

## The Nation-State After Globalism

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*This paper, the text of a keynote talk given at the AESA 2000 Annual Conference in Vancouver, argues that we have an opportunity and responsibility to explore with students ways of strengthening the civil, democratic basis of the nation-state, given how post-coldwar globalism has reduced, however slightly, the nation's critical economic and ideological role, while drawing classrooms into a greater global community in which traditional nationalist notions of who-belongs-where are only greater sources of inequity and miseducation. After the talk, Bernardo Gallegos, who was invited to give a response, raised a series of helpful challenges to this effort to hold the nation to its democratic promise and to my manner of setting the nation into question, especially after I had written so earnestly in *Learning to Divide the World: Education at Empires End (1998a)* about the depth of European imperial intent contained, for example, in aboriginal exhibitions and in the West's particular use of nationhood within its moral economy. In light of his comments, readers need to judge whether the educational proposal expressed here to stop treating nationhood as a means of locating who-belongs-where, while working on increasing its original promise as a civil and political space, contributes to or betrays the larger, postcolonial critique that continues to be developed by Bernardo Gallegos (1998) and others.*

When I was first approached to give this talk by Wendy Kolhi, program chair for this year's AESA conference, she mentioned that the Association was interested in having a local keynote at its annual conference. Now, I have assumed, believe me, that this was about more than simply the careful management of conference travel expenses. Rather, I took this choice of me as someone who is, in some sense, local, to be about something else. In fact, I went so far as to take this invitation to be about giving some sense of rootedness to what can seem to be the rootless cosmopolitanism of the academic conference circuit, with a touch-down this week in Vancouver, organized as far as I can tell by Wendy in New York. Having arrived here myself a decade ago, I am not so much

a splash of local color, perhaps, as an acknowledgement that there might be a here here, as if to steel us against Gertrude Stein's acute perception that there is no there there. Still, I am not the one to deliver you here. I am not the one who can wrest you from the Universalized Conference Hotel that you might find the ground beneath your feet. I may, however, be able to point to one who can.

A few months ago, Vincent Stogan Sr. passed away. Vince was certainly local, but more importantly, what he did for as long as I knew him was to bring home the local for those lived and visited here. Vince was a Musqueam elder. The Musqueam people have lived here for a very long time. They are part of a very early globalization that first breached the east-west divide. Vince was invited to open conferences and other special events the Great Hall of the First Nation House of Learning at the University of British Columbia. Once he was convinced of the value of the event, he would come, wearing the clothes of a man who worked with his hands for a living, and gave a prayer and invocation among the well-pressed suits that tend to appear for conference openings.

Vince would first speak in English, welcoming everyone, inviting them to feel at home on Musqueam land and to go about their important business in a fruitful way. I was caught off-guard the first time I heard this assertion of Musqueam sovereignty over the land on which the university stands. Without irony or a quiver of resentment in his voice, he welcomed us to his homeland, leaving it to us to remember the history buried within a poorly paid graciousness. There is no doubt, by every convention of international law, that this is Musqueam land. It is land that has been occupied by the Musqueam people for ten thousand years and has not yet be ceded by treaty or agreement to those who occupy it and trade in it at some of the highest prices paid in North America for what is not yet theirs. Until very recently, the whole of this province occupied the First Nations' unceded lands. The courts have now finally agreed to recognize this fact, leading to a treaty process that has finally reached its first settlements and will be underway for a generation or more to come.

Vince would ask us to join hands. And before delivering a considerable prayer in Hun'q'umin'un, he would explain in English how he would pay homage to our ancestors, with a wish that we at the conference would receive their blessings in wisdom, peace, friendship, and courage. In holding hands together with him, he pointed out, we held our

left palm upward to receive the teachings of the ancestors, and our right palm down to turn these lessons back to the young. And then the conference would go into its own form of ancestor worship, with homages paid to Hegel and Kant, Woolf and De Beauvoir, Barthes and Foucault, Dewey and Green. And Vince would, then, catch a ride back to his home, just beyond the edge of the campus, near what are known as the university's "endowment lands."

