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Are Higher Education's Efforts to Advance Global Engagement, and Global Citizenship, Un-American?

Thank you. I appreciate being able to join Lynn in making a few remarks, and hopefully provoking constructive dialogue at the discussion tables.

You may know that both Lynn and I were educated as philosophers. So, with apologies, you'll hear a theoretical bend.

In recent years, the work of Bringing Theory to Practice (BTtoP—cf. the descriptive ellipses) has focused on commenting on connections among conceptual analyses of higher education's greater purposes—creating and supporting campus cultures making possible greater achievement of learning, civic engagement, well-being, and purposeful choice objectives. In doing so, constructions of identity formation, cognitive and emotive engagement, purposefulness and flourishing, the ideals of diversity, and the gains of risking encountering “other” with empathy and integrity—these have been the complex constructs that colleagues at BTtoP have tried to explore.

It might be helpful before offering an approach to the question posed for this session to ask you to rehearse in your own thoughts what is currently being said on your own campuses regarding global engagement, national citizenship and global citizenship. It is likely intense, perhaps angry; it may be often incomplete and perhaps disturbing as it responds to external conversations or fails to respond to them. You are likely hearing versions of such remarks as:

“the well-documented rebellions against globalism and against global citizenship rely on appeals to anti-liberal, anti-intellectual, and anti-democratic themes” (anonymous); or

“we must develop a ‘post-truth’ diplomacy which ‘re-brands’ nationalism...challenging and prevailing against the ‘eco-chamber’ media bubbles which reinforce ‘globalist snowflakes’ who cannot deal with realities...” (anonymous); or

“Current geo-political rhetoric amounts to shaking fists at the rest of the world—those not ‘us’—the trend undoubtedly towards retreating inwards. Those who call for more global co-operation are dismissed as liberal elitists, weak, and unpatriotic” ... (Owen Jones, *Demonization of the Working Class*)

What is perhaps *not* being discussed is how those matters fit with the core purposes of the institution, or of higher education, or of who you are, your identities, and what you value as an educator.

All of us applaud institutions which want their students to become aware of global realities; to become more meaningfully global citizens. [cf. Global Learning VALUE Rubric— “Global learning is a critical analysis of and an engagement with complex, interdependent global systems and legacies and their implications for people’s lives and the earth’s sustainability”] Many have strategies which make possible student global experiences; or are preparing for future demographic pools of possible attendees now living in foreign countries who could benefit from attending your university; or within the campus internationalizing the curriculum as a priority—developing global dimensions or implications of disciplinary teaching and research.

While many of these are academic manifestations of campus work at globalization, other strategies would appear to be more utilitarian; for example, revealing the significance of reaching global audiences for recruiting students and for hiring faculty. For some, being global has become a significant dimension of the institution's business and promotional model: identifying markets; *finding* willing off-shore partners to share students; and working campus-wide to gain and retain international students.

These are likely "both and" strategies. Even so, we might ask, "How are the strategies and emphases on my campus advancing global engagement or promoting global citizenship? Are they connected to our students' greater understanding of what it means to be a global citizen, and to have themselves, a global identity?"

Pop culture icon Rihanna encourages global citizenship by organizing individual donations to educate children in remote and most needy areas of the world—she makes a global difference.

The Human Rights project of the UN Council tries to hold countries accountable to international human rights and commitments—to be responsible to all "citizens of the globe."

The Pope and the Dalai Lama are said by many to be global citizens by virtue of the power of the ideas and ideals they espouse and their evident humility—in being vulnerable.

The audience at Global Citizen Day in NYC on Sept 23 heard Stevie Wonder and top tier bands advocate global human values, collaboration, and peace—letting the common appreciation of the music penetrate difference.

But what does it mean for higher education or for a campus to advance or promote global citizenship? Could a commitment to being global be a greater educational purpose? Could the campus have the objective of educating "global citizens" of all students in authentic and clearly confirmable ways?

To promote global citizenship as a purpose, as a clear educational objective, requires the crafting of a "global community" [the 'logic' of citizenship requires a community of which citizenry is possible]—in which citizenship is understood and welcomed—a community that is crafted on sharing values and common practices. This is the intent of AAC&U's VALUE rubric for global learning.

