

GOING TO THE COMMUNITY

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Let me offer three points. First, I want to take a few minutes to set the context for a democratic education. I want to cite six or seven key choices that I think anybody who's interested in community service as a vehicle of citizen education needs to face and which we face at Rutgers as do other universities around the the country. Thirdly, I want to address Harry Boyte's thoughtful criticisms of communitarianism.

The Context of Democratic Education

First to set the context with a few remarks. Because we regard ourselves as born free we tend to take our liberty for granted. We assume that our freedom can be enjoyed without responsibility and that like some great perpetual motion machine our democracy can run forever without the fuel of civic activity by engaged citizens. The most sympathetic overseas critic America has known, Alexis de Toqueville, issued a warning to all would-be democrats. "There is nothing so arduous as the apprenticeship of liberty," he wrote. Today there's endless talk about education but between the hysteria and the cynicism there seems to be little room for civic learning, hardly any at all for democracy. Yet a fundamental task of education in a democracy is the apprenticeship of liberty — learning to be free. While we root our fragile freedom in the myth that we are born free, we are in truth born dependent. We are born fragile, we are born needy, we are born ignorant, we are born unformed, we are born weak, we are born foolish, we are born unimaginative. We're born small, defenseless, unthinking infants. We are in fact born in chains and only acquire liberty through civil society. Our

dependency is both physical, we need each other and can't survive alone, and psychological. Our identity is forged in a dialectical relationship with others. This is where I think the communitarian perspective is necessary and where the public politics response advocated by Boyte is simply inadequate to the deep psychological need we have to forge an identity in the company of others. Consequently we are all embedded, like it or not, in families and tribes and in communities. The only question we face is what kind of communities will they be. Will they be communities of blood, tribal communities, exclusive communities, or will they be open and inclusive democratic communities? That's the choice. The choice isn't whether we'll be individual and free from one another to live in communities of dependency.

In short we have to learn to be free. We have to be taught liberty. We have to be taught to become persons and citizens. We are born belonging to others. We quite literally belong to our parents. We have to learn how to sculpt our individualities from common clay. The great mistake of liberalism is the myth that we start out free and then join together somehow. The truth is, as any psychologist, anthropologist or sociologist will tell us, we're born joined and have to find ways to separate ourselves and understand ourselves as individuals and that happens through civic education. The literacy required to live in civil society, the competence to participate in democratic communities, the ability to think critically and act deliberately in a pluralistic world, the empathy that permits us to hear and to accommodate others — these are skills that have to be acquired. It is important to remind ourselves of this, particularly in America where we are all children of a Lockean tradition which insists that we are born free, that we are individuals to start with, and the civic task is the task of the social contract, how to bring ourselves together and learn to live together. The real skill is to learn how to live apart, to learn how to separate

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ourselves and live as free beings in what are otherwise the natural communities of dependency into which we are born.

Some Questions About Community Service

Now to take a leap from that general theoretical perspective, let me talk about community service and experiential education as a part of the apprenticeship of liberty. This is an unfinished task in most colleges and universities in America. Let me not try here to justify community service as a form of civic education but rather pose for you some critical choices that must be faced if you already agree that it is.

The first and most important choice about community service is whether or not it should be curricular or extracurricular. Campus Compact and Cool started with the notion that their job was to organize in an extracurricular fashion those students who were interested in community service and make sure there were ample opportunities to do so. In other words, their choice was to say that community service need not have a direct curricular connection. I believe that community service must be a part of the curriculum if it is to be effective and I have three reasons for saying that. First of all, we have to remember that we are all educators and we work in educational institutions. We don't work in social agencies. There's a tendency on the part of some service programs to think that somehow their students are becoming little mini-service agencies. It is not the job of colleges and universities or indeed high schools or primary schools to solve America's social problems directly. We can't do it, we shouldn't do it, we're not equipped to do it. What we are qualified to do is educate the young and if we believe that citizen education is a vital part of that education and believe that community service will reinforce citizen education, then we have to root community service in the curriculum in a serious way. The second reason is that educational institutions are themselves communities. Students live in a community, although often school communities are among the most corrupt, fragmented, alienating of all the communities to which we are likely to belong. We all know, particularly in large universities, that is the case. There is in fact a strong argument to be made that many of the pathologies associated with young people derive in part from their alienation from the communities they belong to. Because the school is a community it's terribly important to root teaching in the primary community to which people actually belong. A third reason is that educational institutions are part of the larger community. The relationship between the two, traditionally town-gown relations, is in a sense emblematic of the larger problem of small communities existing within larger communities. A fourth somewhat secondary but nonetheless important reason is that programs that are extracurricular will be treated as a kind of second-class education. They're seen as do-good or