But that is not all that Vince has left us with on the tenuousness of the nation's claims. The Musqueam belong to the Assembly of First Nations. Those who are considered the indigenous people of this land identify themselves, as a whole, as First Nations. This naming of themselves is, of course, a profound and political linguistic act. It overthrows the presumptive mis-naming by others. It is a declaration of being first among nations. This challenges Canada's sovereignty, and its failure as a nation to honor the principles of equality and democratic justice that it would otherwise claim for itself. From my perspective, at least, the First Nations title is not about race or culture. The earlier assigned name had been meant to contain all of that. This assertion of nationhood has everything to do with regaining control over education, governance, and land, wresting it from Canada's highly paternalistic and colonial Department of Indian Affairs. The unsettling politics of nationhood in Vince's welcome is one way of locating how we might make something new of the nation, educationally speaking, and that would be to simply hold it to its original promise of respecting all its citizens.

There is yet a second aspect to this place which calls the nation into question. In coming to this AESA conference, many of you crossed a national border with little more than a show of your passport. This easy passage into Canada is something more than what a majority of the students who attend schools here, in Vancouver, can accomplish. The reason is that they are learning to speak English as at least their second language. They are not "native speakers" of either of this nation's two official languages. Their are well over a hundred languages spoken the students, led by Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, and Spanish (Gunderson and Clarke, 1998, p. 266). These mother tongues place them elsewhere, situating them in another place and of another nationality. That our schools are home to so many who are not heard as being fully here also disrupts what we take for granted about this nation.

For some, this diversity threatens to transport and displace the entire city, judging by a prediction that appeared in the Globe and Mail, this country's original "national newspaper," nearly a decade ago which declared that Vancouver "is going to become an Asian city." The article carried the wonderfully racialized headline, "Face of Vancouver to Be Radically Altered."<sup>1</sup> If the faces on the street are radically altered, and thus no longer overwhelmingly white, then this city is no longer here, in Canada. It has been lost to the "sleeping giant," as one school text puts it, of Asia (Willinsky, 1998, p. 128). That Asia is here, and not only there, might seem to speak to cosmopolitan sensibilities within a borderless world, but as it is sounded here, in Vancouver, it is touching the nationalist nerve of white panic.

## I

You are, then, in a good place to think about how the nation has served as an educational device for positioning people, for teaching young and old who-belongs-where. This is a good place to contemplate not only possible futures for the nation, but for considering, I will argue in what follows, our educational responsibilities in directing that future toward what has always been promised in the name of the nation, namely the right to join together in the making of a better world.

I am here, then, on disputed land, in a place that may not be here (but in Asia), to consider what we at this conference, with our concern for the schools, are to do with this idea of the nation. What is to be made of this critical juncture of multinational, transnational, and post-national globalism? Among recent signs of a the shift are the United Nations' debates that weigh human rights against national rights which challenge the UN's traditional protection of national interests. Canada's Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy has commissioned an international study on how to begin thinking beyond the nation in protecting human rights: "Our take has been that since the end of the cold war we have to focus on the individuals, on the people. That is as much in the charter as sovereignty" (Crossette, 2000, p. A11).

The nation may still stand as the fundamental demarcation of geographical space, the primary organization of place. But the cold-war's end has meant that the nation is no

longer the domino in the only game in town. The nation is no longer the primary ideological unit, to stand as friend or foe, in the great struggle against evil. Global forces connect the world in a virtual and literal sense that pays little heed to national borders. It makes less sense, then, to think of the nation as defining who people are, how they live, and where they belong. For some, like John Tomlinson, of Nottingham Trent University, it may well seem that globalization “weakens the cultural coherence of all nation-states, including economically powerful ones,” but I would hold that this sense of cultural coherence within the nation has always been a questionable state (forgive the pun). What this increased transnational flow of people, capital, and goods does enable us to do is to call this assumed coherence, and the unnecessary damage it does, more forcefully into question (1991, p. 175).

