

Derek Gottlieb: Hello and welcome to Episode 6 of Thinking in the midst, a podcast about philosophy and education. I'm Derek Gottlieb and today we're talking about schooling's connections to and responsibilities for trauma and loss. This time, I am the one who couldn't participate in the conversation with our guests thanks to my dog getting into some raisins and needing to be rushed to the emergency vet. She's fine, by the way. Imagine my chagrin though, when I had to hear one of our guests mention the work of one of my philosopher idols, Cora Diamond, as I was editing this episode after the fact. On this topic, Cara speaks with two philosophers who have long been engaged in thinking about trauma from a broadly humanistic perspective and who turn their attention here to themes involving loss, children's lives inside and outside of schools, the role of broad-based social anxieties in the politics of schooling, and our relative ability to experience life collectively. Turn it over to Kara now, who will ask our guests to introduce themselves.

Cara Furman: Okay, welcome. I'm really excited to hear from both of you on loss, trauma, and healing. And I'm wondering, Elizabeth, if you would be able to introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about your relationship to this topic, where you're coming from, and any recent publications that you want to highlight. Excellent.

Elizabeth Dutro: So, it's so nice to be here. Thanks for the invitation. I'm Elizabeth Dutro, and I'm a professor and associate dean in the School of Education at University of Colorado, Boulder, where I've been for a while. And how I came to this work was, it was not the focus of, say, my dissertation work, but it was that my interactions with children during my dissertation work, which was drawing on Butler's ideas of performativity around gendered reading practices in a classroom, they were just full of stories. They were full of stories of the harder things of life that children were making as connections with each other, connections with text, and connections with me. And so, a few years later, I realized, and also based on my own experience as an adolescent who had experienced sudden tragedy, grief, and loss in high school, I moved those to the center of my work, questions about how does this idea of trauma function in consequential ways for children and teachers in classrooms, and then started some studies there. I'll mention, I have a book that came out in 2019 called The Vulnerable Heart of Literacy, trauma as powerful pedagogies, and just an edited volume really focused on teachers, pedagogies, and practices that came out from NCTE just a little bit ago. And Kara, you have a piece, a beautiful piece in there. So I'll stop there. Thank you very much.

Cara Furman: Thanks, Elizabeth. And Jeff.

Jeff Frank: Yeah, my name is Jeff Frank. I am an associate professor at St. Lawrence University in upstate New York. Thanks for inviting me to talk today. My interest in loss really came out of the COVID pandemic. It was really as a father of four young children and as somebody who works closely with undergraduate students at a small liberal arts school, I could just see and feel the loss every day that I was working and teaching. And I was struck by the fact that we were so fixated on the idea of learning loss, which is important, the fact that what are students missing academically because of the COVID pandemic. But I was really disturbed, frankly, by the fact that we weren't talking about all of the other losses that students were sustaining, some very profound loss of primary caregivers to the more mundane, but nonetheless, kind of significant loss of these huge

developmental milestones, these huge social connections. So that's really what drove me to this topic. So it was new to me and completely provoked by the COVID pandemic.

Cara Furman: Thank you. So we think a lot in philosophy about how to define things. So I'm going to ask you a little bit to define how you're thinking about trauma and loss and also healing and why does it matter to you as an educator? You've both talked about it a little bit already, but why does it matter to you as an educator? And if you have an anecdote that you can draw listeners into, that's always really helpful. Do you want to start, Elizabeth?

Elizabeth Duto: Sure. So I think it's actually one of part of the crux of what I try to think about and think about through theoretical philosophical lenses, but then also as pedagogies bring those ideas to pedagogies in classrooms, the very idea of what trauma means. I can't get the answer to that on Apple Watch. But it is this idea that feels like we should know what it is. And it definitely carries all the weight of hard things, and we could list what those hard things are. Yet it's this very flighty term that actually starts to lose its meaning because it gets used so often for so many things. And yet it's always consequential for students in classrooms. So drawing on ideas from the humanities and across disciplines, one of the ways I think we need to think about the idea of trauma and all of its complexities are things like that it's personal, it's individual, but it's also collective and shared, much like, I mean, the COVID-19 is just such a perfect example of that. It gets at that in just the ways Jeff was already talking about and has written about. It's part of the human condition. Yes, no one gets through life unscathed and it's systemically targeted against certain groups more than others, and it fuels inequities in those ways. And then trauma is experiences brought into schools. Yes, that gives most of the attention, but it's also inflicted by schools and schooling and the unjust practices of schools. So that gets at some of the complexities that I think we have to hold around trauma and what that term is holding and needs to mean for schools.

