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# The Levels of Global Citizenship

Melanie Smith
*Allegheny College*

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Global citizenship is more than a mere basic knowledge of other cultures and nations. It affects all levels of life: individual, family, friends, community, nation, world, and ecological world including all things living. A way of life promoting global citizenship has to be present on both a small and broad scale for it to be successful, and there cannot be dissonance between what we say, believe, or do at one level and what we believe and do at other levels. Individuals must internalize values and skills compatible with global citizenship, such as selflessness, perspective, service, speaking, listening, and acceptance. There must be a global and universal commitment to the common good, which must be a process and a pursuit, not an end; "common good" must be practically synonymous with growth. All of these qualities of global citizens have to be planted by the family and reinforced through human interaction with friends, coworkers, in town meetings, in casual conversation, and on the national and international levels.

Global citizenship must start with the individual. Without individual internal beliefs supporting global citizenship, none of the interactions or relationships shaping the larger world can be effective in moving forward towards a world of global citizens. Although global citizenship revolves around the interconnectedness and inclusion of all, interactions are made up of individuals and shaped by the beliefs of those individuals. The first requirement of an individual global citizen is that he or she must see himself or herself in relation to the world around himself or herself. Although Aldo Leopold's material is often discussed in a broader context than that of the individual, his concept of the "fountain of energy" is useful in determining the individual's view of himself or herself as required for global citizenship. Leopold states, "Land, then, is not merely soil; it is a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soil, plants, and animals" (Leopold, 1949, p. 216). Leopold is using this idea of a "fountain of energy" not only to discuss land and ecology, but also in an attempt to get people to view themselves as merely moments within a cosmic energy. This humbling sense of insignificance naturally also encourages an acknowledgement that there is something real and more important beyond our own individual accomplishments.

Although global citizens must view themselves as small, it is vital that they are not limited or slowed by an overwhelming feeling of insignificance. If individuals feel that they are so small that they have no influence in the world, laziness will overcome them, thereby halting any movement or progress and damaging true, productive global citizenship. This balance between a feeling of power to change and evaluate society and a humbling sense of smallness is crucial to in an evolving world. However, a sense of individual insignificance in

moderation can also serve as a motivating force for more effective actions taken towards change – although one person can have a strong voice, it takes groups of people to engage in effective social change, which is an inevitably important part of a world that is constantly evolving. In this way, a sense of perspective on the vastness of the world in relation to oneself can serve to promote the interconnectedness that helps to define global citizenship.

Just as education on fundamental life tasks begins with the family, so does education promoting global citizenship. In a study on adolescent political views conducted in Hungary in 1998 by C. A. Flanagan, as discussed by J. J. Arnett (2007), results showed that only 10% of adolescents held a political position opposite to that of their parents (in Arnett, 2007, p. 420). In addition, Flanagan found that children are brought up either nonreligious or practicing a specific religion that they often continue to practice throughout adulthood. Undeniably, the scope of influence the family has on a child is vast. While some specific views are formed independently, much of how an individual learns to process the world in the first place is learned in the home and is modeled by one's parents. Consequently, family life must be conducive towards a global perspective if a child is to grow up ready to participate in and contribute to a globalizing, interconnected world. None of the previously outlined individual requirements for global citizenship are likely without first being established in the home.

To prevent the apathy generated by feelings of insignificance, children should be made to feel important and influential, which is typically not a major hardship or foreign concept to modern parents. However, the specific nature of this parental nurture as it should be channeled in a world of global citizens is less present in today's society. Parents often channel their desire to make their children feel loved and important through giving them material possessions, which is a trend that has only gotten worse over time through the combination of a powerful media force with a consumerist culture. Instead of showing a child his or her voice through granting his every wish, a child's power can be shown to him through fostering a passion for selfless service. Service can be integrated into family life and the family schedule, not as the occasional good deed, but as an essential aspect of life. Martin Luther King Jr. states in *Where do we go from Here* (1967), "there is no deficit in human resources; the deficit is in human will" (p. 177). Parents must plant the seed of motivation to serve others early in life, or the feelings of apathy and worthlessness will take over. Service must not be an abstract ideal to children but an action. In *Democracy Matters* (2004), Cornell West discusses a dangerous paradox between words and actions. He uses the example of slavery to show that, despite American's proud words of a "fight for liberty" that was supposedly so central to the United States, slavery prevailed for

hundreds of years. Just as patriotic cries of liberty and equality were somewhat meaningless when they did not reflect actions carried out in society, speaking on the need to devote time to community service has little affect without actions to serve as a credible model.

