

We Are Each Other's

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This past week we opened with a poem by Gwendolyn Brooks. The last three lines have stuck with me:

We are each other's harvest.

We are each other's business.

We are each other's magnitude and bond.

On the surface, Brooks' poem seemed easy to understand: people in community reap the benefits of each other, hold each other accountable, and are interconnected and thus strong. But the poem carried the sort of power that gave me pause. I want to unpack it as a way to explore the extent to which we are "doing community" at Young Adult Group.

Harvest

At this last meeting in particular, I felt we were living out the line "we are each other's harvest." As we talked about how we continue to fall in love with each other again and again and noticed aloud the quirks that make the people in this group so endearing to us, our delight felt like a harvest.

But is there more to harvest? Harvest implies previous growth and even transformation as buds bloom and later turn to fruits. Has witnessing someone else's personal or spiritual growth felt so intimately close that it has felt like other people's own harvest? I, at least, feel that this type of harvest is one that I'm still hoping to find at Young Adult Group.

Business

This is the word I wrestled with the most. Do we really want to be in each other's business? Doesn't that mean we're crossing each other's boundaries? Or are we just talking about accountability?

To answer these questions, I decided to identify what it is I usually think of as "my business." I realized I usually define it as my biggest "work" in life: my own personal growth. I was reminded of Adrienne Maree Brown's thoughts on liberated relationships, particularly her writings on people she term her "woes" (her Working on Excellence partners). She says woes are "people who know [your] north star, who know your challenges, and who hold [you] accountable to your own development, celebrating [your] self-awareness and growth [...] It's friendship with a lot of transparency and intention woven into it."

If we use Brown's description of woes to define Brook's idea of being each other's business, I'm not sure we are there yet at Young Adult Group, though I do get the sense that we are committed enough to each other that we have the potential to be.

Magnitude and Bond

I like the idea of thinking of ourselves as each other's magnitude. So often I gravitate toward thinking about capacity, the limits of what is possible. But even though magnitude has a definite size (at least in the scientific sense of measuring the brightness of stars), the greatness of that size suggests that what we're talking about is abundance, not scarcity.

I'm also intrigued by Brook's syntax. She says "We are each other's magnitude," not "we give each other magnitude" or "we determine each other's magnitude." By using the verb "to be," Brooks suggests that when people are in community, there is an intermingling of identities, a blurring of boundaries that separate one person from the next. I wonder, if we truly understood that we are each other's magnitude, what would that do to our own self-consciousness? How could you ever feel inadequate if your magnitude is derived from your community?

Or perhaps Brooks just wanted a certain cluster of words next to each other:

We are each other's.

We are each other's.

We are each other's.

As we approach Thanksgiving, I feel grateful both for the community we've already built at Young Adult Group and for the opportunity to continue to fully understand what it means to be each other's harvest, business, magnitude, and bond.