Cara Furman: Thank you very much. And Jeff, I know there's a lot in there that you can probably speak to and elaborate on, so I'll turn it over to you.

Jeff Frank: Oh, sure, maybe I'll just start with an anecdote. The way that my college decided to kind of address the COVID pandemic was interesting that we split into three semesters instead of we had a normally two semester thing. So students were coming to school in the summertime, something that we had never done before. So I remember teaching in the summer semester, something that we'd never done before, and it was striking to kind of look around the class and nobody was talking about how odd it was, what we were doing. No one was talking about what we were all undergoing together. So this to me was what I guess is so philosophically interesting, something that's so ordinary, so commonplace, and yet it's something that at least in my context, people weren't talking about. We were all just trying to get through it together, right? This language of we just need to get through once the pandemic's over, maybe we'll have some time to process this all together. But I worry that we'll never take the time to stop and pause and acknowledge this. And as Elizabeth was saying, right, that this is a COVID now, particularly it's kind of a communal experience, something that we were all undergoing and trying to make sense of. So it was really just striking that it wasn't more front and center, that it wasn't we weren't talking regularly about what is this thing that we're all

experiencing individually, but also collectively. So again, that made me think more broadly and Elizabeth alluded to this about kind of trauma in schools in general. It's so obvious that students are struggling. And yet we refuse to talk about it. And as Elizabeth said, it's so obvious that school inflicts trauma and harm and loss on children and yet it isn't seemingly deserving of our attention and conversation. So again, it was just so striking to me sitting in a classroom every day as we're in our masks, as we're losing all of these traditions that our school has and we're not creating space to talk about it and process it.

Cara Furman: So speaking kind of broadly, what have you found out about studying trauma that you think would be helpful for schools to be thinking about?

Elizabeth Dutro: Well, I mean, I'll speak broadly and I realize I didn't attach an anecdote. So I'll do that here, which is also specifically, but it just it just travels across like conversations with children and seeing what they do with their own like lived knowledge when it's invited into schools and made part of what learning needs to be and that is that they as they are testifying to their experiences, they are also serving as these very empathetic witnesses to one another. And children tend to like I'll sit with the child and it just happens over and over. But like one little girl talking about the loss of her father and she's in second grade and she's written something, but it's in her writing, but also in her talk that she's just starts to use the metaphoric language. She starts to use these evocative ways of still connecting to this person who she's lost and what the children do over and over then, like her, her name was Ren, is they're challenging the distinctions that we so often want to bring around trauma when it gets clinicalized and medicalized in schools, right, which is it's just it's about the harm and the harm needs to be fixed and the harm needs to be fixed by adults surrounding children. But what we know is that those binaries don't hold and that talking about the loss is also talking about connection. The talking about the harms is as you know, women of color feminisms definitely tell us is to be showing the kind of lived knowledge over histories that students can bring to those experiences of harm when they're targeted on them for their identities in schools. So yes, that's that's part of what I get to see in my research working with children. And then we can talk about what that looks like pedagogically as we go forward.

Cara Furman: That's great. Jeff, before you turn in, I know that witnessing is a really big concept for you, Elizabeth, and also testimony. And I'm wondering if you can define what that looks like and also offer us a little bit of a contrast to things defining witnessing and testimony. But also when you're talking about things that are medicalized or clinical, sort of what what is that framework or orientation that you're pushing back against a little bit? Let me let me slow it down a little bit. Let's start with. So what does witnessing mean? Where is that framework income coming from? Is that a legal term? Is that, you know, where are you getting that term from?

Elizabeth Dutro: So my use of witnessing is kind of grounded in the work in the humanities in literary theory around two things as the testimony and witness to traumatic narratives coming out of literary theory. Shoshana Feldman's work in particular and Shulman and Lobb take that into pedagogy, right, in that work. And then in trauma studies work in the humanities of what about witnessing narratives of trauma actually defies our ability and

language to truly comprehend others experiences and and the role of witnessing as unlike serving as a witness in law, right, is much more this reciprocal process where witnessing someone's story inevitably calls up your own, which then prompts the desire to testify to your own experience, which calls up other witnesses, which becomes much more this circular kind of reciprocal process, which then lends itself to thinking about what can happen in schools around that cycle of testimony of witness that is always happening, whether spoken or not.