So let us not allow this seeming loss of national distinctions cause us to go misty-eyed. Please, let us be both educational and ethical opportunists here. Let us ask how can we steer this slight turning away from the nation toward some greater good for, in the first instance perhaps, the transnational young who are trying to find themselves in our schools. Let us see whether we can correct the educational excesses that would closely link national identity to race, culture, and gender.<sup>2</sup> Let us see if we can teach the young about holding the democratic nation to its promises, challenging its shortcomings, and supporting its ongoing civil and political experiment in public deliberation. This means drawing the young into a concern for the experiment they are living out, giving them a sense of responsibility, not for living out national destinies but for improving, on a local and global level, how people live and work together. It means teaching them how to hold the nation responsible for principles that extend beyond the nation and nationalism.<sup>3</sup>

Now, such educational optimism may seem a trifle unwarranted. After all, I do read the papers. The headlines are regularly haunted by spectacles of ethnic nationalism. And I know that we are a long way from separating how we view nationality through the lens of race, culture, and gender, a long way from allowing that everyone has an equal and unequivocal claim to being here in that national sense.

But we need to start somewhere, and I am proposing that we begin by reducing the emphasis on the nation as defining what is inherently common to us all, so that we can see it more fully as a civil and political device for working with and through

differences. This is no small step, given that only a couple of decades ago, the distinguished social theorist Ernest Gellner could define nationalism as “the principle of homogeneous cultural units as the foundations of political life, and of the obligatory cultural unity of rulers and ruled” and that, as such, was inherent in “the condition of our times” (1983, p. 125). If nationalism was neither natural state nor a “precondition for social life,” Gellner held that it was driven by industrialization, which created a “national imperative” of cultural homogeneity. Such homogeneity was necessarily supported by national school systems that ensured a common language and sensibility. Such grand theories of national identity are exactly what our students must test against the experience of their own neighborhoods, as well as within the economies that dress, feed, and amuse them. They need to see how the nation has a history of stumbling badly over these assumptions of cultural coherence.

In the case of Canada, for example, they could well turn to the work of Sunera Thobani, in Women’s Studies at Simon Fraser University. She has found that “historically, the Canadian state has contended with the conflicting interests of preserving ‘whiteness’ of the nation while simultaneously ensuring an adequate supply of labor” (2000, p. 34). And if that was then, what now, given that race has been ostensibly removed from this country’s immigration policies, and voting privileges have, since the second world war, been extended to immigrants from China and India, as well to the aboriginal peoples? “Canadian nation building,” Thobani finds, “relies in no small measure upon the construction of immigrants, in general, and immigrant women in particular, as one of the most potent threats to the nation’s prosperity and well-being” (ibid.). This may well be an era of globalization, but we clearly have much to do in setting our ideas of the nation in order.

My educational proposal calls the very idea of the nation into question. It has an eye to advancing the nation’s civil and democratic qualities through two steps: First, we need to study with students how the original promise of the modern nation, as a free association of equals, is the point of a continuing economic, social, and philosophical struggle, even as the nation’s status is changing in the face of globalization. Second, we need to explore with students various means of advancing this democratic experiment, not only with the nation-state, but at the global and local levels at which we now live.

This rethinking of the nation with students could begin with how the modern nation-state has long been pulled in two directions – ethnic and civil, the nation as a source of cultural identity and the nation as a form of voluntary political association. The goal here is not necessarily about striking a balance between the nation as shared destiny and political engagement, as the two ideas can easily work against each other. If democracy really did require this ethnic nationalist sense of a shared culture and a common set of values among its citizens (beyond a commitment to democratic processes), as Princeton political philosopher Amy Gutman makes clear, then it would be far less of a democracy, with far less hope of teaching us about ourselves and each other through deliberation and debate (1999, p. 11). Rather, the democratic state was founded, at least in its formal political sense, on a minimal principle of association, based on a common humanity, with people committed to working out together ways of advancing their varying and common interests.

