

The Citizen-reader

We hereby announce the appearance of a new world citizen, a free citizen of the earth with its many peoples and cultures, none of them superior to the other.

This citizen will not be found in a social science demographic resulting from the geographic sampling of peoples classified by race, class, economic status or any other grouping.

The collective of citizens is world wide, and though having a nationality, the world citizen is not defined by it. The collective of individuals is not naive, but is fully aware of science, technology, religion, politics, economics and their powers. The collective of people are bright and reasonable, and can listen to an argument and form an opinion and respect the opinion of others. The collective of individual human beings, male and female, are fed up with the inaction of governments to stop the disintegration of nature and culture.

We appeal to readers of this document like Plato (the discoverer of the idea) appealed to the citizens of Athens. We recognize that discussion among peers (we are all peers) is vital to good citizenship. We understand that the intelligent grasp of a subject, and a commitment to balanced knowledge, will lead to the best order in all things human, politically, economically, psychologically. We know our natural rights. We do not want to stick our heads in the sand and let others do the leading for us or lack of leading.

In the new world order, the hierarchies of culture, class, economies, education, profession, religion are things of the past. Our common situation (small world) requires an immediate recognition of the knowledge of our shared existence. And knowledge means taking a stand. Some things that we know are beyond argument because they define us. For example, the world citizen stands for equality of all human beings world wide under the law, freedom of expression no matter how idiosyncratic, the right to justice (finding a dignified place) in a free society in the quest for a decent life. The 18th century Enlightenment giants had this feature right about our human nature: liberty is the breath of life.

The world citizen of whatever natural (existing) country surrenders his/her privileged position within the established hierarchical realm of wealth or status as it may be, and accepts the re-established horizontal realm of mutually dependent, pluralistic cultures and people. The image of the new order is not personal financial success, not scientific achievement, not universal religious truth not the current tolerated hierarchical

distribution of wealth among cultures. The image of the new order is this: the free human being in the concrete world of his or her existence, that is, this life in my own neighborhood, here and now, the healthy existence immediately available to me through my body, the gravity and sanctity of this felt existence wherever this "here and now" may be (Indonesia, Persia, Antarctica). First and last it is my life, and the life of the environment that sustains me, that matters, not some externally imposed ultimate or transcendent truth issuing out of Religion, Science, Politics, Philosophy.

The world citizen is an individual who is smart and confident and non-professional. He is an amateur, but an informed amateur. The amateur knows and can reason and can make good decisions. The amateur does not think all decisions are equal, but seeks the ones that lead, like a good map, to the desired ends. The amateur demands a fair and equitable order. The amateur regards too much wealth as just as wrong as too much poverty. The amateur works to understand Nature and human nature with an admitted bias towards the human, but not at the expense of the other creatures in the environment.

We are all in this together, the ants as much as the humming birds, the crocodiles as much as the snowy egrets, the crickets, clouds, the vistas, the ground beneath our feet, the waterfalls, highways, bridges, trees, walkways, department stores, wheat fields, hospitals, city parks, skyscrapers, the wilderness and the parking lots, the domestic pets and irritating mosquitoes, the mountains, the seasons, all of it, every last atom of Nature, where everything, before it is reckoned good or bad, simple IS. Existence itself. We did not invent it. We are in it. We are part of it. We claim our part within it. We will NOT be moved out of the way or allow exploitation any longer. We did not come into existence to be claimed by a superpower, God or emperor. Nobody owns us.

Take note, every citizen of the earth, the rulers and the ruled, the leaders as well as the ones following, the office worker, the heavy equipment operator, every minimum wage worker, every field laborer whether legal or illegal, the skilled, learned, the rich and the dispossessed, the retired, the imprisoned, the part time workers, the homemakers, the caregivers, the volunteers, the athletes, carpenters, maintenance crews, the tall skinny half starving shepherd in a drought stricken African plain. Stand up and claim your place as a dignified and worthy citizen of the earth. You who are wealthy reduce your possessions. You don't need four cars, three homes, multiple vacations a year, a motor home, when others, citizens like yourself, have nothing. Give away a part of your wealth to those who need it more than you. Find a way to give it so that the giving does not demean the ones who receive. The equitable distribution of the planet's resources is the goal of a just humanity. When we get there, we can rest.

Neither science nor technology, nor religion is going to bring us to our goal, but each one of them can help. A scientist can be both a practitioner of his trade AND a citizen of the world. A priest can be both a leader of his flock, AND a citizen of the world. And everybody else, each one of you, can be a something (I am a carpenter) AND a citizen of the world. It is not as scientists or engineers or professors of philosophy that we demand justice and peace in life, but as citizens of the world, with natural rights, and with brains to know these rights, and free speech to claim them as our due. What made us what we are? Not God, not Evolution, not Technology, though these things contributed. Ideas about the good made us, and continue to make us, what we are. Ideas, as Plato says, are the most powerful things on earth. Where do they come from? Well, not from the Eternal, as Plato asserted (whether he meant it or not,) but, as we now know, ideas come from our brains. And since Nature made our brains, our ideas must be natural, just as genes are natural. But, evolution, as we are learning, doesn't give a damn whether we as a species make it or not. However, WE do give a damn, and WE as citizens of the world want to do what we can to make our world habitable and to make our lives worth living. Science itself isn't going to get us there; all science can do is put the truth in front of our noses. Religion isn't going to get us there; religion's answers are based on myths and religion cannot tolerate, if necessary, a reverse of direction (it's necessary.)

How can we change? One of the ideas that got us where we are in 2007 is the belief in the inexhaustibility of the earth's resources, and the treatment of our planet as a trash can. Bad idea. A better idea is sustainability of resources and recycling. Did a scientist think up that? Did a priest? Did a philosopher? No, the people thought it up, and it's the people who are acting on it. The common person is demanding a solution, the individual who is fed up with government inaction, corporate indifference or greed, religious intolerance, racism, fanaticism, ignorance. The common human being who claims his and her right to be a citizen of the world, beginning with the body and its existence, on this piece of land, in this neighborhood, this community, extending out horizontally to the next community, and beyond that to the city, and from there to all other cities and to all communities across the land, then to all people on the planet and their communities and cities everywhere. We send a greeting without fear, with determination to hear the other out, to respect every person, to honor their right to a life with dignity, on their own terms, not on ours, on a planet we can all call home.

Dan Duncan, September 3, 2007