

Wendell Berry on Community

Community, I am beginning to understand, is made through a skill I have never learned or valued: the ability to pass time with people you do not and will not know well, talking about nothing in particular, with no end in mind, just to build trust, just to be sure of each other, just to be neighborly. A community is not something that you *have*, like a camcorder or a breakfast nook. No, it is something you *do*. And you have to do it all the time.

— Wendell Berry, posted at The Beanery at 25th Avenue & Hilyard

The indispensable form that can intervene between public and private interests is that of the community. The concerns of public and private, republic and citizen, necessary as they are, are not adequate for the shaping of human life. Community alone, as a principle and as a fact, can raise the standards of local health (ecological, economic, social, and spiritual) without which the other two interests will destroy one another.

By community, I mean the commonwealth and common interests, commonly understood, of people living together in a place and wishing to continue to do so. To put it another way, community is a locally understood interdependence of local people, local culture, local economy, and local nature. . . . Lacking the interest of or in such a community, private life becomes merely a sort of reserve in which individuals defend their “right” to act as they please and attempt to limit or destroy the “rights” of other individuals to act as they please.

A community identifies itself by an understood mutuality of interests. But it lives and acts by the common virtues of trust, goodwill, forbearance, self-restraint, compassion, and forgiveness.

— Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community* (1992, 1993)