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How Natural are National and Transnational Citizenship? A Historical Perspective

DAVID THELEN*

The aspiration to be a “citizen of the world” reaches far back before Martha Nussbaum’s proclamation, before even Thomas Paine’s and William Lloyd Garrison’s, back at least to Socrates, if we can believe Plutarch. At a time when there is so much talk about globalization, Linda Bosniak has written an important article that reviews writings on citizenship to explore what “denationalized” citizenship looks like in the present and might look like in the future. My goal in this Comment is to evaluate Bosniak’s observations from a historian’s point of view.

This challenge is difficult because history is probably the most nation-centered discipline. The modern discipline of history took shape in the early nineteenth century around the promotion of the nation-State as the core identity that the new “scientific” historians wanted people to embrace. Nations, the first modern historians proclaimed, were the best vehicles through which people could fulfill their dreams and destinies. The sources left by nation-States generated the most important traces for these nation-minded historians to collect, preserve, and study because the past of the nation-State contained the lessons that most interested the new historians. As the nineteenth century wore on, romantic nationalism and emergence of national professional practices reinforced history’s embrace of the nation-State. By the 1890s, historians added a pedagogical and civic justification when they centered their claims for public support on the mission of teaching national citizenship. It was in the 1890s that “history definitely came into its own as the primary medium

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for civic education.”¹ Historians developed academic courses with national citizenship at the core of a chronological record of events, held together by the single theme that all the events happened in the same nation-State. While historians of the past generation have certainly widened the topics and voices they have looked for in the past—and indeed Karl Marx long ago took the “workers of the world” as his subject—historians have found it very hard to “rescue history from the nation,” or, as Prasenjit Duara has put the challenge: “even the best social historians do not find themselves challenging the assumption that the nation is the master subject of history or theorizing an alternative to the already-always nation space is testimony to the complicity of history and the nation state.”² It is hard, therefore, for historians to separate claims for the nation-State from themes like citizenship that historians have embedded in the nation-State. This Comment argues, however, that national citizenship has been a difficult project for most of the history of the United States, and that recent developments in where and how Americans have experienced citizenship have made it at least as “natural” to imagine transnational patterns of citizenship as it has been, in the past, to legitimate national patterns.

Bosniak begins to suggest how history might illuminate the prospect of a denationalized conception of citizenship. She asks us to look critically at the fundamental assumption that “thinking of citizenship in national terms is part of our political common sense.”³ She urges us to unpack “various understandings we maintain of the concept of citizenship,”⁴ including the diverse meanings and experiences it conveys in the present. By extending her perspective to include earlier contests and negotiations over citizenship, I widen our sense of the stakes in citizenship, and question the “common sense” faith that it is somehow natural to think of citizenship in national, instead of some other, terms. This Comment underscores the contested and unstable history of citizenship, at least in the United States, not only to counter the tendency to speak in terms of abstract models, but even more to suggest how some of the conflicts from the past help us to imagine the directions citizenship may take

1. ROBERT WENDELL FREDERICK & PAUL H. SHEATS, *CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION THROUGH THE SOCIAL STUDIES: A PHILOSOPHY AND A PROGRAM* 18 (1936).

2. PRASENJIT DUARA, *RESCUING HISTORY FROM THE NATION: QUESTIONING NARRATIVES OF MODERN CHINA* 28 (1995); see also Prasenjit Duara, *The Regime of Authenticity: Timelessness, Gender, and National History in Modern China*, 37 *HIST. AND THEORY* 287 (1998).

3. Linda Bosniak, *Citizenship Denationalized*, 7 *IND. J. GLOBAL LEGAL STUD.* 447, 449 (2000).

4. *Id.* at 452.

in the future—as well as the obstacles it may encounter. From this perspective, neither the “national” nor the “citizenship” half of “national citizenship” looks very natural.

The most common narrative for citizenship, at least in the United States, is the story of its contested extension to various new groups of people, which both led toward and resulted from the broadening of popular empowerment. It is the story of struggles by groups to acquire what are presented as the “blessings” of citizenship, struggles that have resulted in extending those blessings to poor white men, black men, immigrants, Native Americans, women, and eighteen-year-olds. But this history has been neither inevitable nor linear. Black men won the right to vote, then lost it, and then regained it in different places in struggles that stretched across a century. Chinese immigrants were specifically prohibited from entering the United States and from becoming U.S. citizens from 1882 until well into the twentieth century.⁵ Women acquired the right to vote in many school board elections two generations before they acquired the right to vote in most state and national elections.

