurts to see her picture with my eyes. But the energy of her beauty glows along with the candles.

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