It requires considering how being a global citizen is possible beyond the strategies of student exchanges or international study semesters—how students "with or without a passport", who do, or do not travel beyond the local can have and gain empathetic understanding and authentic encountering of difference imbedded in their education and in their identities—and how doing so will make possible the gaining of their own global identity

The VALUE rubric for Global learning must extend beyond seeking to inform regarding "integrated global systems and their implications," to encouraging those campus practices where self-interest is deferred, replaced with the humility of seeking a common good—where existent privileges, and their attendant economic and social power relationships, are suspended or revoked – where the full practices and opportunities of reciprocal engagement with difference could move students beyond tolerance, beyond even empathy, to being sufficiently compassionate as to act to make change.

A campus crafting a global community brings clarity in practice of global values and what adherence to them demands; it creates a campus culture that encourages the development, among a student's various threads of identities, the adoption of a "global citizen identity." Such an identity would be the gaining of a perspective of trying to understand the world more synthetically as a whole— seeing

citizens, locally and globally, synthetically—as being whole persons, as constructions of integrated collections of identities—like strands of woven hemp, the whole citizen as a construct of overlapping strands of identity.

Could constructing a strand of identity—one of being a global citizen—be compatible with being a patriotic national citizen? (In the form of the question opening this session: “Is a global identity Un-American?”)

President Trump appealed to the Nation in late August for unity and the healing of racial fissures by asserting that national patriotism was a “common bond”—sufficient to heal fissures if the public would only adopt the patriotic ardor found in the military community.

But the “common bond” may not be the zeal of nationalistic pledges. What holds us together may well be the commitment to ideas and ideals, not to pledges “of blood and soil.” A bonding that unites (weaves together) differences requires giving priority to identifying the causes and histories of those strands of difference and different identities, challenging the patterns of privilege that pull them apart, and determining that being an engaged citizen nationally or globally, means encountering and being encountered, empathetically understanding and being vulnerable to being understood.

What if Trump’s appeal had been made to *global* patriotism, to the values of global citizenship, to the articulation and defense of a higher, greater common good? Would such an appeal have a different impact on healing wounds of difference? Would it have spoken to, called out, confronted as abhorrent, the exhibition in Virginia of the reality of the virulent strands of fascism and racism in the US social and political identity?

When asked if one can be a global citizen in meaningful ways and still be a loyal nationalist, some respond: “sure, compatibility is possible—as long as advancing global interests and values are not in conflict with national interests.” After all, they add, “since the League of Nations, WWII and the UN, the US has promulgated economic, social and political policies which have championed globalism—but not at the surrender of national interests. Those take priority.”

Others emphasize that national citizenship means learning about, understanding one’s history, respecting and promoting what is the “good” in one’s culture, society, community or nation, and not be reluctant to call out ignorance and injustice.” Such nationalism, or nationalistic identity, stands with, (is a strand braided with) but not above, global citizenship and a global identity.”

To whether globalism and nationalism are incompatible, both answer “No,” but for different reasons. For one there is no incompatibility, because ultimately the priority is to nationalism—the practicalities of real politics and self-interest of nations, they argue, will prevail (an Hobbesian if not dystopian world view). For the other, there is no incompatibility because citizenship in both global and national terms is a commitment to a higher common value, the *good*—(not power or privilege, not blood or the accident of soil where born, but the universal good of pursuing truth, fairness, justice and compassion)—the highest of values in any republic—values at the core of democratic civic society—and those same values are at the center of higher education’s unique responsibility for engaging with difference, encountering, understanding and acting in pursuit of learning, well-being, justice and a civic common good.

National citizenship, whether by accident or intent, carries specific responsibilities, as well as brings with those duties guaranteed freedoms and rights. Those responsibilities and rights rest on the maintenance

and the protection of ideas and values. It is a participatory requirement; it is engagement (not passivity or silence) in taking actions that we practice those values and ideas.