Cara Furman: I'm going to ask one more follow up question. Thank you. When you I know that some of this work comes particularly out of Holocaust studies, which is a very collective and extremely traumatic trauma, if I can say it that way. When you're thinking about witnessing and giving testimony, are you sort of only thinking of those collective experiences or are you is it a broader range? It's a bit of a leaving question because I know the answer, but it is broader.

Elizabeth Dutro: But I think it encompasses kind of the both and of what's collective and then what's what's individual because you use this idea of critical witness that I think gets at something, right? It's like as kind of the pillar example that many literary theorists and scholars use around Holocaust narratives that is I mean collective and individuals in the extreme way we need those we need those historical experiences that really show things like the incomprehensibility yet the importance of connecting and understanding and learning from that something like those stories represent and it can be used to think about what it means to to think about stories as something that happened to others that we are going to connect through our own experiences yet did not happen to us. And so the very important step of embracing other stories connecting and holding those stories at enough of a distance that we understand the target we understand the systemic nature of them that may not apply to our own experiences and to think about how that needs to be happening all the time. All at once. Those aren't separate things. They must be joined and the implications of that for classrooms have always felt important if not profound for for me for children's experiences. Thank you so much.

Cara Furman: Jeff, I'm going to turn to you and what have you found as you've been researching and reading other people's work as well in your new special issue on trauma and loss.

Jeff Frank: So I would say one of the as a starting point something that I that I found that I was a little surprised by maybe it's my perspective as a philosopher of education. I am always looking for ways to kind of improve schooling right to make schooling more meaningful to make schooling less of a game right. Some people can see schooling as a game that you sort winners and losers and I was always of the mind that we could make schooling more purposeive right like make schooling more meaningful and engaging for students. So maybe naively I was thinking that the pandemic would be an opportunity for us collectively to step back and ask well what do we really want school to be now that we have this opportunity. I mean it's a terrible thing but it's also an opportunity to really think about what should schooling be what do our students need. I thought we might make some more movement in the direction of doing some interesting things and to doing some more meaningful things and to supporting students as whole students. But as the pandemic were on I just saw that we were just going to try to replicate and get through it.

We were just going to try to replicate what frankly we knew were not great practices pre-pandemic and just try to do them at a distance or online. So I've really learned a lot from Jonathan Lear's thinking on the pandemic and his point that if we allow ourselves the space to mourn if we allow ourselves to label what has happened to us a loss then it opens up the possibilities for us to really sit with what did we actually lose what was importantly missed during these years of the pandemic. And according to Lear that can orient this toward a kind of deeper conception of the good or a deeper conception of what is knowable or fine or beautiful or truly worth devoting ourselves to. So I still hold on that kind of radical hope of Lear that we have had glimpses of that we have had glimmers of what was truly meaningfully missed during the pandemic. But I'm not optimistic anymore that schools are really going to do much with that. I just don't see us doing that. I see us going back to kind of business as usual. That's another loss for me. It is a huge loss in this opportunity.

Cara Furman: A few years back Jeff you put out a book called I believe the title was teaching in the now. Do you see that work as connected to your current interest in trauma and loss? Is there overlaps in any way?

Jeff Frank: Yeah, absolutely. Thanks for that, Eric, because a real basic or at least as I understand a basic tenet of John Dewey's philosophy of education is that we lose the present moment for the promise of the future. Right? So anytime in school a child asks why am I learning this? We will tell them well you will need it at some future day. And Dewey saw that as such a loss because we were trading the present for some vague promise of some future ability or some future enjoyment. And as I read Dewey his whole philosophy of education is try to extract the fullness of each present moment. That in fact is the best preparation for a good life and for deeper learning. And we can start doing it right now. And that's where again I saw the opportunity of the pandemic. It was such a kind of a rupture. It was such a break with all of our habitual ways of doing business in schools that I did expect some more of an opening for people to kind of reclaim the present and say well what can we do now? What's really interesting and meaningful and engaging to do right now? So yeah I do see the two really interconnected and just as schools haven't listened to Dewey I just don't see us again really taking up the opportunity to fundamentally rethink and re-engage and reconnect with students. Thank you.

