

Ribbons

From *Multisolving: Creating Systems Change in a Fractured World*
By Elizabeth Sawin

For the ribbon cutting,
they chose high noon on a bright day,
the sun flashing off the scissors in the mayor's hand.
Grins for the cameras, tours on the hour.
"One o'clock for the rooftop gardens! Lemonade at the playground!"
All that is missing is a brass band you say.
But you are laughing, and I am too.
We see them all, the invisible ribbons,
stretching back, stretching between.
One is pale pink,
leading forward from that day in the basement of city hall
when Al threw up his hands and knocked the tray of donuts to the floor.
It was an accident, but also, frustration.
Then he told us about his little sister who almost died.
It was an asthma attack.
His voice broke and Vanessa's heart cracked open.
We could all see it,
a soft green ribbon.
Vanessa's boss made that grant,
a life-giving ribbon,
like a vine or a blood vessel.
Between you with your binders and protocols,
and me with my artist's messy hands
there is a ribbon, tight and strong, robin's egg blue.
Between Iona "how many jobs can we guarantee" Williams,
and that guy Steve who came only once,
but grabbed the purple marker and scribbled the answer we'd been missing
onto a crumpled piece of flip chart paper,
and Miss Marley from the neighborhood who scared us all at first
but now brings us lemon squares on Tuesdays
there are ribbons.
They are colorful, frayed, clean, crusty with donut icing, everything.
Thick as rope, thin as sewing thread or babies' hair.
The mayor can cut as many ribbons as he likes.
I prefer braiding them,
weaving until we have something so strong it will hold us all.



Photo Taken at Paris Climate Talks, Courtesy of Elizabeth Sawin