

Global Intercultural Citizenship for Dignity: Philo-politico-Educational Perspectives

by David Balosa

Delaware States University

Department of English and Foreign Languages

dbalosa@desu.edu

The solution to certain social problems required moral transformation.

(Michael J. Sandel, 2009: 245)

Abstract

This paper is a contribution to global intercultural citizenship for dignity. It argues that in this age of interconnected cultures due to human super mobility, technology, globalized economy and global politics, it is important that human society share global intercultural citizenship competence if dignity for all is to become one of the means to overcome human humiliation, domination, and discrimination. This paper use literature review as its research method - Frantz Fanon's *The wretched of the Earth*, Gomes de Matos' *Dignity: A multidimensional view*, and Kathryn Sorrell's *Intercultural communication: Globalization and social justice*. As for the framework, this paper implements a Philo-politico-educational approach to global intercultural citizenship for dignity. By philo-politico-educational approach I mean a multidisciplinary approach that shows integrative intention of philosophical, political, and educational perspectives to advocate for individuals' education that enable them create and develop global intercultural citizenship competence, thus qualifying them to become human dignity agents.

Introduction

I use the term intercultural instead of multicultural, transcultural or crosscultural because it "has particularly widespread success and is often viewed as a field of study or a management tactic" (Lavanchy et al. (2011: 1). I also find it appropriate to support an interdisciplinary approach, a philo-politico-educational framework that I intend to use in this paper. In this regard, Lavanchy et al. (2011) argue that intercultural is "strengthened by its political discursive field, and anchored in the everyday vocabulary of several disciplines and research areas such as education, communication, psychology, linguistics, philosophy, sociology, etc., as well as in professional practice such as education, health, social work, communication, business, marketing, managements, etc." (p. 1).

New Humanism Philosophy and global intercultural citizenship for dignity

In his book *Black skin, white masks*, Frantz Fanon wrote: "Striving for a New Humanism. Understanding humankind - We believe that an individual must endeavor to assume the universalism inherent in the human condition. Society, unlike biochemical processes, does not escape human influence. Man is what brings society into being" (Fanon, 2008: XI, XIV-XV). Today, in the age of globalization, we can interpret

Fanon's analysis of human condition and his recommendation quoted above in terms of global intercultural citizenship for human dignity. The fact of this comparison is that today's world events are no longer issues related to one single country. We are all together in economic crisis, in terrorism attacks, in global diseases, and entertainments and tourism (Asante et al., 2008; Rodriguez & Chawla, 2010; Sadri & Flammia, 2011, D'Anieri, 2012,). Although there are still a portion of individuals who ignore this togetherness and who are determined to pursue the tendency of humiliation, domination, and discrimination of others, the majority of humankind has realized that there is no price for human dignity. They have, with limited resources such as technology, proved to the "assoifés du pouvoir" (thirsty of power) that acts of humankind humiliation may no longer occur without anyone to stand for the victims. Fanon is right, humankind today are striving for "a new humanism" and "understanding" in order to promote the universalism inherent in their human condition.

In his book *The wretched of the earth*, Frantz Fanon describes the humiliation of mankind under colonization rule and education. He argues:

In capitalist societies, education, whether secular or religious, the teaching of moral reflexes handed down from father to son, the exemplary integrity of workers decorated after fifty years of loyal and faithful service, the fostering of love for harmony and wisdom, those aesthetic forms of respect for the status quo, instill in the exploited a mood of submission and inhibition which considerably eases the task of the agents of law and order. In capitalist countries a multitude of sermonizers, counselors, and "confusion-mongers" intervene between the exploited and the authorities to ensure the colonized are kept under close scrutiny, and contained by rifle butts and napalm. We have seen how the government's agent uses a language of pure violence. The agent does not alleviate oppression or mark domination.

(Fanon, 2004: 4).

It goes without saying that the capitalist societies during Fanon's observation and in our time continue to perpetuate the same kind of humiliation toward humankind may be this time they are putting old wine in new bottle. Often time we hear oppressed pacific march in so called democratic countries. We hear educational policies preventing schools or programs in school from teaching certain languages or certain varieties of languages (Huebner & David, 1999)

. We observe policy makers defend the interests of business rather than defending the interests of people who voted them as community or constituency representatives. Yes, indeed. As in Fanon's days, we still have a portion of individuals willing to pursue domination, exploitation, and humiliation of others.

