

## Book Review / Compte rendu

**Benham Rennick, J. & Desjardin, M., Eds. (2013). *The World is My Classroom: International Learning and Canadian Higher Education*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press. Pages: 251 pages. Price 27.95 CDN (paper). ISBN 9781442615823**

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Even from the first page, this book made promises to explore ethical debates and practices of international education that would be hard to achieve in any one volume. This is perhaps, for me, its most enlightening contribution: international education and global service learning initiatives tend to promise the world and deliver something that is much more ragged and even destructive, especially when viewed from a global citizenship perspective. The book presents a number of studies of travel abroad or international service learning as a way to sort through the contested terrain of international/internationalized education. It is a journey to find the “good global citizen,” but the journey doesn’t really get much farther than the familiar voices and experiences of western-educated students and their professors—not exactly a global perspective. Missing are the many worldviews and experiences of hosts (or so-called partners) of western study-abroad students, the indigenous knowledges that might be encountered in lands and places beyond the familiar west described in these texts, and the rich anticolonial/decolonizing contributions of theorists and activists from many of the locations where western students travel to find their “goodness.”

The book begins with an endorsement and preface by the Kielburger brothers, who have recently become the face of *internationalized education via social entrepreneurship* throughout much of Canada. Their projects, backed by extensive corporate support and designed for weary teachers trying to fit engaged global citizenship into already-packed curricula, focus on what empowered individuals might do if they believed in their own goodness. This perspective is evident throughout the book.

Editors Joanne Rennick and Michel Desjardin, in Chapter 1, discuss their vision for the book and the importance of having values-based discussions when planning and

implementing international service learning experiences. Their hope is to find ways to improve these programs through better pedagogies. They report on “good global citizenship workshops,” in which participants are guided in identifying the values that underpin their engagement in international service learning. The authors suggest that “good global citizens” will “avoid repeating some of history’s misguided attempts to ‘save’, ‘help’ and ‘civilize’” (p. 10). However, there is no engagement with how (just as for previous colonialists) the problem of “being good” blinds us to the full impact of our relations, particularly when those relations have historically been colonizing. Recall, for example, the vision of “service in Africa” that framed the work of Thomas Pringle and the 1820s British Settlers in South Africa:

“Let us enter upon a new and nobler career of conquest. Let us subdue Savage [sic] Africa by justice, by kindness, by the talisman of Christian truth. Let us thus go forth, in the name and under the blessing of God, gradually to extend the moral influence . . . and the territorial boundary also of our colony, until it shall become an Empire.” (Hammond and Jablow, 1977, cited in Mudimbe, 1998, p. 47) (Note: [sic] is this author’s.)

Historically, the “goodness” of powerful people has not served marginalized people well.

In Chapter 2, Rennick presents a socio-historical analysis of good global citizenship by looking at the history of Christian missionary-based efforts for conversion through “goodness.” Rennick argues that what will help in international contexts is not so much *what* values are driving an initiative but that these values be identified and articulated. She identifies the problems that arise when institutional values are different from those of the individuals involved in the project. Again, the author suggests that communication of the different values will be key in addressing the kind of hegemony that has traditionally emerged from projects of helping or saving others who are deemed deficient. Rennick submits that a shift toward global solidarity might change neocolonial practices of global citizenship education. This idea is continued in Chapter 3, where Nancy Johnston, Maureen Drysdale, and Caitlin Chiupka present a model of experiential learning to enhance standard curricula with a goal of educating good global citizens.

The last sections of the book include examples of what is “good” in global citizenship education, along with case studies, and a series of short student narratives in which people who have participated in study-abroad programs tell stories to highlight their experiences. These stories work to describe Canadian students finding their “goodness” in someone else’s life, usually someone poorer and more marginalized, and certainly one who is seen as, unequivocally, Other.

In Chapter 5, Sara Matthews draws on current theories of cosmopolitanism, cultural engagement, and global citizenship to explore the dilemmas that students experience when they are “abroad.” She raises questions about the implications of such things as home-stay arrangements and encountering conflicts and difference, and how an ethical dialogic engagement might serve to turn uneven/unequal relations into something more reflexive and ethical. Norah McRae follows, in Chapter 6, with a discussion of how using cultural intelligence as an indicator of a successful international experience might shift the policies and practices of international study-abroad programs. In the final chapters,

authors provide short case studies that highlight specific aspects of study-abroad experiences and suggest ways that these exemplars can help make international education experiences more effective.

Overall, while the intent of the book is to contribute to wider discussions of global citizenship by supplying case studies and examples of curricula and pedagogies, as a project on its own, two things stand out as limitations: (i) its overall framing of *goodness* as the necessary foundation of global/international engagement, and (ii) the lack of representation of voices who might see goodness in a very different way, given their location in historical colonialism, imperialism, and even systems of patriarchy, which are all tied up in the practice of “going abroad.” The work needs a good decolonizing revision, and then we might be able to get down to understanding how global citizenship could be an important educational concept to address the urgent issues that face us on this planet. 🍁