Certainly, the United States, to take a nearby example, was launched in the spirit of the political rather than the ethnic nation. The country’s initial public offering, otherwise known as the Declaration of Independence, refers to “nation” but once, when it speaks of how unworthy the King George III is as head of a civilized nation. The Declaration speaks rather of “the political bands” which “connect” one people to another, held together by the self-evident truths of people’s fundamental equality and their unalienable rights: “That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.” This sense of the state, as a secular banding together of people interested in securing their rights, needs to guide our educational efforts which must ultimately equip the young to judge the great shortfalls in securing the rights and to pursue a just power that derives from the consent of the governed.<sup>4</sup>

This secular, civil model of the nation has often been lost to its standing as a “spiritual principle,” in the words of historian Ernest Renan. In his lecture “What Is a Nation?” given at the Sorbonne in 1882, Renan was, even then, concerned with stripping the nation of its metaphysical claims. He points to how critical “forgetting” and “historical error” are to the “creation of a nation” especially given that national unity is “always affected by means of brutality” (p. 11). Renan goes on to reject the commonly

assumed national principles of a shared race, language, and religion, only to accept, as a good historian should perhaps, that the nation is “the outcome of the profound complications of history” (p. 18). “It presupposes a past,” he adds, “it is summarized, however, in the present by a tangible fact, namely consent, the clearly expressed desire to continue a common life” (p. 19). In the face of the nation’s “spiritual principle,” he still looks for how its continuing existence reflects, in effect, “a daily plebiscite” (ibid.). Similarly, he holds the nation up as a love object, as “one loves the house that one has built and that one has handed down,” even as he attempted to distance himself from its racial and cultural basis (ibid.). But how possible is that, you might well ask, given how the heady mix of patriotic nativism burned through too much of the twentieth century with horrendous associations of nation and race, even as nations failed terribly to protect all of those who found themselves living within their borders.

Yet students also need to appreciate how this spirit of ethnic nationalism also proved an effective instrument against colonialism and the subjection of minority cultures within existing nations. Historian Partha Chatterjee, speaking of India’s struggles against British imperialism, points out that “here nationalism launches its most powerful, creative, and historically significant project: to fashion a ‘modern’ national culture that is nevertheless not Western” (1993, p. 6). Still, Chatterjee allows, “the dominant elements of its self-definition, at least in post-colonial India, were drawn from the ideology of the liberal-democratic state” (p. 10), even as he offers a vision what comes after the triumph of this nationalism in India: “The critique of nationalist discourse must find for itself the ideological means to connect the popular strength of the people’s struggles with the consciousness of a new universality” (1986, p. 170).

In a post-colonial Canada, both the aboriginal peoples, as I’ve already indicated, and the Quebecois have called on a self-defining nationalism to fight for previously denied rights within the larger nation. Pierre Elliot Trudeau, among this nation’s greatest prime ministers and another of this country’s recent losses, was drawn, as a Québécois, into politics to fight a Quebec nationalism that he saw as the enemy of a liberal democratic tradition. As it turned out, of course, Trudeau managed to hold the spirit of Quebec separatism at bay through an questionable political mixture: suspending civil liberties during the War Measures act in 1970 while going on to make the country



officially bilingual and multicultural and instituting a national Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Although Quebec's future is by no means settled, students here might well appreciate how Trudeau sought to counter ethnic nationalism by strengthening the rights-based civil state. More importantly, and encouragingly for my proposal, this civil strategy has been on the rise on a global scale in recent years. Over the last decade, according to Ted Robert Gurr, University of Maryland head of the Minorities at Risk Project, there has been "a sharp decline in ethnic wars, the settlement of many old ones, and proactive efforts by states and international organizations to recognize group rights and channel ethnic disputes into conventional politics" (2000, p. 52). This channeling of ethnic disputes into national political processes has taken place, among newly democratic governments in Europe, Asia, and Latin America, as they formally recognize and guarantee political and cultural rights to minorities within their borders. This, for me, holds important lessons about the changing nation-state. In far fewer instances is the nation being defined as an ethnic unit by those who live within it. Although ethnic bloodshed persists in Israel, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere, the decline in violence over the last decade, Gurr argues, points to gains in political and civil solutions to the question of what defines the nation.<sup>5</sup>