Frantz Fanon points out a key point of indigenous dignity. He argues that "For a colonized people, the most essential value, because it is the most meaningful, is first and foremost the land: the land, which must provide bread and, naturally, dignity." He adds "But this dignity has nothing to do with 'human' dignity. The colonized subject has never heard of such an ideal. All he has ever seen on his land is that he can be arrested, beaten, and starved with impunity; and no sermonizer on morals, no priest has ever stepped in to bear the blows in his place or share his bread" (p. 11). In light of this argument, it makes sense to state that global world educational system has failed to educate people for dignity. Education has focused on how much money one can make after a given educational training rather than what one can do to promote "a politics of common good" (Sandel, 2009: 244, 261) and encourage global intercultural citizenship.

Politics of common good for dignity

In his book *Justice: What's the right thing to do?*, Michael J. Sandel argues that “if a just society involves reasoning together about the good life, it remains to ask what kind of political discourse would point us in this direction.” He adds that “Today most of our political arguments revolve around welfare and freedom – increasing economic output and respecting people’s rights.” Then he continues that “for many people, talk of virtue in politics brings to mind religious conservatives telling people how to live. But this is not the only way that conceptions of virtue and the common good can inform politics.” He concludes that “the challenge is to imagine a politics that takes moral and spiritual questions seriously, but brings them to bear on broad economic and civic concerns, not only on sex and abortion.”

Sandel’s comment reveals the challenges of a crosspolitically, crosseducationally, and interculturally diverse life in today’s world. So to educate individuals to promote politics of common good for dignity involves teaching them to love their neighbor as they love themselves. Teaching them mutual respect and generosity. Teaching them to be unifier and taking the lead when it comes to issue of helping those in disaster zone and when it comes to protecting the environment (Lindner, 2012). If one corner of the globe is infected, the entire planet will end up by being infected and no one is immune against what the wind and the earthquake can bring even to our fortified cities. Here again we can agree on the crucial importance of global intercultural citizenship for dignity as means of teaching “world view” that promotes positive attitude toward diversity and living globally (Rodriguez & Chawala, 2010, Lindner, 2012).

Defining Dignity Scientifically and Didactically

According to Professor Francisco Cordoso Gomes De Matos, peace linguist and professor at The Federal University of Pernambuco, Recife Brasil, “Although dignity may be too complex scientifically to define, educationally it is a life-improving force humanizingly mankind life by representing it as a process integrating character + conduct+ communication.” He adds that “dignity has to do with character elevation” and that “it also refers to one’s wisdom in conversation.” He continues that “dignity has to do with conduct integrity; it also refers to an everyday relational quality.” Furthermore argues the professor, “dignity has to do with personal worthiness; it also refers to one’s moral thoroughness.” This last section touched me the most; “dignity has to do with the deepest foundation of human rights; it also refers to being able to live inspired by compassionate lights” (Gomes De Matos, 2013: 22-23). Professor Gomes De Matos demonstrates that didactically we can define dignity. The question we may ask ourselves is for what audience? The response is simple: The global intercultural citizen agents of human dignity. It is through this education that these individuals will become competent global dignifiers.

What role may global intercultural citizens for dignity play in today’s world?

I will adopt Evelyn Lindner’s dignism perspective here. After the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt, Professor Lindner makes an appealing role for all those concerned for common good of our global family and global world. She argues:

We need a dignity revolution, and not just in Tunisia or Egypt. We need a global dignity revolution, a world dignity movement, a movement that creates inclusion, both locally and globally. We need a dignity movement that forges global public policies and institutions that help dignity to manifest

in our realities. We need to transcend policies and institutions that cause the sellout of dignity, that exclude people from access to dignified lives, both socially and economically, and that make environmental damage invisible by treating it as mere 'externality' (Lindner, 2012: XV - XVI).

