

Global Citizenship and Local Sustainability

Defining citizenship in a globalized and ever globalizing world can be difficult. Global connectedness, often positive, sometimes engenders the exploitation of global "opportunities" and invites global destruction. What if we were to define global citizenship in terms of local citizenship? Perhaps we can: a peaceful, respectful, and engaged global citizen is someone who concentrates on the prosperity, richness, and sustenance of local life, land, and people.

Reading an essay by Wendell Berry, "The Whole Horse; The Preservation of the Agrarian Mind," during one of my last few days at D Acres of New Hampshire Organic Farm and Educational Homestead helped me to define the substance, the grain, the storyline of my time there. Berry defines agrarianism, in contrast to industrialism, as a practice dictated by respect for local land and local communities and the necessity of a deep working connection between the two. This practice of local citizenship and respect is exactly what I encountered and participated in while at D Acres, and what I have done my best to carry with me since.

D Acres helped me toward an understanding and a way of life that I did not even know I was missing. To Berry's notion of agrarianism D Acres adds its own flavor: a welcoming community of eclectic and energetic individuals, good food, a beautiful place to let loose, and an emphasis on everyday creativity, imagination, and DIY resourcefulness as vital aspects of sustainability and communal wellbeing.

At D Acres, we spent our time doing work that contributes directly to our own collective livelihood. For just six short weeks, dedicating my day to the very garden beds that I could count on to produce my own meals, as well as to creative endeavors, yielded a satisfaction and a feeling of wholeness and integrity that I had never before felt.

It was not until I experienced the fullness, wholeness, and connectedness of my life at D Acres that I also understood the relative disjointedness and incoherence of an unsustainable lifestyle. The kind lived by most people in the United States, urban, suburban, and rural alike, leaves vast gaps between the ways we spend our time and the ways we sustain our lives. D Acres helped me to recognize these incongruities, which exist unrecognized and unquestioned between the foods in the fields, the supermarkets, and the "work" we do to be able to afford to participate in the system.

To lead a sustainable lifestyle is not only to engage in practices that sustain the health and beauty of the land that we depend on both materially and spiritually but also to engage in work—physical, creative, imaginative—that contributes to personal and collective sustenance and reintegration. Sustainability encourages global citizenship through active and responsible local citizenship.

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