touchy-feely or nonrigorous forms of education. Unless they are hooked in a rigorous way to a curriculum that involves distinguished faculty and honors students, they will be looked down upon.

The second choice is whether community service should be mandatory or voluntary. In my mind, despite the difficulties, there's no question that it must be mandatory and there are two very significant reasons. One is if you make it voluntary you're preaching to the converted. It is the majority of students, who are not going to volunteer that precisely needs to learn the meaning of civic responsibility. The second reason is that all education is coercive and authoritative. We force students to do all kinds of things all the time. We shut them up for hours at a time while we lecture at them. We tell them what they have to take to graduate and so on. To say that in this vital area of democratic education we can't require certain courses is utterly inconsistent with the authoritative character of all education.

"Because we regard ourselves as born free we tend to take our liberty for granted. We assume that our freedom can be enjoyed without responsibility and that like some great perpetual motion machine our democracy can run forever without the fuel of civic activity by engaged citizens. In short, we have to learn to be free. We have to be taught liberty."

The third choice is between the civic and the philanthropic. What's the point of these programs? To induce civic values or induce values that have to do with philanthropy and charity. Again, in the last 15 or 20 years many people who have supported the Points of Life Foundation and community service see it as a way of engendering what I would call 19th century values of *noblesse oblige*. Serve your inferiors; go out and do something for the poor once in your life. In places like Stanford and Harvard many of the students come from advantaged families and service tends to be seen as a way of paying back society. William Buckley in his book *Gratitude* suggests this. Those of us who are well off owe something to others. I would urge as an alternative to the philanthropic model, the model of civic responsibility. Here we're talking not about altruism versus self-interest but about enlightened self-interest. Students ought to do community service not

simply because they help the community, but because they help themselves; for them to be effective citizens and to live in a world which nourishes their liberty others must be free too. So community service is an aspect of the development of an enlightened form of civic self-interest, not an exercise in altruism.

A fourth choice is between one course to satisfy this requirement or a bottom up approach with many different courses and different schools and different departments. I favor the latter; I think it is a more flexible and pluralistic approach. But that choice does have to be made.

Fifth, do you engage students in the actual planning process or do you do it top down from the administration? My choice is always to engage students in the process of planning a program.

How do you treat the community service agencies you work with? Do you treat them as partners in education or potential clients for service? My suggestion is to go to the community agencies and say, "Will you help us educate our students in citizenship and responsibility? In return you may get some service but you may not. It may turn out that what you get is hardly worth the training time you put into it. We're certainly not there to solve your problems." That has a twofold effect. It makes it clear that we're engaged in civic pedagogy and not in social service but it actually does a very nice thing for the service agencies and their clients as well. It gives them a sense that they're actually contributing to the education of people and are not simply victims getting the help of well-off students.

Finally, do you treat service as something individuals do in the community or as something groups or teams of students do? It's my view that putting students into teams — tiny communities, squadrons, platoons to use William James' moral equivalent of war imagery — is the way to go. By putting students together where they have to actually cooperate with one another, is to teach the lesson of community from the very beginning.

A Less Polarized View

Now let me address the dilemma Boyte brought up. I think he's very right. I think he's identified a historical problem and it's a very real problem, though I think he draws the distinction more sharply than I would because I

think there's more of a dialectical feed between the two. It's really the old problem that all democratic theorists raise. On the one hand is the claim that democratic community works ideally when you have people with shared history, shared value, shared religion, who start with common ground so that the general will is nothing more than an expression of their commonality and democracy in a certain sense traditionally was designed for such communities. But, as we know, modern industrial societies are diversified and fragmented and democracy has become the forging of artificial values around problem solving in the absence of such common ground. Those are the two paradigms. I think Boyte's right to say that most modern societies, particularly in places like America, are diversified, are pluralistic, and to assume that you'll get common ground, common religions or moral values is not only unlikely but probably even dangerous.