Not only did citizenship mean different things to different groups at different times, but, it also meant different things at the same time in different places, as cities and states sought to change the composition of local electorates by depriving people who qualified for national citizenship of the right to vote in their communities. In Texas, the state poll tax of 1903 cut, in a single stroke, the proportion of poor citizens in the eligible electorate from seventy-six percent to thirty-two percent. As a result of such interventions, in the presidential election of 1940, eighty-three percent of adult citizens actually voted in West Virginia and Illinois while only fifteen percent voted in Mississippi and ten percent in South Carolina.⁶

The acquisition and exercise of national citizenship are anything but “common sense” to people at the times and places they occur. Not only have different people sought voting rights at different times, but even when they have been eligible to vote, voting has seemed more attractive to some voters than to others. In 1996, for example, as political issues and the aims of government became increasingly shaped by wealthy campaign contributors,

5. JOHN S. WISE, *A TREATISE ON AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP* 275 (Fred B. Rothman & Co. 1980) (1905); see also FREDERICK VAN DYNE, *CITIZENSHIP OF THE UNITED STATES* 57 (1904).

6. DUDLEY O. MCGOVNEY, *THE AMERICAN SUFFRAGE MEDLEY: THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL UNIFORM SUFFRAGE* 81 (1949); Harold L. Platt, *City-Building and Progressive Reform: The Modernization of an Urban Polity, Houston, 1892-1905*, in *THE AGE OF URBAN REFORM: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE PROGRESSIVE ERA* 41 (Michael H. Ebner & Eugene M. Tobin eds., 1977).

voters in families that earned over \$75,000 were three times more likely to vote for the president of the United States than those in families making less than \$25,000. Citizens with college degrees were twice as likely to vote as those who failed to complete high school.⁷ Victories in a particular group's claims for inclusion have come less because of the naturalness or justice of the group's cause, than because of the fact that those managing wars, both hot and cold, needed to be able to silence a group's cries of exclusion as those leaders have wanted to make democracy one of their war aims. To make democracy a meaningful war aim, the State extended citizenship to blacks in the Civil War (and later World War II and the Cold War), women in World War I, and 18-year-olds in the Vietnam War.

But there are other, darker narratives of struggles over citizenship that center not on acquisition and exercise of rights, but on the imposition and exercise of responsibilities—on obedience, not empowerment. “It may be an easy thing to make a Republic,” began Horace Mann in promoting the project of universal public education, “but it is a very laborious thing to make Republicans; and woe to the republic that rests upon no better foundations than ignorance, selfishness, and passion.”⁸ From the start, promoters of republican government feared how people would exercise their rights of citizenship. The history of citizenship is the history of fears, by those with political or cultural power, of the irrationality, demagoguery, escapism, radicalism, irresponsibility, envy, and selfishness that their inferiors might exercise. They have often brought these fears to the surface when they saw the United States struggling with governments that seemed better able to control and manage their citizens, such as monarchies in the eighteenth century or communism and fascism in the twentieth century. This narrative forms a major, perhaps *the* major, theme in much of the writing about “citizenship” and “civics.” The sheer volume of committees, plans, and reports on this theme points to how unstable, insecure, and wide-ranging the hopes are for good citizenship and fears of bad citizenship, or the fears of containing the excesses of democracy once they are unleashed. In these endless writings and preachings, the issue is not whether people will become citizens, but whether they will be “good” or “bad” citizens as defined by those in power.

From this perspective, the story of citizenship is not the story of the desirability or naturalness of citizenship, but of herculean struggles—indeed at

7. CHI. TRI., Jan. 30, 2000, at 1, 4.

8. Horace Mann, *Twelfth Annual Report, in THE REPUBLIC AND THE SCHOOL: HORACE MANN ON THE EDUCATION OF FREE MEN* 92 (Lawrence A. Cremin ed., 1957).

times obsessions—to channel how citizens exercise their rights. It is a narrative in which people have resisted, not embraced, “citizenship” which centralizers and homogenizers have tried to impose over the traditional ways that people have tried to control their lives. It is a struggle against the whole thrust of national citizenship.

