

Podcast #25: World Citizenship, Not Citizenships of the World:

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Dear President Obama:

I am taking the liberty of composing for you a preliminary draft of your first speech to the United Nations. After the usual preliminary remarks, you could begin...

America is back. It is back in the fold of the family of nations. It is ready to reach out it hand, to other nations, to find the common ground of a shared commitment to peace and cooperation.

Although the challenges are many, they share one common prerequisite. The prerequisite of a commitment by the peoples of the world to hold us, their national leaders, accountable for finding that common ground of a shared commitment to peace and cooperation.

Toward that end, I am proposing that the United Nations issue voluntary certificates of World Citizenship. This would allow individual applicants around the world to become dual citizens: Citizens of their country and Citizens of the World.

If there is to be competition between the nations of the world, let it be over which nation can have the largest percentage of its population become dual Citizens of the World. I will personally lead this registration drive in the United States.

Let us give the United Nations a citizenship base; let us give this base a louder voice than any single nation; let us collectively hear the human cry for peace, the human need for food, and the plea for safety. Let us start, collectively, to be directly responsive to World Citizenship, not just, individually, to the separate citizenships of the world

Sincerely yours,
Edward Renner

President Obama, himself, would be far more eloquent, and he has already made clear that the United States is again an international partner in the quest for world political order.

But, speeches last only as long as immediate memory. Symbolic politics, however, give longevity to our good words.

I have no illusion that a symbolic piece of paper with the words "CITIZEN OF THE WORLD" will have any immediate practical effect on the world political order.

But, I do know that symbolic politics is a starting place. A Certificate of "Citizen of the World" is an icon that transcends time, people and place.

- First, it is a simple definition of a concept
- Second, it is an expression of an ideal and a symbol of hope
- Third, it is a simple commitment that anyone can make, and
- Fourth, it is a rallying point for activism

Although a United Nations certificate of “World Citizenship” would have no legal authority, it is NOT a worthless piece of paper.

- It is the start of a world-wide citizens data base
- It is basis for T-shirts, posters, and stickers from the United Nations Store
- It is a reason for flying the US and a UN flag from your home
- It is the basis for dialogue and for political recruitment to a cause

Globalization, in all of its many forms – economic, political and social – has linked the fate of all of the peoples of the world. We will either acknowledge that we are pushing the limits of the carrying capacity of the planet and respond according, or we shall collapse the earth that sustains us. This we know to be true.

There is no other place to go. The first step is for each of us, individually, to proclaim ourselves to be Citizens of the World, to act responsibly on that citizenship no less than our national citizenship, and to hold others accountable to do the same.

What an exciting time to be alive.

Notes

1. Professor Renner may be reached at renner@cas.usf.edu. The podcast series is also available through the University of South Florida at:

https://my.usf.edu/webapps/lobj-podcast-bb_bb60/feed/IDH3400.004S09/podcast.xml

2. This essay is based on an audio and video podcast by Professor Renner entitled “**Forums for a Future**”. Text, audio and video copies of the material may be accessed from his website at www.kerenner.com. The direct link for subscribing to the video series from iTunes is:

<http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=289289719>