But on the other hand, it's a mistake to think the choice of public politics as a problem solving activity won't itself engender commonality. The kind of politics Boyte rightly suggests in fact engenders new shared values and a new sense of binding and a new sense of community which is more than just problem solving. What happens is that people who are in it together solving common problems come away feeling they have an identity which goes beyond just the fact they worked on a common problem. We find that in our community service teams. Students who are different work together and do community service together and thus create a new bond. This is William James' moral equivalent of war imagery again. A platoon of soldiers drawn from many different backgrounds is bound together in a fight against a common enemy in ways that bind them for life. That happens in democratic politics as well. People who work in a campaign are bound. They come out with an identity that goes beyond just having solved some problems or achieved some common goals. So, to put it a little differently, I would say that one of the objects of public problem solving is to solve public problems, but another object is to create a framework, a communal framework, within which people can find new forms of identity to compensate for the loss of traditional tribal, ethnic, and religious identities which once held democratic communities together. That's why I take a less polarized view of the two paradigms than Boyte does. □

RESPONSES TO BOYTE AND BARBER

CRAIG RIMMERMAN

My presentation will be in three parts. I'm going to raise some broad issues of what I call critical education for citizenship and then talk about how we try to implement such an approach in a senior-level course at Hobart and William Smith Colleges called "AIDS Crises and Challenges" and end with some reflections in light of what Boyte and Barber have touched on.

I think it's ironic that at the very moment that Eastern Europe is celebrating a transition to a Western-style democracy we in the United States are becoming increasingly critical of our own. Two recent books, E.J. Dionne's *Why Americans Hate Politics* and William Greider's *Who Will Tell the People*, do a superb job of highlighting what Greider calls the betrayal of American democracy. A broad level of citizen disaffection with American politics was measured by the Harwood group study *Citizen and Politics* prepared for the Kettering Foundation in 1991. The Harwood group found that Americans do care about politics but they no longer believe that they can have an effect. They feel politically impotent. Citizens feel cut off from most policy issues because of the way they are framed and talked about. Citizens think many of the avenues for expressing their views are window dressing, not serious attempts to hear the public. They feel they are heard only when they organize into large groups and angrily protest policy decisions. For those of us in higher education it seems to me that we're uniquely situated to evaluate citizen disaffection and to devise pedagogical strategies in the curriculum that will enable our students to grapple with the meaning of citizenship, democracy and public participation in compelling ways.

Political scientists have much to offer as we tackle these questions in our teaching, our research and in our community work. We can best achieve our educational goals by pursuing a model of education that I might call critical education for citizenship. I'd like to give you some sense of what I mean by this. Its characteristics might include the following: It must be interdisciplinary in nature and you'll notice that this course I participated in was taught by

someone in English and Theater as well as a sociologist and myself; it must focus on public policy concerns and allow students to see the importance of participating in public decisions; it asks educators and students to conceive of democracy broadly to include community discussions, community action, public service, and protest politics; and it asks us to consider the strengths and weaknesses of all the forms of participation that I've just described.

It also, it seems to me, should study democracy in the workplace as reflected in workplace democracy and workplace self-management schemes. After all, it is in the workplace that most of us are going to spend most of our lives and here we can make important and crucial connections between the political and economic spheres. Critical education for citizenship also takes into account the relationship between gender, race and class concerns in the participatory process and, finally, it asks us to challenge our own as well as our students' assumptions regarding power and leadership. As educators it seems to me absolutely crucial that we deconstruct our own positions of power in the context of the classroom.