Fearing how citizens would use their rights, U.S. leaders mobilized massive agencies to persuade these same citizens to channel citizenship within acceptable limits. From the adoption of universal suffrage for white men in the first third of the nineteenth century and the accompanying rise of “Jacksonian Democracy,” elites from Horace Mann onward promoted public schools as crucial agencies for teaching citizens to channel their aspirations and behavior within a range of constraints that school officials by the twentieth century, would conflate into “good citizenship.” From his positions as superintendent of the St. Louis schools⁹ and first U.S. Commissioner of Education,¹⁰ William Torrey Harris articulated the public schools’ mission to create, not empowered individuals, but obedient ones. With the rise of new factories, themselves breeding grounds of popular resistance, Harris blended the missions of teaching the public obedience to political authorities, and teaching them obedience to factory owners. The issue in the exercise of rights, he explained, was discipline (or in Victorian terms, self-control) not self-fulfillment or empowerment. Asserted Harris:

The discipline of our Public Schools, wherein punctuality and regularity are enforced and the pupils are continually taught to suppress mere self-will and inclination, is the best school of morality. . . . [T]he reason why more stress is placed upon discipline than upon instruction here in America is plain. In our society and government we aim to place as few safeguards as possible around the individual from without, and therefore our system of education must make the character strong and self-determined from within.¹¹

Harris also maintained: “The utmost energy of the teacher is expended in securing for all his pupils that formation of correct habits. Industry, punctuality,

9. From 1868-1880. DAVID THELEN, *PATHS OF RESISTANCE: TRADITION AND DIGNITY IN INDUSTRIALIZING MISSOURI* 109 (1986).

10. From 1889-1907. *Id.*

11. *Id.* (internal citation omitted).

regularity, respect for the rights of others, and obedience to established authority—these are the cardinal virtues of the schoolroom and the foundation of [its] orders.”¹² By the 1890s, public school educators created the “good citizenship” movement which turned schools into cities, home rooms into wards, pupils into voters, and student councils into city councils, as pupils were taught to exercise citizenship toward directions and along channels approved by school administrators. For example, students might be allowed to choose the color of crepe paper with which to decorate school dances. No sooner did schools seem to have finally taught students to internalize one form of regularity (e.g., punctuality or English language instruction), than school officials would find some new arena in which pupils would reveal the dangers of self-government. As George Coe explained: “Popular government—popular education; these two poles are ever discernible in American educational thought. Because the people are the ultimate source of authority, schooling is made universal and compulsory. It is expected to fit them to perform the duty of governing, particularly of voting.”¹³

The larger challenge of citizenship was to teach future citizens not to make laws but to obey the laws made by others. Worrying about what struck him as an appalling spread of mob violence in the 1830s, Abraham Lincoln gave classic expression to this vision of citizenship:

Let reverence of the law be breathed by every American mother to the lisping babe that prattles on her lap. Let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges; let it be written in primers, spelling books, and in almanacs; let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls and enforced in courts of justice. And in short let it become the political religion of the nation.¹⁴

A hundred years later, school officials still preached Lincoln’s “political religion” as they tried to devise ways of turning schools into alternatives to jails, to get future citizens to appreciate the importance of obeying the law. In 1926, H. H. Cherry wrote:

12. *Id.* at 109.

13. GEORGE A. COE, EDUCATING FOR CITIZENSHIP: THE SOVEREIGN STATE AS RULER AND AS TEACHER 1, 3 (1932).

14. Abraham Lincoln, *The Perpetuation of our Political Institutions: Address Before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois (1837)*, in 3 LIFE AND WORKS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN, at 14, 20 (Marion Mills Miller ed., 1907).

The country is full of undesirable citizens who seem to think they are Americans, but who are frequently in word and conduct lawbreakers that trample law under their feet until they reach the door of the criminal's cell and then mechanically obey the law in order to stay out of the penitentiary. Not more laws, but more respect for authorized law, and more positive and efficient support in the enforcement of laws already made, is our greatest need. This must be accomplished largely through education.¹⁵

Thus, uncontrolled passion and lawbreaking were evils that many school officials and other elites placed at the center of their narratives about the history of citizenship as they redefined self-government as self-control.

Not only was the narrative of national citizenship a record of struggle between responsibility and obedience, on the one hand, and rights and empowerment, on the other hand, but many conflicts erupted over whether the national government was a legitimate (or natural) arena for Americans to assign their primary (or even any) allegiance; whether it was the most congenial or effective political space in which to try to control their lives. Indeed, a major theme in any narrative of national citizenship would be the seemingly endless resistance to national authority. It is the story of how people have tried to preserve other identities as places for controlling their lives, in the face of attempts by the national government to impose loyalty and obedience. It has been a struggle from the start.