Showing a child his or her own voice and power is not conducive to global citizenship unless it goes hand-in-hand with teaching a child how to listen. Our mouths can speak eloquent words of freedom and equality, but if we are deaf to the words of others, our own words are meaningless. John Dewey emphasizes constant evaluation and critique of society both on a small and broad scale, and stresses moving away from preoccupation with fixed and final truths. Dewey ties these together into a need for movement and progress in society. The same insignificance of individuals that humbles and gives us perspective makes it so that we cannot merely listen to ourselves. According to the Population Reference Bureau, "global population numbers are on track to reach seven billion in 2011, just twelve years after reaching six billion" (2010). Progress is impossible if seven billion people solely follow their own ideas. If children are taught to listen actively to the opinions and stories of others, even in settings as unthreatening and comfortable as family dinner table conversations, they will be better prepared to be global citizens in a world of collective growth and interconnectivity.

The family-taught skills of voicing opinions, active listening, and service are seen at a wide range of levels, beginning with one's own community. Although it might seem irrelevant on the surface, the community is an important part of global citizenship. In order for conditions to be present encouraging global citizenship, a community should welcome and encourage diversity. A homogenous community, whether it be racially, socioeconomically, politically, or religiously, makes the diversity of the world a foreign, distanced concept. Noelle McAfee's view of the importance of telling stories is very useful in understanding the constructive effects of diversity. Personal stories and testimonies bring to life the different perspectives that make up our world and help to eliminate mental and physical distance between groups. In *Democracy and the Political Unconscious* (2008)*,* McAfee tells of a woman who shared a personal story of hate speech used against her and says that after the story was shared, "instead of operating at the abstract level of principle, [the discussion] moved to a deeper level and began to plumb the values, concerns, and hopes of the people in the room" (p. 154). McAfee further suggests that it is not productive to assume that we completely understand what someone else has been through, but that through good public discourse we can better understand other perspectives and their origins.

Open-door deliberation, such as town-hall style meetings, is one forum for story telling. Since a world full of global citizens will be one of constant re-evaluation and constructive criticism of society, deliberative forums are important in discussing new policy or proposed legislation. According to McAfee, in an open deliberative setting, citizens "can work through, in the Freudian sense, what they might be willing to give up in order to make progress in light of the broader public knowledge they have gained" (2008, p. 155). However, these forums are only successful if they are carried out effectively. First, participants cannot go into a deliberation expecting to gain full understanding of all other opinions, because that is impossible. McAfee agrees with this, saying, "She [the participant] must abandon any presumption that she can fully fathom someone else's experience or that somewhere down the road all can agree" (2008, p. 155). McAfee raises a point essential to effective deliberation: citizens must not only abandon expectations that they will be able to reach a complete understanding of the experiences of all others, but that they will be able to reach a unanimous consensus. Both goals are unrealistic and, although they sound optimistic, they inhibit growth in practice.

Although scheduled meetings, even on a local level, are important for global citizenship, effective deliberation should also occur in casual day-to-day conversations. Communication, friendship, and group membership are undeniably fundamental aspects of human life and development, as evidenced by psychological studies done on the devastating effects of solitary confinement. Even John Dewey, who is reluctant to admit that any human tendencies are derived from human nature, says, "one of the elements of human nature that is often discounted in both idea and practice is the satisfaction derived from a sense of sharing in creative activities; the satisfaction increasing in direct ratio to the scope of the constructive work engaged in" (Dewey, 1989, p. 34). Dewey later phrases that satisfaction as "a sense of union with others," further showing the emphasis he places on groups (1989, p. 35). We naturally strive for some level of emotional fusion, and while it is vital for communities to be diverse in order for global citizenship to occur, we also look for some common thread that connects us to others. Finding something in common with others can actually serve to make it easier to move past differences and to tear down walls that we create in response to differences. In order to be global citizens, this is an important skill to develop at the community level, since the world is full of such drastic differences, whether geographically, culturally, governmentally, socioeconomically, or ethnically. If people are not able to find any common ground with community members and look past differences, they certainly will not be able to find common ground with global citizens.