Let me say a few words about the course on AIDS I've already referred to. It was created and designed as a requirement for all seniors in order to address current issues from moral and global perspectives. We wanted values to be confronted head on before our students go out into the world or enter graduate school. Students themselves participated in the creation of this course. As a matter of fact, the course originated when I went to a meeting of students who invited me to attend a planning session for AIDS Awareness Week and they asked me what courses were going to be taught about AIDS next year? When I said we needed a senior forum they went wild. One of the most rewarding things for me as someone who is very interested in these concerns was to work with students in planning the course. They had no idea of the amount of work that goes into putting a course together. They enjoyed the opportunity, as frustrating as it was at times, to engage in the give and take about course requirements, various books that we might use, speakers we might invite, and so forth. We agreed that all students be required to participate in what we called a Community Action Project in order to receive credit for the course itself. The idea behind this was

to bring some aspects of the AIDS issue to a broader audience outside of the classroom. Students were encouraged to work in groups, although they were not required to do so. The term community "action" was used after our students rejected community "service" for some of the reasons Barber just mentioned earlier. The Community Action Project produced some imaginative results. Several students wrote a play called *Just Words* which was designed to make us use more sensitive language when discussing AIDS; the play was performed in the student theater before a large audience. Another group devised an AIDS education strategy for use in the residence halls. Two students performed a dance in honor of those living with AIDS and those who have died of AIDS, again before a public audience. A large group of students put together an art show reflecting on issues discussed in the course. The exhibit was later shown in a local library. Students also organized a condom distribution day where they distributed fact sheets about AIDS along with condoms on campus.

All three instructors were struck by the fact that many of our students knew very little about the topic. Some had previous AIDS courses and they were at an advantage compared to the 75-80 percent who had had no courses at all. Coming into the course, for example, many students didn't even know the distinction between being HIV positive and having full-blown AIDS. Moreover they had been subjected to ten years of popular culture and media socialization around this issue and we had lot of deconstructing to do. What this meant in practice was that our students thought of AIDS as largely a gay disease, one that couldn't possibly affect upper middle class whites such as themselves and we had to challenge that throughout.

We also found it very difficult to get students to link theory and practice. A significant number of them wanted to talk about feelings and emotions to the great consternation of the three faculty members. We tried to provide analytical frameworks, a critical evaluation scheme. In the planning process students said they wanted someone with AIDS to come to speak as if they needed to see someone in full flesh, you know, some kind of Zeus story, I don't know what was going on here. But there was a sense that this was very, very important to them and we tried to combat that throughout the entire course. Some of these problems may well be built into a course that deals with issues of sexuality and death, powerful, powerful issues that I had never confronted before in ten years of college teaching.

From my vantage point the most acceptable part of our course was the community action projects and if we did this course again I would suggest making these projects the central course requirement and build them in, grade them perhaps, structure them more, work with students and develop them in more mature ways. I'd like to end by suggesting a couple of things to tie in my response to what

Boyte and Barber have already said. It seems to me that our goals as educators is to challenge the prevailing attitude of citizen passivity. I view both the approaches described by Ben and Harry as contributing to this important goal. In this sense, then, I'd like to think that their respective approaches can be complimentary rather than remain in tension with one another. There are so many barriers in our culture and our political and economic systems that prevent us from engaging in public issues in meaningful ways. We should celebrate the strengths of these approaches, allow them to inform us as we develop a critical pedagogy, one that we will need to challenge the prevailing passivity of our time. □

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TIM STANTON

I hope I can offer some thoughts to push the discussion a little further. I speak from a community perspective. I became a community organizer after I graduated from college and did a lot of community work while in college. I became interested in the civic education aspects of community work and that gradually led me back into the academy where I now work with students at Stanford. Our center at Stanford is a large and still growing organization and we've been successful to the degree that we're now working with more than 2000 students each year who are involved in all kinds of community activity from very traditional volunteer service to the kinds of community action and community organizing that would be at the other end of the service advocacy spectrum. We do some of it well and we're learning how to do some of it better. And we've worked very hard to connect this activity with the academic curriculum to engage faculty in working with these students towards some of the goals that my colleagues here on the panel have articulated.