As the price for supporting any kind of national government, anti-Federalists secured ten amendments to the new Constitution that restrained national authority and gave power to individuals and states. Throughout the years, Americans have also vigorously protested the financial burdens of citizenship: from the rebels who refused to pay a whisky tax, imposed by the new national government in the 1790s (a rebellion President George Washington led troops to suppress); to Henry David Thoreau's influential statement for why he would rather go to jail than pay a tax to support slavery and the Mexican War; to the protests against Federal tax burdens and the Internal Revenue Service in the 1990s. Nullification and secession movements seeking to overturn national authority spread from New England in 1815 to the

15. H.H. CHERRY, *EDUCATION: THE BASIS OF DEMOCRACY* 92 (1926).

Coastal South in 1833, climaxing in civil war. In addition, Unionists only created national citizenship in the Fourteenth Amendment after Southern whites enacted “black codes” that sought to reestablish slavery within months after the Union Army had compelled them to abolish it. Not surprisingly, the new Reconstruction governments imposed a public school system with teachings of obedience and costs many southern whites opposed. In the draft riots of the 1860s, 1910s, and 1960s, many Americans tried to evade conscription when the Federal government tried to draft them for military service. Furthermore, the United States has among the lowest voting rates; half of all eligible voters have not even found rights of citizenship “natural” enough to exercise them. The story of national citizenship is the story of attempts by Americans to control their lives at local and state levels and to hold off the national government.

Promoters of national authority not only had to contend with citizens who believed that some other geographic level of sovereignty was more appropriate than the national level, but also with people who felt stronger cultural, linguistic, or emotional connections to some place other than the United States. The obsession with “Americanizing” the immigrant was the national *leitmotiv* that accompanied massive immigration to the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As this immigration became one of the defining features of national identity, fears about how to make or become “Americans” became an obsession that often overlapped with other projects to use the making of citizenship part of the American obsession with allegiance and loyalty. The darkest side of this obsession began with the Chinese exclusion law in 1882 and extended through the exclusion laws of the 1920s, laws that shaped immigration policy for a half-century. This obsession also continues in recent programs to exclude immigrants from public services. Immigrants left their homelands with memories of local communities, but in the United States, in part in reaction to the Americanizers, they discovered “African,” “German,” or “Italian” (i.e., national) allegiances.

The United States was not unique in this obsession. Struggles worldwide between centralized and decentralized centers and visions of power have led countries to adopt some version of federalism as a workable compromise to divide powers so residents of these countries could choose among local, provincial, and national levels of sovereignty, indeed, transnational or international levels for controlling their political lives. This embrace of federalism—in nations such as Canada, Mexico, the United States, Germany,

Nigeria, Switzerland, and even Britain—reflected widespread fears of entrusting sovereignty (and the exercise of citizenship) exclusively in nation-States.

A central conflict of Mexican history has been the challenge of persuading or compelling people in hundreds of intensely local societies (who speak over ninety languages) each with a tradition of controlling their lives in local communities, to develop allegiance to and speak the official language of a single nation-State.¹⁶ The struggle for the nation in Mexico is the story of a struggle, largely a record of failure, by nationalizers to impose an “imaginary Mexico” (which included the imposition of the Spanish language) over scattered indigenous communities with traditions of settled life reaching back a millennium.¹⁷ The struggle by Mexican nationalists to impose a nation-State over disparate local communities received its classic expression in Italian nationalist Massimo D’Azeglio’s famous, if apocryphal, proclamation at the end of Italy’s unification wars: “Italy has been made; now we must make Italians.”¹⁸ In Italy and Mexico, as in the United States, movements by nation-minded elites in the middle of the nineteenth century to impose national citizenship and obedience over local movements prompted civil warfare and were finally settled by armies loyal to the nation-State. In these struggles, history was assigned the task of talking about the inevitability and desirability of national triumphs—of subordinating other identities to that of the nation. In many nations, including the United States, nation-States were most successful in directing citizens’ energies toward the national project in the middle third of the twentieth century. Since then, in the generation after the 1960s, for example, nation-States were challenged by those who would create new nation-States in Kosovo, Serbia, Chiapas, Quebec, Palestine, Scotland, Lombardy, East Timor, and Catalonia, or those who would redefine nationality to include “Queer Nation,” “black nationalism,” or “Nation of Islam.” Part of the new literature begins with the assumption that nation-States were “imagined” and constructed, not inevitable or desirable, that the nineteenth-century nationalist dream that people would find fulfillment of their destinies in nation-States was not natural. Inhabitants neither wanted nor imagined the nationalists-invented communities.