The historical lessons that need honing concern how the nation's best hopes for equal participation and unalienable rights have repeatedly fallen short of the promise, even as the nation may well have made small incremental steps toward that goal. Students also need to understand how this vision of humanity's basic equality has not always been a part of what was and continues to be taught in school. Students need to see how the schools' critical role in shaping how we perceive who-belongs-where by nationality, and their own textbooks, as well as earlier ones still sitting perhaps in the school's bookroom, form a fine starting point for understanding how we need to reset our understanding of the nation, setting it back on a civil path as an association of equals.<sup>6</sup>

## II

After this all-too-brief historical look at the nation-state, and before going on to consider my second educational principle, which concerns how schools can support greater civil and political deliberation among students, I want to offer a critical interlude. For I can readily see four likely objections to my educational focus on the nation, namely that (1) I am undemocratically assuming a particularly Western approach to the nation-state, (2) the nation-state is already a dead concept, (3) the nation should be set aside in favor of cosmopolitanism, and finally (4) that this whole concern with the nation-state is simply educationally irrelevant today.

If this concern with the nation-state is to be all about respecting differences, then what of the charge that such faith in reason and democracy is a Western ploy to sustain its once and fading dominance? Are these national ideals better abandoned as a failed experiment? This is not simply about rejecting Western thinking on the nation. It is misleading and plain arrogant to imagine, Amartya Sen, the Nobel-prize winning economist has recently pointed out, that reason is strictly a Western ideal (2000). He attacks the idea of setting a selective, singular set of “Asian values,” in favor of discipline and order, against “Western values” of liberty and reason (p. 36). He goes on to argue that “once we recognize that many ideas that are taken to be quintessentially Western have also flourished in other civilizations... we need not begin with pessimism, at least on this ground, about the prospects of reasoned humanism in the world” (*ibid.*). Having rejected the West’s exclusive hold on reason, we are left to explore how ideas of nation can work within the logic of democratic and deliberative processes.<sup>7</sup>

This brings me to a second concern, which is that the nation is already a lost cause and we had best just get over it. Such is the view, for example, of Mohammed Bamyeh, of New York University and editor of a journal of “transnational and transcultural studies.” He holds in his critique of the new imperialism, that “the final victory of capitalism everywhere means... that the capitalist state has lost its mission and meaning” (2000, p. 2). Bamyeh places his faith in grass-roots “organized voluntaristic interventions” and a “nascent ‘global civil society’” (p. 24).<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Bernardo Gallegos argues that, in the case of Mexico and the United States, the nation can be “a disabling discursive category” that leads to the “erasure of indigenous identities” while he calls for a re-conception of social space and arrangements, pointing to the indigenous

Zapatista movement in the southern Mexican State of Chiapas as an example (1998, p. 237).

It is clear that this is an age of new politics that upsets old ways of understanding the nation. As Anne-Christine Hubbard, deputy secretary general of International Federation of Human Rights, has explained these politics mean that “ours is a new planetary citizenship, reflecting the fact that decisions have migrated from the state level. Voting for national representatives, an old expression of citizenship, achieves nothing, because they have scant power” (Cohen, 2000, p. WK1). There is no question that decisions of considerable consequence are increasingly taking place on the global stage, often behind the closed curtains of the WTO, IMF, and major financial interests. Even the president of the World Bank, James D. Wolfensohn, knows enough to declare that “something is wrong when the richest 20 percent of the global population receive more than 80 percent of the global income” (Khan, 2000, p. A6). The question then is what to do in the face of a problem of such enormous scope. How can we, to further quote bank president Wolfensohn puts it, “make globalization an instrument of opportunity and inclusion – not fear” (*ibid.*)? In the face of such a question, rather than simply joining in the chorus railing against the death of the nation and the rise of globalization demons, it may be far more helpful, I am suggesting, to identify specific projects that stand some chance of furthering opportunity and inclusion, whether we are bank presidents or university professors.