Everything outlined so far could be present individually, in the family, in groups, and in the community, and even so, global citizenship still might not be possible. If communities do not have any connection to the outside world beyond service, theoretical ideals, and diversity within, the broad perspective and interconnectedness necessary for global citizenship have not been achieved. One concrete way to work towards real and non-theoretical interconnectedness is to bring people in from outside the community to speak at town meetings, bring a global perspective, educate the citizenry, and evaluate local practices. This further emphasizes the need for story telling. In their report on story telling and the effects of sharing experiences on coping and research, East, Jackson, O'Brien, and Peters (2010) state, "stories bring meaning into our lives, convey values and emotions, aid in reaffirming and validating our lives and experiences, and have the ability to connect us with our inner selves, with others and with society" (2010). While reason has its place, it is the sharing of diverse personal experiences that truly connects us.

In modern society, political debates are one of the most obvious examples of over-emphasis on reason and of its limiting effects on progress. Although political debates occasionally touch on controversial or offensive issues, they often consist of weighing the "pros and cons" with wording that pleases everyone. We could rationalize and weigh pros and cons forever without being at all conclusive or without actually using the wealth of diverse experiences in front of us. Reason must be combined with personal stories, which are used most effectively when told by someone who has personal experience with what he or she is preaching. In *Individualism Old and New*, John Dewey (1999) argues that a "new individual" will allow his or her spiritual side to catch up with his or her material side, and will hone his or her intellect to use technology and science in making decisions. However, it is essential that the spiritual side must not be sacrificed. This spiritual side discussed by Dewey does not necessarily imply a religious affiliation, which Dewey himself would argue is dangerous because it can lead to preoccupation with the fixed and final. However, spirituality and the balance of material and concrete ideas with more abstract ideas also help in fostering the global perspective held by global citizens.

Outside opinions also help communities self-evaluate more effectively and honestly. West says that we should be evaluative not only of our actions and whether they fit with what we claim to believe and practice, but even of the specific language we use. Some of the very wording we use might bring up evidence of phantoms without us really knowing. When we develop certain phrases and rhetoric that become internalized and common speech, we stop hearing the meaning behind them. This places us in dangerous territory that

inhibits growth and creates walls that can be detrimental to global citizenship. A visit paid by a political leader, an activist, or even simply a citizen of a nation fundamentally different from one's own is more likely to be able to recognize offensive or outdated language.

Conditions compatible with global citizenship must also be rooted at the national level. Many requirements of global citizenship that need to be present nationally are similar to those found on more local and familiar levels. For example, equality is essential, but equality does not mean homogeneity, ignorance, or absence of differences, but rather an acceptance of differences. At the national level, this means equal rights for all, both on paper and in practice. Differences in background and experiences should not be ignored, because these same differences that have in the past encouraged discrimination and retarded efforts to create global citizenship can still dramatically illustrate information on how a specific policy can, for example, promote white supremacy.