When I was reading this section, I saw myself seating in lecture room that I would call a global intercultural citizenship for dignity seminar. I said to myself -What an inspirational message! I said- that is what a global intercultural citizen must be educated about and advocate for. That the role he or she must play in our global world. Professor Lindner's message reasoned in my mind in the same way that the interpellation that Professor Gomes de Matos makes about the most dignifying moment in one's life (Gomes de Matos, 2013). I cannot pass these interpellations since they also answer the question related to the role that global intercultural citizens for dignity may play. Professor Gomes de Matos' interpellation reads:

The most dignifying moment in your life
Was it a moment of character education?
Was it a moment of spiritual elevation?
Was it a moment of human right(s) implementation?
Was it a moment of constructive cooperation?
Was it a moment of self-humbling humiliation?
Was it a moment of dignifying communication?
Was it a moment of life affirmation?
Was it a moment of peace?
In your life, may dignity never cease (P. 24).

I add may global intercultural citizens play the role of missionizing this interpellation! Indeed, no one can pretend to be a global intercultural citizen for dignity and at the same time fail to convey the meaning of this interpellation in is everyday life.

Global Intercultural Citizenship for Dignity: How to proceed?

In the opening chapter of her book *intercultural communication: Globalization and social justice*, Kathryn Sorrells writes: " We, the people of the world –nearly 7 billion of us from different cultures –find our lives, our livelihoods, and our lifestyles increasingly interconnected and interdependent due to the forces globalization. She adds that "Changes in economic and political policies, governance, and institutions since the early 1990s have combined with advances in communication and transportation technology to dramatically accelerate interaction and interrelationship among people from different cultures around the globe" (Sorrells, 2013: 1). Unfortunately, Sorrells does not mentioned whether this accelerated interaction and interrelationship among people from different cultures around the globe is taking place with dignity or without dignity. Human interaction no matter at what speed it takes place is a worthless effort if not taking place within dignity. This interaction may promote capitalist and political ideologist interests rather than dignifying project for "common good" (sandel, 2009). So it is important

that approaches to human interaction in a world as diverse as ours carries dignifying dimension otherwise we will remain under the empire of capitalism humiliation.

To proceed within global intercultural citizenship for dignity, it is important to recognize that we succeed or fail as global world together. We are as Evelin Lindner puts it “a human family” (Lindner, 2012: 150), thus in a sense, we are brothers and sisters. The happiness or the sadness of ones makes the happiness or the sadness of others. Also it is important to be generous. That is to cooperate with the rest members of the family for the success of all. If we may contribute willingly to the significance of human dignity in its smallest detail, we will see the entire global society stand as a unified and revived human family.

Another important procedure to adopt in the global intercultural citizenship for dignity education is to address the humiliation that the “relation of power” and its tendency to maintain hierarchies (Mittelman, 2011). In his book *Contesting global order: Development, global governance, and globalization*, James H. Mittelman, professor of International Affairs at American University argues that among different meanings or interpretation to globalization such as surge in flows across borders, increased interconnectedness, and heightened interdependence; a compression of time-space relations: with new technologies, transportation and communication, interconnections speed up and distances are effectively reduced. He adds that while “these interpretations are accurate as far as they go, but are too antiseptic and leave out power relations.” He suggests that “a third and more comprehensive position incorporates evolving hierarchies as a key facet of this shift in global order. Mittelman explains that in the power relations perspective, “globalization may be understood not as a single, unified phenomenon, but as a syndrome of multifaceted processes and activities: a historical transformation in the interactions among market forces, political authority, and the lifeway embodied in culture and society” (Mittelman, 2011: 14). If Mittelman is right about the power relations incorporating hierarchies as a key facet in the global order, global intercultural citizenship for dignity needs to transcend that power relations with humility and spirit of duty. It is only by overcoming the tendency of hierarchies that the global order can become a transparent and trustworthy human dignifying system for the common good of all.