So I really welcome this meeting because in my many years of travail in this work in higher education it's been rare that these discussions have taken place at academic meetings. This is a kind of pivotal event in our work and I'm glad to be a part of it. I find what Ben and Harry offered us this morning to be two pieces of a constructive tension in my mind. Having come into this work from a service and community action perspective, I always held

suspect the notion that service alone will lead to civically engaged citizens or more responsible citizens. Without a strong curricular component, service alone really is just an advanced form of recreation or even voyeurism for many students, particularly many of the students we have at a place like Stanford. And indeed, as Ben has pointed out, can be an exercise in subjectivism as opposed to real democratic dialogue or thinking.

I'm thinking of some of the research I've seen on the urban studies programs of the 60s and 70s which were aimed mainly at getting the white mainstream college population interested and concerned and knowledgeable about the issues and problems of urban minorities. The research showed that those programs tended to reinforce and strengthen the biases and attitudes which students brought with them when they went into those communities. In many cases this was due to the lack of opportunity for critical reflection and analysis about what students were seeing and experiencing. And as hard as we work on that problem I don't know if we've succeeded a great deal. Many of you may have seen an article in *Mother Jones* a couple of years ago in which a Stanford student was quoted as saying her experience at a homeless shelter was the most rewarding and educational experience of her time at Stanford and she only hoped her grandchildren would have the same opportunity. So what is it we need to do and how are we going to move beyond having our students make statements like that? I wonder what Harry's students do when they're in a community and how their experience is connected to the kind of conceptual exchange that he's trying to bring about. That's so important and my own experience of trying to do it has been such a challenge and it's so difficult. I also wonder about Ben's feeling that we must simply mandate this kind of education and I worry about whether we can do that well.

So let me push a little further by discussing a few challenges that arise out of my work. The first has to do with the community we aim to have our students serve. I would argue, and I don't think I'd get a lot of resistance here, that students ought to do no harm in the community while they're out there. When I took my first job in higher education after doing community organizing work I talked to the folks in the community who had been my friends and colleagues about placing my students with them. They said they would be delighted to collaborate but they wondered why my institution was going to get the FTE from the state for the instruction we were asking them to do. There needs to be a lot more clarity than I think we have now about what students are to do, who is to be responsible for it, and who will evaluate it. On another level there's a need to think about how we in the academy relate to our community partners. I agree with Ben that we should model in our programs the kind of democratic community we're trying to teach our students about. I don't think many town-gown relationships exhibit that model so we have to think about it.

The second challenge relates to pedagogy. I think that's already been raised. If we're really serious about having students examine issues of charity, philanthropy, altruism, enlightened self-interest, public rights, and have them relate those issues and concepts to observed practice in the context of service learning where they're responsible for at least doing no harm, we must think about the teaching process. How do we make this happen? I don't think it happens by accident. This pedagogy issue cross-cuts the communitarian-public life issues that Ben and Harry have raised because we need to reconstruct a civic community in our classrooms as Craig has said — a learning community with individuals empowered to work for both self and group interests. The challenge is to help students think rigorously about what they're experiencing, to help them learn how to understand the world and their place in it and then to integrate their perceptions with other people's ideas.

The third challenge relates to the source of the questions we address. Do they simply come from our lectures, our books, our disciplines, or do they in fact arise from the experience in the community and the problems that our community partners are facing or even from the kinds of people that our students are engaged with? If we're truly going to have democratic exchange in our classrooms and in our programs we've got to have a wide, diverse community of people — staff, faculty, students and community members engaged in the conversation. □

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LESLIE HILL

I'd like to raise two important subjects that affect the objectives and the pedagogical practices of civic education. The first is power and the second is the nature of the citizen we assume to be at the center of political practice. Power is a critical element of our social lives and adheres to the sites in which civic education takes place, the community and the classroom. To ignore power relations is to leave unexamined one of the most critical factors shaping the nature of political practice and to miss an opportunity to question the assumptions on which current lamentable patterns of discrimination are based. If the aim of civic education is to develop citizens who act as agents in self-determining interaction with others, then we have to enhance their capacity to apprehend consciously the nature and uses of power and challenge them to think about alternative conceptions and uses of power that foster democracy.