I think it hasty to write off states as “large deadly vacuities,” as Bamyeh does (2000. p. 25). I think it time, following Gallegos, to reconceptualize the social space and arrangements of the nation. Let us at least turn to the state’s school systems and universities to see if we can prepare the young and ourselves better for working in conjunction with grass-roots organizations to foster a more civil society at every level. Civility cannot simply happen at the global level; it has to be civil all the way down. I see this as an opportunity for the schools and universities to sharpen the state’s political focus, to help it bring public reason to bear on questions of local and global interests. This is about the capitalist state having a mission and meaning. We have to see how our work as educators can do more to expand, if not restore, the scope of the public sphere within national democratic processes.<sup>9</sup>

In this way, I open myself to a third possible objection with my seemingly parochial concern with the nation. To the contrary, I am advocating that we gain some critical distance on how education divides up the world. This seems to me a first step in paying greater allegiance, as Martha Nussbaum holds we should, to humanity's reason and moral capacity (1996, p. 7). This distinguished philosopher at the University of Chicago is best known for having so thoughtfully kept the ancient wisdom of the Greeks vital in such works as the Fragility of Goodness and Love's Knowledge. This year, however, she published the more prosaically entitled, Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach (2000). This book finds her far from the Parthenon, sitting on the ground in rural Bihar in northeastern India observing for herself how well the Adithi literacy program is working in improving the lot of women (2000). She actively solicits our participation in supporting the world-wide growth of women's education as a humane response to the forces of globalization by which we are otherwise profiting by in many ways.

Nussbaum has also called elsewhere for the introduction of a cosmopolitan rather than a nationalist education, in which we learn to see ourselves as citizens of the world, moved by the universal values of a common humanity (1996). Her provocative rejection of national patriotism has given rise to considerable debate over whether we can so easily turn away from our national commitments, given that there is no larger state to be a citizen of, nor any apparent agreement over which shared values provide a basis for such a common cause (Walzer, 1996; Putman, 1996). Yet we need not choose between nation and world in our allegiances, she holds against her dichotomizing critics, we need to overcome that particular chauvinism that mars the political stature of the nation by recognizing that what links me to my neighborhood links me to humanity at large.

How then are we to do a better job of honoring that principle of cosmopolitanism, whether within our own families and neighborhoods or among those that exist in seemingly distant lands? The problem, as Nussbaum identifies it, is that "we think of people from China as our fellows the minute they dwell in a certain place, namely the United States, but not when they dwell in a certain other place, namely China" (p. 14).<sup>10</sup> The term "Chinese" (and "Asian," for that matter) acts as a blended racial, cultural, and national designation that we need to critically analyze with students. These labels of

“other” by another are one of the primary social legacies of imperialism which each of us continues to live through.<sup>11</sup>

I have now arrived at the fourth (but never final) objection to this concern with redressing the nation, which is about whether I need to simply get real. For you may well be shaking your heads over how I am so totally missing the Big Education Issue of the Day, which is, of course, raising educational standards in the schools. (It is so not reducing the schools’ spirit of nationalism.)<sup>12</sup> If I am not talking about ways of improving test scores, whether through incentives, vouchers, privatization, or computers, then I am not talking to parents, teachers, administrators, politicians, or anyone else who has a hope of influencing the schools.

In the face of such concerns, I would still ask that with this paramount concern that more students learn more in every grade, we give some consideration to what it is they are going to learn more about. There are lessons, I am suggesting, that we have long taught about the nation and nationality that do not serve our students well. If we are going to raise the standards for more students, then let us also reflect on what they learn and how it contributes to the world they are going to inherit. If those raised standards are intended to improve the quality of life, then let us consider the implications of what students learn and practice, whether in social studies, information technologies, or language arts, for democratic participation on a local, national, and global level. Otherwise, to go on assuming that the principal educational goal is to raise students’ test scores seems to sell what we do in classrooms, not to mention the students themselves, vastly short.