16. GUILLERMO BONFIL BATALLA, *MEXICO PROFUNDO: RECLAIMING A CIVILIZATION* (Philip A. Dennis trans., 1996).

17. *Id.*; David Thelen, *Mexico, the Puzzle: A Conversation about Civil Society and the Nation with Ilan Semo*, 86 *J. AM. HIST.* 689-97 (1999).

18. Recent scholars have disputed whether D’Azeglio ever made exactly this comment that for many years scholars quoted to illustrate the difficulty of creating national loyalties. See DONNA GABACCIA, *ITALY’S MANY DIASPORAS* 9 (2000).

In imagining how people will conceive citizenship in the future, we can look at changes in the places where they have chosen to talk and listen to each other and the means they have used to try to shape politics. The right to vote has been the classic means by which “Americans” act as citizens, but the proportion of eligible voters that exercises that right has fallen from a high of around seventy-five to seventy-nine percent in the 1880s and 1890s, to around fifty percent in the 1990s.¹⁹ While voting has become a less attractive way for citizens to experience representative government, Americans over the twentieth century have developed direct communication with legislators—through letters and phone calls—into a major new means for connecting themselves to the policy-making arena. As government expanded into more areas of people’s lives and became more visible through radio and television, particularly live coverage of congressional hearings that began in 1951, the number of communications to Congress rose from six to nine million in the first Franklin Roosevelt Congress to about ninety-two and one-half million in the first Reagan Congress. The number of communications to Congress also rose from five percent of all Americans in 1934 to twenty-five percent in 1981. Between 1964 and 1976, a span for which there is comparable survey data, the proportion of Americans who reported that they had written letters to public officials rose from seventeen percent to twenty-eight percent while the proportion of eligible voters to cast ballots fell from sixty-three percent to fifty-six percent. The decline in voting parallels, and reflects a decline in, the proportion of people who place their faith in political parties to represent them in politics. In the nineteenth century, mass-based political parties grounded partisan division in the ethnic and religious loyalties of U.S. citizens who were mobilized by ethnic, religious, and partisan leaders. With the widespread decline of faith—not only in political parties and government, but in institutions more generally—people have retreated into their intimate face-to-face worlds as the places where they interpret and participate in politics. Now people are more likely to compose and convey their political beliefs to a congressperson after watching a televised hearing than to convey their political participation by marching with other Irish Catholics or evangelical Protestants to the polls to express their inherited ethnic, religious, and partisan allegiances.

19. Everett Carl Ladd, *Participation in American Elections*, in *VOTING AND THE SPIRIT OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY: ESSAYS ON THE HISTORY OF VOTING AND VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA* 109, 110-13 (Donald W. Rogers ed., 1990).

Changes in the places where Americans seek and experience citizenship parallel changes in the identities that they bring to citizenship. Between 1917 and 1987, Americans identified themselves very differently, in the voices they presented in letters to congresspeople, the voices in which they wanted congresspeople to recognize them as citizens. Over those seventy years, the proportion of letter-writers using the smallest of all voices, that of the individual, more than doubled from fourteen and three-fifths percent to thirty-five and one-fifth percent. The proportion of individuals using the intimate voice of family and friends stayed about the same, at one-third of all letter-writers. But by far the largest change between 1917 and 1987 was the striking decline in the number of people who projected their political conclusions to congresspeople out of the cultures of community, occupation, ethnicity, partisanship, gender, and religion in which nineteenth-century Americans had forged their political identities. By 1987, the proportion of writers who associated their conclusions with their occupations had fallen by two-thirds, with the communities and religions by four-fifths, and with their ethnic backgrounds by more than five-sixths.²⁰

Individual U.S. citizens reported that they increasingly felt multiple identities as the sites where people experienced citizenship shrank from mass parties, in which foot soldiers were mobilized into huge armies, to conversations with family and friends; from choosing between two candidates or parties, to the conveyance of personal experiences, needs, and opinions. People then had to choose and combine these identities in different ways for different circumstances in a development, which among other things, reflected the growing tendency of people, problems, cultures, and products to cross national lines and decenter nations. Indeed, Americans sounded less like interchangeable pieces of larger groups and more as though they had experienced individuality as something larger than groups or cultures. A female individual, for example, could draw on her experiences as a woman, lawyer, Democrat, Milwaukeean, lesbian, Italian-American, or college graduate to shape her political views. To describe any one of these identities alone is to fall short of describing the multifaceted individual as a whole person with multiple, overlapping, and conflicting identities. Today, as some individuals and group leaders draw circles around poles of identity and try to keep members from straying and strangers from entering, many people