Cara Furman: Elizabeth I'm going to push us back to a previous question which was that you contrasted your work with clinical work or a medicalized model in schools. And my next question for both of you is why philosophy, why the humanities, why is this a useful research mode? And so either one of you can chime in but I'm thinking about it a little bit in contrast to the medical mode which is also a useful and important mode. But I think we're all in agreement it doesn't need to be the only mode or it shouldn't be the only mode in schools.

Elizabeth Dutro: I mean I'll jump in. I think just as we've been talking about like the term trauma becomes normalized as it's taken up and we know that attention to trauma in schools again with some positive impacts to attend to it. But that it has become this normalized term and in its normalizing way of being used it is very medicalized. It speaks to psychological and neurological impacts which then quite literally mean that damage is

located in the body of an individual child. And then the impacts of that are yes it's not that some of those programs don't attend to psychological wounds and healing but it's also much as Jeff describes in his piece on learning loss. It's about impacts on learning. And so it takes up clinical terms, clinical interventions, it speaks that language of damage and then it's very instrumental in how it would try to address that idea. So the humanities of course interrupt that. The humanities point to how those philosophies point to how any term that gets weighted like that that becomes normalized. We have to pay attention to how it functions and then we have to find the ways to interrupt that to reframe that to center humanity, to center children's knowledge that they're bringing from those lived experiences and to look at the evidence that's apparent in schools every single day of how children are doing that. Of course they're capable of doing it but that is what they're doing and they're doing it in important, evocative, often poetic ways in the classrooms that I get to be in, in my field and in my work with teacher colleagues on the ground in schools. So I think that's what it offers, it offers an interruption and it offers a path forward that is very different from that kind of clinical thinking of what this means.

Cara Furman: And Jeff, you I think identify as a philosopher of education by trade. Tell me why philosophy of education because you also have a teacher ed background as well.

Jeff Frank: It's interesting, I mean I would say a lot of what Elizabeth just said as well about interruptions. I see philosophy of education as a key way in which we can interrupt habitual ways of doing things and thinking about things and I don't see myself as someone who applies philosophy to educational problems. I like to see myself as someone who thinks philosophically from practice, from everyday experiences in my own teaching practice or in the ways that I interact with practicing teachers or my own children. So I really see it philosophy of ed from the ground, like on the ground floor. And as I always listen to Elizabeth, I mean I think a lot about how the pandemic made our students feel like it was their individual problem to deal with and I was working with college students. A lot of college students again really felt like okay well I need to go to the health center right, I need to go into counseling to figure out my individual issues with the pandemic. And of course that's really important that we each develop individual strategies to manage our stress anxiety and our mental health. But it was also so clearly a collective issue that we were putting on the shoulders of these young people to figure out your mental health so you can stay on track as a student. And this now connects to another aspect of the humanities that I love. I mean that it can be shared, that it can be performed, that it can be a collective experience watching a play, watching a film, each of us reading a book and discussing a shared document that we can then share what we thought was just our individual mental health struggle and really see it's also importantly a shared struggle. And I'll just say briefly I really love Brian Dory's kind of theater of war project where he brings ancient tragedies, he reads them in very different contexts so with service members, with unhomed people, with incarcerated people. And really to show that yes we are each processing our challenges as individuals and individually but there is this kind of commonness that a good piece of humanistic work can illuminate both our individual struggles and something important about being human, right, and our collective struggles.

Cara Furman: I'm hearing both of you talk about poetry or sort of poetry broadly defined and also keep pushing this back to what does it mean to be human and how do we be human together and I'm wondering if you can think about that first on the policy level and then on the individual teacher level so I like to think about it as first how do you dream big so how might things on a policy level on a school wide level be shifted so that children are not handling these things so much on their own but there's this sense of the collective as we engage and then what might an individual teacher be doing in their classroom that could be helping children feel humanized and heal in these really difficult moments that they're going through.