Professors of education have a responsibility, I would hold, to find ways of extending the public conversation about education so that it continues to include a concern with what we are learning and how that learning contributes to this changing world. Schools everywhere have long reinforced this concept of a singular national identity with the world neatly divided into color-coded nations, each with their own characteristics, currencies, and customs. This has been tempered by the introduction of multiculturalism into the curriculum, enabling students to see how their nation is enriched by other nationalities and cultures. This can, however, sustain the view that people carry

a home-nation – or is it just a culture and race? – on their backs like snails, as they have made their way in the world.

The curriculum has also grown more global in its perspective, and I am encouraged by reports that a greater sense of the world’s interconnectedness can be found in some social studies classes, at least in America (Merryfield, in press). Yet Merry M. Merrifield, a curriculum professor at Ohio State, has also found that this globalism carries underlying assumptions of both capitalism’s triumph and America’s continuing dominance. Not surprisingly, she calls for “moving the center of global education from institutionalized divisions of people and ideas to the complexity of the interaction and syncretism of the global human experience” (in press). This move would help the school curriculum catch up to what the world has long been about.

But oh, the continuing force of those institutionalized divisions. The complexity that the students also need to understand, now as much as ever, is how this still-powerful idea of the nation can shape the very way we see and understand each other; the students need to appreciate how the idea of the nation has worked historically for and against its very promise of self-determination and self-definition, its promise of political deliberation and consent. They need to see how globalization may pose a threat to hard-won democratic forms of state governance, no less in areas of education than in trade or law.<sup>13</sup>

### III

My educational goal, then, is to explore with students how the nation-state has long been about both the patriotic call to loyalty and an open commitment to protecting dissent and other democratic processes. I want to ask how we can begin to study the nation-state in ways that reduce our chauvinistic fixing of who-belongs-where and increase our chances of seeing how the nation can extend democratic and civil processes within our lives and work. The schools have long worked both the civil and nativist tendencies of the nation, teaching about the rights and liberties of democratic participation while celebrating allegiance to the nation, with their flags, anthems, and pledges, as well as their maps, histories, and stories. The schools have always sought to instill a spirit of patriotism in

the young around a common cultural legacy, and as proponents of multiculturalism have made clear, this has meant the exclusion and alienation of too many students. I am proposing that all students need to understand how the idea of nation has been divided in ways that have worked against its own democratic promises, both in how we have learned about other nations and in how we have learned about the nation in which we live.

One means of rethinking who-belongs-where is by paying attention to those who already belong to many places. The emerging transnational ruling class might be one critical point of attention (Robinson and Harris, 2000). But then so might the new transnational migrant classes. For who can tell us more about the multiplicity of rootedness, of being variously local, than people who freely move among a number of nations. This jet set, however, flies with the rest of us in coach. These are working people who “develop networks, activities, patterns of living, and ideologies that span their home and host society,” according to the anthropological work of Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina Szanton Blanc (1994, p. 4). But distinctions between a “home” and “host” society doesn’t really work for these “transmigrants.” They circulate rather than immigrate. They are at home on the streets of New York and in a Trinidadian village. Their roots in both nations are not just social, but economic, political, and religious. Their co-existence defies traditional notions of nation and nationality, not least of all through their selfless efforts to redress national inequities their families suffer by sending money to those in need. Here, then, is how people live and work on a global level and among nations. Here they contribute to two nations’ vitality while defying claims to a necessary, sustaining nationality. Here is a model of the nation as a place for people who are here and elsewhere, an idea of the nation not so wholly focused on itself, a collection of scattered communities, devoted to working together to share their mobile opportunities.