20. On the rise of letter writing as a pattern of citizenship and the shrinking of voices in which Americans conveyed their identities, see DAVID THELEN, *BECOMING CITIZENS IN THE AGE OF TELEVISION* 8-14 (1996).

describe themselves as “betwixt and between” poles—to use George Sanchez’s description of Mexican-American life—as border-crossers who construct their lives between Mexican and American, Republican and Democrat, gay and straight.²¹

As Americans come to express their citizenship in more intimate voices and places, we can expect them to draw ever more on a rich tradition of people who have sought to maintain multiple identities in order to increase the range within which they can experience life and act as citizens. In this vein, W. E. B. DuBois has described the “double consciousness” of blacks in which they could draw on both African and American experiences and traditions if only Americans did not draw a color line that sought to keep the two cultures apart.²² As Anglophiles, with the outbreak of war in Europe, sought to compel immigrants to abandon the cultures they brought to the United States, Randolph Bourne boldly proclaimed a vision of “Trans-National America” by asserting:

America is coming to be, not a nationality but a trans-nationality, a weaving back and forth, with other lands, of many threads of all sizes and colors. Any movement which attempts to thwart this weaving, to dye the fabric any one color, or disentangle the threads of the strands, is false to this cosmopolitan vision.²³

In her brilliant *Borderlands: La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldua describes how “I, a mestiza, continually walk out of one culture and into another, because I am in all cultures at the same time.”²⁴ “Like others having or living in more than one culture, we get multiple, often opposing messages,”²⁵ she wrote, adding that her lesbian identity also permitted her to choose male and female experiences. “I am an act of kneading, of uniting and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new

21. GEORGE SANCHEZ, *BECOMING MEXICAN AMERICAN: ETHNICITY, CULTURE, AND IDENTITY IN CHICANO LOS ANGELES, 1900-1945* (1993). For a recent review of the literature on making homosexual identities see Steven Maynard, “*Respect Your Elders, Know Your Past*”: *History and the Queer Theorists*, 75 *RADICAL HIST. REV.* 56-78 (1999).

22. W. E. B. DUBOIS, *THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK: ESSAYS AND SKETCHES* 3-5, 13 (Grenwich ed., 1961) (1903).

23. RANDOLPH S. BOURNE, *WAR AND THE INTELLECTUALS; ESSAYS, 1915-1919*, 121 (Carl Resek ed., 1964).

24. GLORIA ANZALDUA, *BORDERLANDS: LA FRONTERA*, ch. 7 (1987).

25. *Id.*

meanings. A tolerance of contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity.”²⁶ Americans are abandoning single group identities, as evidenced by the dramatic increase in interracial marriages, the most vivid example of an intimate relationship.²⁷

The increasingly multiple, diverse, and intimate arenas within which citizens construct hybrid and creole identities, as they imagine how to act as citizens, corresponds and contributes to the many overlapping developments that have decentered whatever allegiances the nation-State has been able to command (though this is not the place to evaluate the vast and complex literature that has emerged over the past generation to trace how nation-States have come to look more fragile and constructed now than they did a generation ago). However, the nation-State’s capacity to govern was battered from the Left in the 1960s and the Right in the 1990s, in slogans like “self-determination” (that evoke people on the march) and those like “globalization” (that seem beyond human reach).

“Globalization” seems to be coming from above in the spread across national borders that used to contain them of institutions such as multinational corporations, as those corporations seem increasingly to exercise some of the traditional State forms of sovereignty.²⁸ Globalization also seems to be coming from below, in new patterns that immigrants have made for themselves, as they no longer see themselves as either Americans-in-the-making or temporary sojourners who will return to their homelands, but as “immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-State.”²⁹ As migrants built institutions and cultures through which they expressed citizenship in ways that drew pieces from, defied, and ignored, more than one nation-State or national culture, they “destabilize[d] fixed and unitary notions of community, culture, nationality, and, indeed, of the territorial ‘nation’ itself,” said David Gutierrez, who has written about the rise of liminal identities such as Chicano, Latino, and Hispanic—to say nothing of “people of

26. *Id.*

27. Gary Nash read the choice of multiple identities backward as a theme of American history he called “The Hidden History of Mestizo America” in Gary Nash, *The Hidden History of Mestizo America*, 82 J. AM. HIST. 941 (1995), ANZALUDA, *supra* note 24; Randolph S. Bourne, *Trans-National America*, in WAR AND THE INTELLECTUALS: ESSAYS BY RANDOLPH S. BOURNE, 1915-1919, 101 (Carl Resek ed., 1964); DUBOIS, *supra* note 22, at 16-17, 23.