Power in the popular imagination and in our public discourse is most often conceived to be hierarchical and an instrument of domination, even as it is often contested.

Power as domination structures interaction among and between citizens and between them and the institutions of government. But alternative notions and practices of power are available that are much more conducive to supporting public conversations in which people have a stake in a political community and can engage with each other as equals in order to solve problems. But alternative practices of power cannot be engendered without some recognition of the nature of power and some conscious efforts to do so. Moreover, we cannot help students develop a sense of efficacy as political actors without challenging assumptions and popular beliefs about power.

In order to be effective, then, I argue that civic education programs must include power as one of their central subjects and employ specific methods to help students learn to analyze the nature and operation of the power relations at play in a given situation in order to demystify them and thus avoid becoming demobilized by them. One way to do this is to pay attention to power in the classroom. My colleagues have spoken about the need to pay close attention to our pedagogical practices. I agree that practicing democracy should begin in our workplace and the students' workplace, which is the classroom. Our classrooms provide handy opportunities for faculty to engage in civic education and an important occasion to structure and guide classroom learning in ways that establish the space to practice politics, to develop habits of engagement, to have conversations that promote mutual recognition, attempts at listening, reflection and judgment, all skills necessary to the practice of democratic politics. It takes time and effort to begin to transform classrooms into settings for non-hierarchical processes of interaction where people really can practice those skills essential for deliberative democracy.

And now my second point. What notion of citizenship do we put into play when we design curricula and experiential opportunities for civic education? My thinking about this as about power is informed by the critiques of liberal formulations of the citizen as an abstracted self-interested individual. Studies of African-American politics and feminine theory scholarship have emphasized the significance of embodiment. In cultures that assign political meaning to biological characteristics such as race and gender and to sexual practices, it is crucial to examine the fact that each of us enters politics as embodied subjects with our own and others' assumptions about our political roles. W.B. DuBois has written about double consciousness, about the inside or outside of women or men of African descent in the American polity. And the debates about abortion and laws regulating same-sex couples remind us of the significance of the body in deliberations about the rights of citizens and the obligations of government.

The question for us is how assumptions about who is the proper citizen establish or diminish possibilities for participation and for good deliberation, how they shape the

possibility for members of the polity to see themselves in relation to others. Kathleen Jones and a number of other feminist writers on political theory have argued that the dominant identification and definition of citizens is derived from group affiliations with particular race, gender and class characteristics. This insight prompts us to raise such questions as: How might our civic conversation expand both in terms of who is envisioned as a participant and how that person might see herself in relation to others in the conversation? How might that conversation expand if our definition of citizenship had at its center a black domestic worker from East Harlem? What would politics in a deliberative democracy look like if we assumed poor women of color to be their central subject and necessary participants?

I raise these questions about embodiment and relations briefly here in order to stimulate some reflection on the assumptions about who is present as subject and participant in civic education and on what can be learned in experiential learning sites. Civic education carefully designed can subvert, and I argue should subvert, the conceptual and mythological biases revolving around gender, class and race. That kind of civic education can provide opportunities for students to see themselves as empowered political actors and to locate themselves in various communities.

I teach a class called Black Women in the Americas which attempts to determine the lot of black women in the political economy of the Americas. Most of the students who are enrolled in that course are white middle class or upper class students who populate the small private colleges in New England. Most of them have grown up in suburban communities and have had little contact, certainly little intimate contact, with people of color. I require them to do an interview with a woman of color over 30 years old. What this does, I think, is important for them to see themselves as part of a polity in which they have to deal with people who are not like them. In fact, it is an exercise to help them locate themselves. I began another course last fall called Gender in the States and one of the most useful exercises was to have each of the students again locate themselves by doing a political genealogy of women in their family so they could look specifically at some of the political issues we would be talking about and see themselves in their own particularity as well as in relation to broader issues of poorer citizens.

The overarching point I am making is that it's important to design civic education in such a way that students can locate themselves, not just in relation to some universalized notion of political man, but in relation to others, cognizant of differences, and thus equip themselves to look for common ground they share with different others whom they come to see as legitimate political players. □

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