Global citizenship too, carries responsibilities beyond simply expressing shared values; it means acting in support of those values (e.g. supporting the peaceful resolution of conflict, the more equitable distribution of wealth and uses of natural resources, and posing challenges if not denial and opposition to the hubris of uncritical nativism and the arrogance of power blind to justice). It means being committed to, and acting in recognition of the necessity to align national aspirations and interests with a higher common good.

It is said that this is a “hinge moment”—on one hand a terrifying time of building walls, of exiting any common search for a shared wholeness. But it is also the moment to champion our unique role in higher education to assert our essential responsibility of championing values and practices that reinforce searches for truth and justice—even if they are contrary to prevailing social, political power or demands of utility.

If campuses commit to fostering global citizens as a core purpose, they have to be willing to challenge, to risk naming and speaking out, to denounce ignorance and bigotry—and to act—to demonstrate that creating a context for the expression of global citizenship—for both those “with or without a passport,”—maximizes opportunities to engage, to encounter the other, and to be encountered, with authenticity. The press for an institution of higher education—to be global is not to craft strategies of marketing for positional and competitive advantage—but it is to craft their own campus as a global community—championing synthetic understanding, calling out nativism and prejudice, facilitating the practice of global values and confirming global citizenship as one essential strand in the weave of identities their students can achieve.

The challenging work for each campus to be a global community is in it becoming a context and a learning culture where the emancipation of a student as a global citizen is anticipated—even expected—that “global citizenry” is realized as a dimension of each student’s identity. For a campus to do so may include:

- * Encourage and expect teachers and learners to rigorously analyze and openly question the sources of the narratives of national and global citizenship, including history; to challenge what is offered as initial evidence; then contest myth, indoctrination and propaganda.

- *Strengthen opportunities that demand authentic engagement; questioning programs or opportunities that simply reinforce the privilege of ignoring difference by being near or naming otherness but not encountering it (as though the taking of a ‘selfie’ with a local or taking a village ‘walk through’ was encountering).

- * Risk suspending privilege, be vulnerable to learn when engaged and being engaged—to feel the restrictions of being objectified and to reflect on the power of objectifying.

- *Analyze what “taking a global perspective” would mean in actual practice. How would it differ from forms of tourism? Beyond tolerance and empathetic synthetic understanding, how could a global perspective lead to actions of compassionate practice...of solidarity?

- *Use dialogic pedagogies which open inquiry with questions rather than assertions, questions which require beginning exploration with the suspension of hegemonic or dominant responses—

questions that put at risk certainty. [For example, the way asking, “What time is it on the moon? or “What does being global demand of my identity?” immediately confounds, then opens perspective.]

* And finally, encourage being vulnerable to being seen as other; risk the sharing of life narratives. Learn how the construction of an identity is made *for* and not *by* some individuals and groups, and what conditions of power and privilege allow that.

Each of these would build on extending already existing opportunities for engagement, for cultivating a campus culture of inquiry and an environment for the building of global citizenship.

One can be a global citizen in New Orleans, or on campus, in the borough, or in the distant village. One can champion global citizenship as an authentic identity. One can be “other” to others as they are vulnerable, and in being vulnerable, engage. A campus culture and community can encourage liberation of its members from the confines of privilege and authority to come to understand what bridging difference of identity means and makes possible.

Paraphrasing Bryan Stevenson regarding broken justice in America’s penal systems, “Being broken [vulnerable] is what makes us human. Our shared vulnerability and imperfection nurtures and sustains our capacity for compassion.” It is the theme in the work of a Rihanna, a Dali Lama, a Papal edict, or a Stevie Wonder song. **And** it is the appeal to be global, to care, we hear from our students as they discover their own liberation in an identity beyond self-interest.

Being a citizen, having a national and global identity, requires the capacity and necessity of being vulnerable, of recognizing where and when we are broken; having compassion for other; standing in relation to difference and being judged by it, as well as judging it; recognizing the realities of national or global strengths as well as flaws, their history and the implications for either sustaining or altering them.

Campuses can be global communities—not necessarily measured by admission data or by hype, but by doing the hard work of making the campus actually “work,” function, as a global community—sharing and understanding common values and the common practices across and among identities of difference, acting to bring about changes that exemplify and amplify common, global, dimensions of the good.

October 13, 2017, AAC&U conference, New Orleans