Elizabeth Dutro: I mean for me you mentioned policy and two things come up for me. One is and it's just so present in the field of literacy studies right now and in schools and that is the impacts of policies and you know it does make me think of what Jeff's been talking about that in the within and in the wake of COVID when we need to center humanizing spaces in just the ways that Jeff was talking about right that applies K-12 and throughout schooling and beyond that's when some of the policy impacts that are high stakes that involve you know strict pacing that involve new curriculum coming into schools legislated often by states and reading education for example right now the science of reading is that's what's falling into schools and we just know that what that does is it creates environments that then make even less space for the kinds of humanizing pedagogies that we're talking about here in response to difficult experiences and the lived knowledge that all students bring to their learning. So I just that's where my head went first with policy and so it's almost like mitigating that how do you create the space and then around trauma policies I just think I'm seeing more and more and care I'm so I'm curious if you would agree I do see at least the critical right culturally responsive trying to interrupt deficit starting to take hold in some of the programming that districts are adopting and of course not across the board it's always something that needs to be interrupted but that's what policy can do it can help us adopt it can make as a requirement that these programs around trauma informed teaching and learning in have to include cultural responsiveness have to include centering what schools do to children and youth if those became principles in some of these policies and programs I think I think that could go a long way and then just briefly what we've been talking about testimony and witness and what that can look like as part of the fabric of in my case school literacies you know it's just been a joy because teachers and I've been able to kind of work on on the ground pedagogies the everyday ways built into what you have to do in schools anyway and you get to do in classrooms you can invite never require but invite students lives into the curriculum make that matter for them in a way that they respond to in in classrooms K-12.

Cara Furman: It's interesting from what you were saying because in the arc of your response I'm seeing there's the policy around literacy which right now is really focused on the science of reading sort of exclusively without other elements in it and then there's this trauma informed pedagogy which is like this different time of the day that's also required and what I really appreciate about your work and I feel like you kind of went there is that yours is not dividing the day into now we talk about trauma now we talk about literacy but this opportunity for literacy to be a meaningful way in which students engage not just

with trauma of course but where they're engaging with the reality of what's important in life so that's sort of what I'm hearing in your work but also in your response.

Elizabeth Dutro: Deeply felt experiences is how we often talk about them when we're together in classrooms.

Cara Furman: I really like that and I think I cut it off a little bit but then sort of deeply felt experiences as literacy education seems really key. I feel like this sort of segues a little bit Jeff into your revisioning of what school might be and then I'd love to come back to you Elizabeth and talk about sort of what does a literacy curriculum actually look like in the day to day when a teacher is implementing a mix of trauma and form pedagogy with literacy in a meaningful way. So Jeff what do you think schools could be thinking big or thinking sort of small in the individual classroom level?

Jeff Frank: Right I mean I think one of the biggest resources that we don't think enough about in schools right is time right time itself what do we what do we spend our time on how important are certain activities in the day and I worry that we are we have been for a very long time been crowding out meaningful activities from school right crowding out things that could really get students thinking critically creatively deeply engaged. So again from from the policy perspective what I really want to see is more space for what some scholars call right deeper learning or meaningful learning opportunities for every single student. And what I found particularly disheartening is the ways in which all of a sudden we've deflected I think the concern with COVID right parents being fundamental I think I think across the board parents fundamentally concerned about their children and their futures and deeply scared deeply fearful and all of a sudden we deflected this into a battle over critical race theory right. Like we I find that and this is where I read kind of Cora Diamond and she says anytime we have to deal with something truly difficult that we know to be difficult we'll look for ways to deflect into something else. And I know the CRT kind of revival of the culture wars comes from a lot of sources and has a lot of reasons for it but I I can't imagine parents in small communities fighting each other over this thing which probably isn't even in their schools right or probably isn't affecting the day to day of their children but they're spending considerable psychic and emotional energy fighting about these things instead of returning back to what I would say is like the real hurt of being a parent through these times is is my kid going to be alright. Like is my child going to be okay are they doing interesting things in their school. Why can't we as a nation and a group of people talk about those types of things. And so that's where again in my ideal policy world communities come together and say this is what we need to talk about. Let's stop talking about all this other stuff and let's talk about the root of our real fears the root of our real concerns and then I'll just say one other thing in my in my dream world that we're spending more time on on remembrance and kind of memorializing this time the sacrifices our students went through the sacrifices that that teachers and school leaders went through again and our rush to get back to normal and and and our rush kind of headlong into these kind of culture war things that are consuming so much energy right now in the public imagination. I wish we could center on again the real pain in my mind and the real laws and again to clarify the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy and the importance of addressing also racial injustice that became huge over the course of the pandemic. That's where we need to center on

not again these really I would say fabricated fears about what's being taught in school without any attention to what is actually happening on the ground. Parents are fighting this very kind of in my mind kind of hypothetical battles over things that don't really exist in schools.