28. Masao Miyoshi, *A Borderless World? From Colonialism to Transnationalism and the Decline of the Nation-State*, 19 CRITICAL INQUIRY 726 (1993).

29. Nina Glick Schiller et al., *From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration*, 68 ANTHROPOLOGICAL Q. 48 (1995).

color.”³⁰ As people, institutions, and popular cultures have crossed national borders, they have carried problems ranging from sexism and AIDS to environmental pollution with them.³¹

As individuals increasingly experience citizenship as a choice among multiple histories and identities, we should not be surprised that individuals, political activists, and national officials alike are all exploring different transnational arenas in which people may act as citizens. In defending her choice of the term “transnational” to define emerging patterns of citizenship, Aiwah Ong explains:

Trans denotes both moving through space or across lines, as well as changing the nature of something. Besides suggesting new relations between nation-states and capital, transnationality also alludes to the *trans*versal, the *trans*actional, the *trans*lational, and the *trans*gressive aspects of contemporary behavior and imagination that are incited, enabled, and regulated by the changing logics of states and capitalism.³²

The development of transnational patterns of citizenship is clearly proceeding more rapidly at the grass-roots level than it is among many officials and scholars, whose faith that national citizenship is “natural,” has left it hard for them to see and map these developments. In the 1950s, Mexican officials devoted their energies to meetings in Brazil, Argentina, and other South American countries as they tried to construct Mexico as a Latin American nation, but individual Mexicans constructed their lives in the United States and forced Mexican officials to shift directions to construct Mexico as a North American nation.³³ In an era when such national patterns of citizenship (such

30. David G. Gutierrez, *Migration, Emergent Ethnicity, and the “Third Space”: The Shifting Politics of Nationalism in Greater Mexico*, 86 J. AM. HIST. 483 (1999).

31. I have elaborated ideas contained in this paragraph in the following two works: David Thelen, *Rethinking History and the Nation State: Mexico and the United States as a Case Study*, 86 J. AM. HIST. 439 (1999); David Thelen, *The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History*, 86 J. AM. HIST. 965 (1999). See also Richard Falk, *The Making of Global Citizenship*, in GLOBAL VISIONS: BEYOND THE NEW WORLD ORDER 39 (Jeremy Brecher et al. eds., 1993).

32. AIWA ONG, FLEXIBLE CITIZENSHIP: THE CULTURAL LOGICS OF TRANSNATIONALITY 4 (1999).

33. David Thelen, *Mexico, the Latin North American Nation: A Conversation with Carlos Rico Ferrat*, 86 J. AM. HIST. 467 (1999).

as writing congresspeople) have increasingly centered around intimate relationships, it is not surprising that many citizens build these new non-governmental organizations (NGOs) through relationships with other activists and colleagues that cross national borders. Reflecting this growing transnational activity, the number of NGOs dedicated to human rights has risen from thirty-three in 1953, to seventy-nine by 1983, and 168 in 1993; to women's rights, from ten in 1953, to twenty-five in 1983, and sixty-one in 1993; and to environmental protection, from two in 1953, to twenty-six in 1983, and ninety in 1993. In more than forty U.S. communities in the 1980s, activists formed close connections with like-minded groups of (primarily) Sandinistas in sister Nicaraguan cities. Those connections carried everything from love, to material aid and political empowerment. Personal relations among people in sister communities—who knew each other as members of two extended families, grieved over deaths and natural disasters, rejoiced in births and marriages, exchanged photographs and gifts, and stayed in each others' homes—prefigured a future citizenship. In this emerging citizenship, individuals could control their lives across national borders and create far-reaching political changes even when their governments were at war. For example, when the U.S. government was using legal and illegal means to destroy the Sandinista movement and government in Nicaragua, activists made a common cause across national lines to challenge their States.³⁴

