

Good Citizen and Good Person: Are They always Equal

Ziyuan Yu

Lake Forest Academy, Chicago, IL 60045, USA

Abstract. Given the different perceptions of an individual, the standard of a good citizen and that of a good person are not always in congruence and often in contradiction in terms of their respective obligations. This essay will discuss the conflictions and correspondence between being both a citizen and a person through three examples in history. Moreover, the paper argues that the ideal situation of being both a good citizen and a good person is that we are global citizens. The rights and obligations of each person are in harmony, not in contradiction, so there will not be conflicting situations resulting from our status of being citizens of different countries and persons. As global citizens, we have a broader mind that is connected to the world and humanity. We do not only care about our country's own benefit but the welfare of humankind.

Keywords: citizenship; politics; global citizen.

1. Introduction

Citizenship, according to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, is the relationship between an individual and the state, to which the individual owes allegiance and in turn is entitled to its protection. Born into different states and being citizens, we have particular as well as universal political rights and responsibilities. By principle, citizens are protected by their states, and the states are also supported and protected by their citizens. Take the United States for example: the citizens' responsibilities include "supporting and defending the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic," "staying informed of the issues affecting the community," "respecting the rights, beliefs, and opinions of others" and "defending the country if the need should arise." At the sametime, citizens enjoy rights including "freedom to worship as you wish" and "freedom to pursue life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" in *The Citizen's Almanac*. One can extend these civic obligations and rights to many other nations both in our times and in history.

Unlike the political nature of the concept of citizenship, a "person" is a more holistic understanding of an individual. In addition to being a citizen of a certain state, a person possesses reason, morality, and consciousness. A person is enmeshed in varieties of social relations including state, community, family, etc.

Given the different perceptions of an individual, the standard of "good citizen" and that of "good person" are not always in congruence and often in contradiction in terms of their respective obligations. This essay will discuss the conflictions and correspondence between being both a citizen and a person through three examples in history.

2. Good Citizen, Bad Person

The first question is: Is a good citizen always also a good person? The event that shows us a good citizen may not be a good person is the disaster of Holocaust during the World War II. As the German Chancellor at the time, Adolf Hitler schemed the Holocaust against the Jews and others who were considered as political dissidents and moral degenerates such as homosexuals, disabled people, etc., which were recorded as 25 Facts About the Holocaust. The Jewish people were regarded as enemies because of their "blood and race." During the Holocaust, Jews were systematically slaughtered by Nazis, through starvation, abuse, gassing, shooting, slavery, etc. About 6 million Jews were killed at that time, of which 1.5 million were children.

How do we judge these Nazi soldiers? Arguably, they were obeying the orders of the state to kill the people. They were supporting the state and considered themselves to be fighting against the enemies identified by their state, which is the responsibility of being a citizen. From this perspective,

the Nazi officers and soldiers who participated in these activities are good citizens. They are good, dutiful political members. However, this confirms that “politics often trumped justice”, according to *Time*.

From the perspective of an individual as a person, a Nazi soldier is a bad person. They were immoral and anti-human as they killed fellow human beings indiscriminately. They deprived others of their “freedom to pursue life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” The tragedy shows the absolute distortion of human nature and a loss of morality with so many inhuman acts of murder, genocide, enslavement, and expulsion. Even the children were not let off just because of their race. Therefore, they trampled the rights and beliefs of others. Their reason and morality vanished.

3. Good Person, Bad Citizen

The second question is: Is a good person always also a good citizen? The historical event shows that a good person is a bad citizen was the life of Japanese Americans in America during the same period of World War II. In reaction to the Pearl Harbor attacks, all ethnically Japanese people in America, regardless of their citizenship, were caught and isolated in the concentration camps surrounded by the electrified wire netting, which is sanctioned by the U.S. government.

The U.S. government wrongly assumed that all Japanese Americans might engage in espionage. As long as they had Japanese descent, they were forced to leave their home and work and discriminated against, as the country called them enemies. It was the government who put the guilt on them and entitled them “bad citizens.” Their loyalty to the country was suspected, as well as their capacity to be assimilated into the country. Senator Tom Stewart once believed: “There is not a single Japanese in this country who would not stab you in the back.”

