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“Global Citizenship: Cultivating Resilience Through Mindfulness”

What does it mean to be a citizen of the world? I reflect on this ideological concept while sitting in the daunting reality of an immigration court waiting-room, anticipating a removal-proceedings hearing for my child’s father. The atmosphere is heavy with anxiety and uncertainty, as various languages are whispered in the background, and glances of confusion, despair, hope, empathy and solidarity are exchanged. The U.S. Department of Justice emblem is hanging up on one of the gray walls that encloses us, strangers from around the world, together in one stuffy room. It is a symbolic reminder of the overwhelming power of the state, particularly in determining who may be granted liberty at the expense of others. Still, in contemplating what it means to be a global citizen, I optimistically feel that agency is returned to the individual.

For me, being a global citizen constitutes a consciousness that challenges ethnocentrism and the ideas of belonging that nation-states inflict upon us, including the bureaucratic routines and paperwork that falsely assumes the authority to define who we are. Rather, a global citizen cannot be mentally bound by arbitrary political borders and strives to explicitly challenge other socially constructed forces that aim to divide and exclude (such as the law, gender, race, legal status, etc.). To be a global citizen is to recognize the humanity in everyone, regardless of the social categories we identify with or assume others are members of. Furthermore, it is to be aware of how interconnected our spaces and lives really are, despite geographic or social distance, and to acknowledge the multitude of intersectional identities one person can have. Perhaps most importantly, it is to remain vulnerable and open to other beliefs and ways of life.

Essentially, global citizenship is a collective mindset, a framework or lens to view the world, that realizes how diversity and unity can and should coexist.

It would be an oversight to neglect mentioning how my education at Stony Brook, experience as a mother, and relationships to the Latino immigrant community have shaped my ideas of global citizenship. Always fascinated by the social and behavioral sciences, I am a double-major at Stony Brook in Psychology and Sociology, as well as double-minor in History and Latin American/ Caribbean Studies. Pursuing an academic background in these disciplines and applying my education to navigate my daily personal life has taught me about the power and influence of the social actor, or the impact of just one member in this global community we share.

In an increasingly globalized and technological world, through mass communication and trade, we are now more than ever interdependent and therefore affected by each other. While this should seemingly inspire and render responsibility to the collective of human society and general world environment, the harsh inequalities resulting from a capitalist and neoliberal economic world order remain profound. Nonetheless it is through this notion of global citizenship that accountability to confront the consequences of consumerism and hierarchical society is encouraged.

As a member of the global community, it has become my passionate obligation to theoretically transcend time and space by actively learning world history from different perspectives, and continuously keeping in mind our unique role in shaping the world for future generations. Moreover, it is just as important to take action in any way possible to effect positive social change. As a young mother who is a full-time student and works two jobs, my mobility often feels restricted. Yet, I have found that there are many ways to be a global citizen that don't involve travelling.

I have chosen to pursue a career in college-level teaching and sociological research, focusing on migration, transnationalism, race, and ethnicity. While I have a long way to go to achieve those goals, I try to incorporate other ways to challenge the norms, preconceived notions and biases that might hinder my ability to move through life as a global citizen.

Through my position as a shelter worker at a housing agency that provides services to the homeless and mentally ill, I strive to connect with people who face various hardships. In addition, I serve as a teacher assistant for ESOL classes for adult-learners at the Central American Refugee Center. This experience has allowed me to be a part of a community of international members and assist students with developing fundamental language skills that could help make their lives a little bit easier. I also completed the Just. Serve. Social Justice Certificate Program offered at Stony Brook, participated in SUNY Advocacy Day in February 2016, and have volunteered consistently with Earth-Day initiatives. Before transferring to Stony Brook, when I attended community college, I began a club called Student-Parents for Tomorrow which aimed to connect student-parents on campus, provide a supportive group meeting and connect people to resources. Overall, I maintain that service is vital to becoming a global citizen.

Finally, my research endeavors as an aspiring global citizen have led me to be a research assistant in Dr. Sheri Levy's Prejudice and Intergroup Relations Lab, as well as conduct my own independent research on the influence of neoliberal policies on immigration bond hearings, and identify the social implications of such hearings on U.S. economic and race relations. These past and current efforts and my future goals are all ways I try to cultivate and spread the awareness of global citizenship. I have always believed in the saying "Be the change you to wish to see in the world," and in pursuing this ideal, it is necessary to consider a global perspective. Indeed, it is through the appreciation of diversity and notion of solidarity that humanity can go the farthest.