

## A SOLID SELF-IDENTITY AND SELF-IMAGE – PREREQUISITES FOR SAFE GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Dr. Mohammed Sadiq

Wikipedia defines Global Citizenship as the rights, responsibilities and duties that come with being a member of our global community/world. The term "citizen" refers to an identity between a person and a city, state or nation and their right to work, live and participate politically in a particular geographic area. When combined with the term "global", it typically defines a person who places their identity with a "global community" above their identity as a citizen of a particular nation or place. The idea is that one's identity transcends geography or political borders and that responsibilities or rights are or can be derived from membership in a broader class: "humanity". This does not mean that such a person denounces or waives their nationality or other, more local identities, but such identities are given "second place" to their membership in a global community.<sup>1</sup>

The last sentence in this definition raises an important question. All people carry with them some core values they live by. These values are deeply rooted in religion and culture. Does the concept of Global Citizenship require that these core values be put aside in favor of the ever changing global values? I believe most people would not be willing to put aside their core values and their core identities in favor of the global ones. As a matter of fact, no one should be expected to denounce their core values and identities to be accepted as a global citizen, for the freedom to practice and live by one's values is one of the fundamental human right.

A more functional definition has been provided by the Ideas Forum Org UK.<sup>2</sup>

“Global Citizenship is a way of living that recognizes our world is an increasingly complex web of connections and interdependencies. One in which our choices and actions may have repercussions for people and communities locally, nationally or internationally. “

“A Global Citizen is someone who:

- is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen
- respects and values diversity
- has an understanding of how the world works
- is outraged by social injustice
- participates in the community at a range of levels, from the local to the global
- is willing to act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place
- takes responsibility for their actions.”

This is a functional, practical, definition which would closely fits with most cultural and religious values.

For example, we find in the holy Qur'an, Allah (swt) says:

“O you who believe! stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor, for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you swerve, and if you distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do.”<sup>3</sup>

“Good and evil are not equal. Repel (evil) with that which is good, and you will see that he, between whom and you there was enmity, shall become as if he were a bosom friend.”<sup>4</sup>

In order to effectively and safely become a Global Citizen, one must have a solid self-identity and must feel safe to be who they are. The problem is that most of us, Muslims, do not feel safe to be ourselves – to practice and live by our core values, in today’s global world. Consequently, we struggle to fit in, to be accepted, and to feel safe.

This deficit is more evident in our youth. Many of them feel lost in the larger society and often in their own communities and homes. Attendance of youth in our masjid and social and family gatherings has gradually decreased significantly. They easily fall prey to peer pressure to fit in, whether in educational institutes or work places. They often develop multiple personalities to meet the requirements/demands of multiple environment they must survive in, and, as a result, completely lose their own identity, self-image and unfortunately their faith. Not only that, but many end in wrongful behaviors, such as, drugs, violence, sexual perversions, etc. They have no internal mechanisms or a frame of reference to defend against all such ills of the larger society.

This is why it is of utmost importance to guide them in developing a healthy and solid self-identity and self-image to shield them from unwanted global views and ills of the morally decaying societies of the world.

This objective of this seminar will be as follows:

1. To understand the magnitude of current world condition.
2. To explain that Citizenship is deeply ingrained in our Self-Identity, Self-Image and Self-Worth - in short how do we see ourselves?
3. To understand why many of our youth feel lost and confused about who they really are and what they would like to be.
4. What can Islamic Schools do to teach and promote a healthy self-identity, self-image, and self-worth in our students.
5. How to educate them about the concept of Citizenship and Global Citizenship - how to be a citizen of the world without losing their true identity, their faith, and how to make the best of all the good in the global world and leave the undesirable.

Digital PowerPoint slides will be made available to the participants in PDF format.

## REFERENCES

- 1 Israel, Ronald C. (Spring|Summer 2012). "What Does it Mean to be a Global Citizen?"  
Kosmos.
- 2 <http://www.ideas-forum.org.uk/about-us/global-citizenship>
- 3 Holy Qur'an, 4:135.
- 4 Holy Qur'an, 41:34