Later in the concentration camps, mandatory questionnaires were given to the American Japanese people. The two infamous questions, No.27 and No. 28, asked: “Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?” “Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic force, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor?” Whatever one answered - yes or no - would mean that he is a person not trustworthy. If one answered no, it would mean you were not willing to want to fight for the United States and were not qualified as a good citizen. You admitted directly that you failed to comply with the civic code. However, if one answered yes, it demonstrates, on the contrary, that he previously owed allegiance to the Japanese emperor, which also turns one into a traitor. It was the guilt that the U.S. government arbitrarily imposed on the Japanese.

Thus, for the families, for self-esteem, and belonging, many people answered “no.” We cannot say they are bad people because they do not want to fight for a country that treats them as traitors. People have the right to dissent based on their own reasonings and values. Many of them chose to stay with their family, and they were being good parents and good community members. They valued and respected the whole obligation of a person, not merely that of a citizen. And in the book, *They Called Us Enemy*, the family of the protagonist helped lots of homeless American Japanese that were unemployed to begin a new life after they got out of the camp. Certainly, these are good people as individuals with a sense of morality and responsibility to their family and community.

4. The Global Citizen

The paper argues that the ideal situation of being both a good citizen and a good person is that we are global citizens. The rights and obligations of each person are in harmony, not in contradiction, so there will not be conflicting situations resulting from our status of being citizens of different countries and persons. As global citizens, we have a broader mind that is connected to the world and humanity. We do not only care about our country’s own benefit but the welfare of humankind.

Nelson Mandela, the anti-apartheid revolutionary and first president of South Africa, is regarded as an icon of democracy and social justice. His government worked to undo the legacy of apartheid by addressing institutionalized racism and promoting racial reconciliation. Mandela fought his life toward a more democratic and just society through the struggle against racism and the fight for Black Africans' freedom and equality. His ideas and speeches have had a profound impact on the world. Mandela was a global citizen who participated in efforts to advocate for global change and in organizations that worked to build an international community, according to *Kosmos Journal*. People around the world have been influenced and encouraged by him to fight for a more equal world.

With the deepening of globalization, the mode of production, forms of communication and social relations of mankind have undergone profound changes. Mankind has entered a stage of development in "world history". Human society has become a community with a shared future in which "we are each other", thus giving birth to a sense of world citizenship with a flavor of globalization.

Thus, it can be seen that world citizenship involves national identity and belonging, active participation in public life, democratic and legal consciousness, ecological consciousness and humane spirit, and respect for the difference of life. It is specifically manifested in that individuals should get rid of the boundary of "state-nation" as the object of observation, and apply their own mature responsibility and moral value to the world. The rise of world citizenship, to a certain extent, counteracts the process of globalization. It advocates that people who abandon the sense of single nationality or are not recognized by the main member states under the framework of the United Nations due to various historical reasons, through their own efforts, perceive the "scissors difference" status quo of development in different regions and use their own exploration. Think about the relationship between individuals and individuals, and the relationship between individuals and the world, and try to arouse more people's resonance and participation. Through the network of the Internet of everything, the voice of thought is spread, which drives others to constantly think about the institutional differences and endogenous logic of the differences in the development status of different regions under the perception of the fact frame, so as to develop their own pattern vision and civic consciousness, and to compare their own environment and specific experience with other regions horizontally, and learn effective methods from it. Inject substantial and epochal content into the globalization of culture, economy, politics and thought.

5. Conclusion

All in all, it can be seen that in history and nowadays, the identities of a good citizen and a good person cannot easily correspond due to the conflict between a national and parochial mindset and the existence of a holistic and moral being. However, if we could all be global citizens, then these tragedies will not happen again, since we all share the same goal of caring for each other. If people are motivated by the example of Mandela, if countries can take a much more open-minded view toward others, if we all come together, if we restrain bigotry and xenophobia, we can build a more harmonious society with less inequality. If we could let go of selfishness, I believe the global issues, such as climate change, environmental pollution, poverty and more will be much easier to solve, and a new and better era would be within reach. For another example, we should cultivate citizens' awareness of rational consumption, low-carbon life and social participation, so that people can make more contributions to the sustainable development of human society.

In the era of globalization, people should abandon narrow national consciousness, treat social development and human civilization with a global vision and open concept, and have the courage to absorb and learn from the advanced achievements of other civilizations. They should not only be aware of their national identity and national identity, but also bear in mind their identity as "earthman". The cultivation of world citizenship is an important content of citizenship education, and also an objective requirement of adapting to globalization and realizing modernization. Therefore, we should establish and improve the cultivation system of world citizenship consciousness, and carry out the education of world citizenship consciousness.

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