Cara Furman: So I want to slow down a little bit because you've just connected a lot of really big things which philosophers do and and just sort of parse through the argument that I'm hearing. And I think that's just to me there's a lot of fear and fear about what's happening in schools from covid and from learning loss you know for lives being disrupted let's put it that way and the literal fear of being sick from covid. And I think what I am hearing you say is that parents are kind of channeling that fear into this sort sometimes what might be a paranoia of what is happening in my children's classes and they've jumped on to oh it's because of critical race theory without necessarily knowing what critical race theory actually is or how it might be playing out in the classroom but it's become this sort of fabricated fear that people are latching on to around certain topics without really knowing what what is actually being taught with critical race theory. It's a general distrust is that kind of is that what your argument is.

Jeff Frank: This that you express that much more clearly than I did. And again deflecting attention from things that we could really be paying attention to if we wanted to improve the lives of young people and their teachers and their school communities.

Cara Furman: I think okay that makes a lot of sense and so then parents are focusing on that without really asking what is going on in the classroom. They're sort of looking for a fight with one particular thing and not focusing on what they might actually be upset about which might be the rigidity of what's happening in the classrooms and things like that. Is that seem like that. Absolutely. The line.

Elizabeth Dutro: Well I was just going to build on that just something that you know I kind of hear you saying and then you can see if this also pertains but just just the ways we know right that fear actually then turn did you know like lived ideologies live circulations of power of place time identities turns to injustice right like that that idea of fear when it's looking for a target some individuals but a collective will then turn to the they will attach the fear to certain bodies to certain identities to certain experiences as the threat which then you know as you're saying just works to fuel the injustices that queer students that students of color are then experiencing in schools and just exacerbates that institutional trauma that schools are inflicting even as there's a whole collective of parents and students who are being targeted who would love to have it any other way so it just does make me think of you know the power circulations within schools and as you're saying into policy and then into community discourse and the consequences of this for students and for many students and the parents who are and teachers who are trying to advocate for them in the midst of that it's a profound time in that way.

Cara Furman: So I want to bring it back to Jeff your call for remember remembrance and Elizabeth your work on witnessing and testimony because I see that as a different orientation for engaging with both your own history and present and also with somebody else and specifically that I think witnessing and testimony gives you an opportunity for bringing remember remembrance into the classroom in a way that brings people together in conversation as opposed to sort of creating these like well we're going to tell

my story no we're going to tell my story that kind of battle that I think is also happening. Does that resonate as kind of a response to thinking about the divides that are coming out of fear right now or maybe you see it differently?

Jeff Frank: I do I mean I think Kara this is kind of new so it's not really fully developed in my mind but it was really provoked by on many college campuses for example or many high schools right senior classes will give a gift back and to say you know thank you for this time here and it's striking again that the senior class across the country like they're not necessarily thinking about because I know it's so painful to think about how might we as a class remember that the middle of our first year of college we went home and now we're graduating through this experience what would be a way as a group to again in solidarity across all the divisions that emerged because of the pandemic try to remember it together and it may be too soon and it may actually be an impossible given how differently we all experienced the pandemic and we focused on the ways that we were differently affected by the pandemic which is extremely important but I think there has to be some space and particularly for students to really think about how might we remember this time together how might we think about something that did affect us all it affected us differently but it also affected us all so I see that in the coming years I would hope that we can begin having those conversations right like what it looked like for a school of an elementary school to remember this time I think those would be great conversations but as Elizabeth and you have said right we're just kind of brushing headlong into scientific literacy all these other things that school must do and we know kids have to learn these things but not at the expense of remembrance and reflecting.

Elizabeth Dutro: I love that idea of remembrance and thinking about it in this context and one thing that came to mind as you were talking Jeff is just like the need for accurate history and accurate representation of who schools are serving as part of what allows for even remembrance to be part of what school can mean and right when policies and practices particularly in certain spaces in the U.S. right now are actively trying to foreclose that that makes remembrance of course as lived family histories and lived identities remembrance is present but as part of what schools need to mean that's what that's what's trying to be foreclosed through those policies so that's I find that a really important way to think about it and in terms of you know the day to day of classrooms yeah that's also really resonant like what does it mean for in the pedagogies that we study just the vulnerability of teachers also sharing their remembrances right to think of that as a remembrance project of the sharing of what matters just as part of school literacies choosing mentor texts that are speaking to something a theme that humans can attach to and putting that at the center while bringing in all of the skills at the same time that what that allows then is that sense that everyone then gets to attach gets to witness those memories that humanity that then children and youth can take up as an invitation for what school needs to mean which is that their humanity really does matter that their stories are part of what it means to be to learn and to be able to be deemed successful in schools.