Conclusion

As a proponent of Global intercultural citizenship for dignity – a philo-politico- educational approach, I argue that it is important to educate individuals on issue related to human dignity by moving beyond materialistic view of the world that has characterized the global educational system so far. It is important that we integrate philosophical, political, and educational dimensions of our world and our togetherness as a human family. It is sad that many centuries have set wrong patterns for human behavior and model of leadership. Yet, if we cooperate as a family of dignifiers and keep teaching it, it will have a transformational effect on the global society. As Michael J. Sandel argues, “The solution to certain social problems required moral transformation” (Sandel, 2009: 245). Indeed, moral transformation may take place through effective educational programs and “conduct integrity” as both value may contribute to “character elevation”, “wisdom in conversation” and action, and above all, “an everyday relational quality”(Gomes De Matos, 2013: 24, 25). I recommend that foreign language education programs promote global intercultural citizenship for dignity in their curriculum. I also recommend that those individuals already operating in society

become global intercultural citizens for dignity through their conduct of integrity and communicative behavior with dignity and maintain an everyday relational quality with one another. In doing so, they will be sending a message that supports the idea that “dignity has to do with personal worthiness” (Gomes de Matos, 2013: 23). In fact the 7 billion of the world population may interconnect at any speed possible it is to no avail if this interconnection is not done with dignity and love and mutual respect and understanding. This is the mission the global intercultural citizenship for dignity would like to pursue. At the conclusion of this paper I cannot keep the rhymed reflection to this paper from my dear and beloved friend Francisco for myself, please feel invited to enjoy it as well.

Rhymed Reflection from my Dear and Beloved Friend Francisco Cardoso Gomes De Matos

“What would a Global Intercultural Citizenship for Dignity call for?”

An open-ended checklist through pairs of rhymed reflections by Francisco Gomes de Matos, a peace linguist, author of *Dignity: A Multidimensional view*, Dignity Press, 2013.

A Global Intercultural Citizenship for Dignity would call for...

- (I) Hyuman beings everywhere learning to interact in communicatively dignifying ways
Human group and communities everywhere learning to share the earth in
Individually and collectively edifying ways
- (II) Humankind committing to engaging in interculturally harmonizing actions
Improving their everyday cultural interactions
- (III) Humankind being educated in intercultural rights and responsibilities
Intercultural communicative dignity abilities

An intercultural peaceful/nonviolent/nonkilling world: when/how will it be possible?

Cultures of war, violence, and killing will cease everywhere

Global intercultural citizens in deep solidarity for one another will learn to care

How will deep transformations pave the way to a Global Intercultural Citizenship for Dignity?

Cultures of aggression and oppression will give way to cultures of compassion and affection

Improvement of character + conduct + Communication will lead to intercultural humility
and dignifying transformation

Gomes de Matos to David Balosa

Email/Sun, Sep 29, 2013 at 8:25 AM

References

- Asante, M. K., Miike, Y., & Yin, J. (eds) (2008). *The global intercultural communication reader*. New York: Routledge.
- D'Anieri, P. (2012). *International politics: Power and purpose in global affairs (2nd)*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth.
- Dervin, F., Gajardo, A. & Lavanchy, A. (eds) (2011). *Politics of interculturality*. New Casstle, UK: Cambridge Scholars.
- Fanon, F. (2004). *The wretched of the earth*. New York: Grove Press.
- Fanon, F. (2008). *Black skin, white masks*. New York: Grove Press.
- Gomes de Matos, F. C. (2013). *Dignity: A multidimensional view*. Lake Oswego, OR: Dignity Press.
- Gomes de Matos, F. C. (2013). "Rhymed Reflections for David Balosa: What would a Global Intercultural Citizenship for Dignity call for? ". <fcardosogomesdematos@gmail.com> To: "dbalosa1@umbc.edu" Recife, Brazil: Email/September, Sun, Sep 29, 2013 at 8:25 AM
- Huebner, T. & David, K. A. (eds.) (1999). *Sociopolitical perspectives on language policy and planning in the USA*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Lindner, E. G. (2012). *A dignity economy: Creating an economy that serves human dignity and preserves our planet*. Secaucus, NJ: Dignity Press.
- Mittelman, J. H. (2011). *Contesting global order: Development, global governance, and globalization*. New York: Routledge.
- Rodriguez, A. & Chawala, D. (2010): *Intercultural communication: An ecological approach*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt.
- Sadri, H. A., & Flammia, M. (2011). *Intercultural communication: A new approach to international relations and global challenges*. New York: Continuum.
- Sandel, M. J. (2009). *Justice: What's the right thing to do?* New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Sorrells, K. (2013). *Intercultural communication: Globalization and social justice*. Thousand, Oaks, CA: Sage.