The key at the national level is to make sure that equal rights, such as the right to freedom of speech, exist not only legally but also in the minds of that country's citizens. In order to help in creating an atmosphere conducive to the acceptance required for global citizenship, equal rights for all must be internalized. This internalization is actually far more important than what is legally established on paper. Just as with the paradox discussed by West, if what is said on paper does not represent what is put into practice, the words mean nothing. L. Alcoff and M. Ortega include Eduardo Mendieta's *Citizenship and Political Friendship: Two Hearts, One Passport* (2007) in their volume, in which he states, "citizenship presupposes the education of public affect, a form of public somatology, in which how we feel about our cocitizens is far more important than whether there is a specific list of rights to which they are entitled and by means of which they may litigate" (Alcoff & Ortega, 2007, p. 170). Mendieta's words reinforce the concept of the importance of feelings and internalizations over hollow words. His ideas are also useful in recognizing the need for citizens to empathize with their cocitizens. Propelled by a strong sense of nationalism, citizens often swear by the rights their countries claim to offer, stating that there is free speech and equality because it is set in stone in that country's law. However, most people would concede that if everyone were to steal all of their material possessions rather than buying them, laws prohibiting theft would be essentially meaningless. Laws mean little if the ethics that inspired them and norms they enforce them are not internalized by the people.

Nations often seek to increase nationalism, yet nationalism is one of the strongest foes of global citizenship. A citizen should be comfortable in his or her

own country, but a raging sense of nationalism can be just as blinding as racism. On an individual level, the effects of raging nationalism are not as dramatic or obviously harmful as those of racism, yet they can build up an equally strong wall preventing global citizenship. There are positive qualities of nationalism that can promote the broad perspective beyond the self that is required for global citizens, such as a care for and awareness of the feelings of others. According to Mendieta (2007) in Alcoff & Ortega's collection, "we have to be educated as citizens to feel not just tolerance, but especially solidarity, empathy, pride, and loyalty toward our cocitizens, who both share in our burdens and contribute to our collective well-being" (Alcoff & Ortega, 2007, p. 170). All of the preconditions necessary for global citizenship must also be present in order for these feelings of strong connection to and concern for fellow citizens to exist. However, for global citizenship to occur, this "solidarity, empathy, pride, and loyalty" cannot stop at the national level. Mendieta's statement that our cocitizens "both share in our burdens and contribute to our collective well-being" is also useful for global citizens, because it shows us that despite differences in socioeconomic class, geographic location, language, religion, race, gender, and nationality, we all have a degree of shared experience and all, ideally, contribute to the well-being of others, even if indirectly.

Once the mindsets and practices conducive to global citizenship are consistent and found at all levels of interaction, from individual to national, the world is theoretically prepared for global citizenship. However, physical borders that often fall along the lines of ethnic, socioeconomic, or cultural differences between countries, states, towns, and geographical regions still make global citizenship difficult to achieve in practice. Inevitably, those borders will continue to exist. They provide organization and order to a world that without them would make the previously detailed problem of seven billion people independently trying to achieve their own goals and motives infinitely more difficult. However, although philosophers have not examined it in nearly as much detail, ecological awareness can help individuals to defy the limitations presented by those borders. Leopold (1949) argues that we must have value in nature beyond economic value. Leopold understands that a broad, abstract, removed view of the land is worthless if it is not made relatable to the public, a concept similar to that of the need to prevent disparity between words and actions. He uses metaphors and images such as the fountain of energy, food chains, and a land pyramid to try to give his audience perspective on the land and how everything is interconnected. J. Baird Callicott (1987) combines Leopold's description of the land ethic with the need to move from personal accomplishment to a sense of collective success, even for efforts that are technically individual. Since land and energy are found everywhere and seen by all, they can be useful in establishing some common

experiences from which to ground global citizenship, although specific knowledge of the land and of other animals is less crucial for global citizenship than the necessary qualities found in different levels of human interaction. Of the major themes in Leopold and Callicott's argument, the sense of the vastness and interconnectedness of the world is perhaps the most useful to global citizens.

Global citizenship is not achieved simply through international forces. Fundamental beliefs that allow for global citizenship must come from family life and nurturing as a child. Group membership, friendship, and other local interaction must include diverse opinions and the sharing of personal stories. Communities must have frequent open-door deliberation, such as through town meetings, in which a diverse group of participants uses not only rationality and reason but personal stories as well. Nations must also engage in open deliberation, and both nations and communities must bring in outside sources to provide perspective, tell personal stories different from those experienced within that community, and aid in criticism of language and practices. Above all, global citizens find connection to others through shared experiences and openly shared differences in order to learn from each other and work towards a common good of growth.

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