As people increasingly lived their lives in circuits that looped between two or more countries, they demanded the right to take part as citizens in both countries—to be able to draw on the pasts of both countries to shape their futures. Officials in both countries likewise needed them. One result was the emergence of a human rights movement which envisioned rights not as things given by nation-States, but as things people carried with them by virtue of their simple humanity; as rights that should accompany them as they crossed national borders.³⁵ As Mexico and the United States collaborated to maintain surveillance over their citizens, as Mexican politicians increasingly campaigned in the United States for state and local office in Mexico, and as champions of democracy in Mexico increasingly depended on American activists to monitor their State, movements for democracy, human rights, and citizenship burst

34. MARGARET KECK & KATHRYN SIKKINK, *ACTIVISTS BEYOND BORDERS: ADVOCACY NETWORKS IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS* 4, 7, 11 (1998); LIZ CHILSEN & SHELDON RAMPTON, *FRIENDS IN DEED: THE STORY OF US-NICARAGUAN SISTER CITIES* (1988).

35. YASEMIN NUHOGLU SOYSAL, *LIMITS OF CITIZENSHIP: MIGRANTS AND POSTNATIONAL MEMBERSHIP IN EUROPE* (1994).

across national borders and became transnational struggles. By the late 1990s, Mexico had formally abandoned its traditional position that emigrants lost their Mexican citizenship when they left their homeland and began to take steps toward embracing formal dual citizenship in which migrants could take part in both Mexican and American elections. Mexico thereby fulfilled the dream of many borderlands champions and embraced the idea that multiple citizenships offered a wider range of citizen life than single citizenship did.³⁶

Once transnational movements became obvious in the present, scholars began to discover that earlier movements for abolition of slavery, temperance, women's and workers' rights, Socialism, peace, revolution, and democracy, had also been transnational (though invisible) to nation-minded scholars and politicians. These dramatic changes on the ground have also brought many national histories into dialogue with the result of challenging the older confidence that each nation experienced the past differently. As previously-isolated histories collide, we are discovering and imagining pasts that emphasize common patterns—not different ones—between nations, common problems addressed, and common issues and solutions to learn from, and thus more alternatives to explore.³⁷ We will discover that the history of the Estados Unidos Mexicanos, like that of the United States of America, includes stories of a nation's birth in revolution against a European empire that had "settled" its territory as colonial outposts to advance commercial and religious agendas; of a moving frontier engagement with unfamiliar forms of nature, other empires, and Indian tribes; of massive nineteenth-century constitutional debates and ultimately civil warfare over whether power should be in local or national hands; of victory by forces of nationalism; of turn-of-the-century revolts to redistribute power from the privileged to the people; of a popular president in the 1930s who established a security net; of movements for democratization and empowerment that flowered in the 1960s; of a New Right movement and its president in the 1980s that deregulated the economy and promoted free trade; and finally, in the 1990s, of a far-reaching debate about national identity, about whether the nation's construction of itself as a melting pot continues to describe the national culture of its people. When history explores common

36. See MICHAEL JONES-CORREA, *BETWEEN TWO NATIONS: THE POLITICAL PREDICAMENT OF LATINOS IN NEW YORK CITY* (1998); SOYSAL, *supra* note 35; *LATINO CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP: CLAIMING IDENTITY, SPACE, AND RIGHTS* (William V. Flores & Rina Benmayor eds., 1997); ARISTIDE R. ZOLBERG ET AL., *ESCAPE FROM VIOLENCE: CONFLICT AND THE REFUGEE CRISIS IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD* (1989); Thelen, *supra* note 34.

37. See Michael Geyer & Charles Bright, *World History in a Global Age*, 100 *AM. HIST. REV.* 1034 (1995).

patterns in different countries it will be a discipline better able to address Bosniak's article.

In order to imagine future directions for citizenship, we should look beyond the formal or legal right to citizenship to the wide fields of struggle that have marked its history. "Citizen of the world" will connote as many contradictory and contested meanings as "citizen of the United States." There was nothing natural about embedding civic aspiration in national citizenship and there will be nothing natural in world citizenship. Some people will favor and experience it as a means for some kind of empowerment, while others will resent giving up traditional controls to a larger and more remote public identity. In any case, the extension will be accompanied by the same conflict, multiplicity, ambivalence, and struggle that accompanied the history of national citizenship. At this moment of declining trust in national institutions we can expect Americans, as in the past, to develop and strengthen multiple vehicles and arenas on several geographic levels for acting as citizens.