Cara Furman: We like to close with thinking about what might a teacher do tomorrow when they're thinking about these ideas alongside both of you and before we turn to that I want to highlight the podcast is titled thinking in the midst and it's really we are thinking about it as one brings expertise into the grappling but one doesn't bring always concrete

conclusions and I really appreciate Jeff in particular you're saying this is something that you're just beginning to work through because we're still really in the midst of this coming out of this pandemic and grappling with it so I wanted to highlight that first that there may not be a one answer to going forward or there's not. The other thing I want to say is I hear one way in which one a teacher might practically bring in remembrance is to testify to share what they are remembering and they could say you know this is how I was interrupted what else might other people want to say. What are some ideas that strike you out of this conversation that a teacher might bring into their practice or an administrator as they go forward tomorrow with some of these ideas.

Jeff Frank: So I mean just everything Elizabeth said I mean I think there's an entire kind of program and invitation and what Elizabeth just said and and I would say an invitation to a conversation that we really need to have as school buildings as communities as parents what is essential what do we what is really important to talk about right now otherwise I fear what Elizabeth we're just going to perpetuate old injustices and probably create new injustices in the process so an invitation to a different type of conversation I think is absolutely essential right now and and then I'll just say as as a philosopher I feel like one of my main jobs if you will is to give people permission to not know right I don't want to be paternalistic but but I tell a lot of people this like it is okay not to know we are in the middle of of an extremely challenging period of time it's okay not to know please don't foreclose this kind of journey into possibility with a sense of knowingness as Jonathan Lear says like oh I already know how to deal with this or I already know what we should do we don't and so as much as we feel comfortable tolerating the ambiguity of not knowing and trying to focus on like the good the just the human that's that's where I'd like to see that's where I'd like to see us moving and I do hope teachers individual classrooms can be those spaces to tell a kid yeah you don't need to you don't need to know let's try to figure

Elizabeth Dutro: this out together yeah that is just one of the things I find most powerful to Jeff is that idea of not knowing it's like I mean we're talking about trauma talking about the losses of COVID it is incomprehensible and and that's not a space of paralysis like embracing that level of not knowing of not being able to absorb just as others can't fully absorb our own pain loss trauma is it can be a space of action of the viscerally felt need for the action and then I mean as a tangible thing Kara I would point to you know if you are for good reason a teacher no matter what level you're teaching who feels like but wait I have to be the one in charge I'm not supposed to show any vulnerability I have to show that I've got it all together holding it together for the student that's that's one of the discourses of education right that that needs to be what teachers do to try it out just try letting it down a little bit try sharing you know the impact of something that was hard just something that shows that humanity can live in this classroom and it has to be the person with the most power who has to try that out first if children and youth are going to accept the invitation in a way that at least shows their space for them to be met with responsiveness and and humanity and holding their stories and holding their stories close and respected so I'll say that as my action.

Cara Furman: I think that's really both of those are really sort of powerful directions and I think really we speak to just the deep vulnerability of this moment that we're in and how we

choose to live with that vulnerability you know do we choose to make a claim and lash out and those around us or can we sort of sit with that vulnerability and and join with others in a more supportive way that just the potential of that is really powerful for me so thank you both of you for for bringing that forth that closes our interview together and but I want to say on behalf of myself and and Derek thank you so much for joining us today it was really a powerful and moving experience to hear from you both.

Elizabeth Dutro: Such a pleasure thank you.

Jeff Frank: Thank you so much Garrett.

Derek Gottlieb: And that is our show gratitude to Elizabeth and Jeff for taking the time to share their work and their thinking with us subscribe to this show wherever you listen if you have not done so already as a standard reminder leaving us a rating and a review helps the algorithm make us more visible to others to connect with us directly with feedback or thoughts of whatever kind send us an email at thinkinginthemitstatgmail.com new episodes come out every Friday up next we are speaking to Michelle Moses about her 2023 presidential address delivered at the philosophy of education society annual meeting and Winston Thompson about his response on behalf of Kara Furman I'm Derek Gottlieb this is thinking in the

Jeff Frank: midst we'll see you next time.