This trans-national, transmigrant sense of connection and support, of responsibility and opportunity, could well temper our far more closed sense of nationality. This fixing of people to nations is what we need to give up in learning and teaching about what we are, about what cultures and nations are, and about what we owe each other in the circulation of goods and understandings. It is what we need to take up in thinking about the nation as defining a group’s efforts to extend and refine democratic

forms of justice and governance. The nation need not be thought of as that special place to which we are given. It needs to be more a place where we gather together equally, to imagine and to work together on imagining, what want to make of this world. It is but a unit for organizing the way we live, and we need to think about what, given its size, its administrative structures, its history, it can best do to ensure that it reduces the harm that we are capable of doing each other, and especially the harm that has, in the past and today, that it does in its own name of nationality and nationalism..

Yet in bringing this measure of reason to why and how this concept nation has operated, I do not want to deny the need for roots.<sup>14</sup> There is no giving up our sense of belonging, of having deep and abiding feelings for a place or more likely a series of places, demarcated by memory's streets, hills, a line of trees, the turn of a river, no less than a way of talking and cooking, than the color of the buses, than the music playing in the corner store. There are times, too, when this country has sent in troops. Within these places lie aspects of our identity and thus what we bring to the deliberations of the nation. This sense of place, infused with memories, may mean that I want to keep my streets as they were and seem always to have been. These sentiments are directed at times toward restricting immigration, and here, in Vancouver, they resulted in regulations, in an earlier era, that kept properties in certain neighborhoods from being sold to Jews and Asians. And this is why, I would argue, that we need to help students see that the nation is a place where our attachments to memory and identity cannot be allowed to over-ride fundamental democratic principles of what we owe each other. It means looking critically with students at how this idea of the nation operates. It means explaining why at this time we are focusing on the nation as a means of realizing the rights and obligations of citizenship, while worrying that it can too often serve as a source of sentimental and occasionally hostile nativism and nationality.

We need to explore with our students how this concept of nation makes necessarily insecure claims to a people as well as to the land they live on. As long as some people within the nation are thought of as rooted elsewhere by their nationality or race, their full and equal participation in this democratic nation is undermined. That is, the basic premises of the democratic state have not been realized. How much less true is it today, we can ask them, then it was in 1903 when W. E. B. Du Bois spoke of African-



Americans as ever having to possess this “double-consciousness,” ever having to feel this “two-ness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings” (1989, p. 5)? How is it that the nation is so identified with one race that others must live divided lives? Is this not finally a time in which an American can be understood to identify no more than one who is living in America? That has always been true, at one level, but now it has taken on a moral political imperative if this democratic quality of the nation is going to continue to advance.

We need to track how prevailing ideas of nationhood are changing in the face of a wide range of forces that include globalization, but also the spread of democracy, feminism, and environmentalism. We need to press these new global communication technologies so that they advance public interests within this growing knowledge economy. We need to ask, at every turn, how our work in the study of education helps identify and clarify ways of extending the democratic basis of the state. We need to specify projects of educational intervention in the face of what can otherwise be a platitudinous approach of joining the chorus now given to denouncing the evils of globalization.

Take the critical question of language, from bilingual education programs to the official English movement in the United States. There is no question that access to English is now a global issue. But against the hegemony of this language, can we explore with students how democratic processes operate in multi-lingual communities? Can we consider with them the sometimes assumptions that guide ESL programs (Norton, 2000)? Can we explore the role of translation within these communities and how it can be better supported by the schools and students themselves? What are the sources of political information, the processes of local and public deliberation? How are rights exercised within multi-lingual communities? How can they be extended as a part of an educational process? Can a greater place for multilingual literature and arts in the schools and communities support the idea of the nation and its schools as a place of meeting, of inquiry and exchange?

Or consider the new information technologies. These machines may be the mainstay of a knowledge-based global economy, but they can also be used to deliver on the national promise of democratic access and action. The question is then one of how

this technology can further expand the public sphere, providing opportunities for greater awareness, understanding and participation, on a national and global level. How, then, are students being prepared to take advantage of greater public access to government documents, and related research and policy analysis? How ready are they to utilize these new information sources to foster greater public deliberation and participation? Are there ways for these new information systems to extend democratic processes into the workplace and other walks of life?

To turn to my own struggle with these new technologies, for a moment, I have made improving the public value of research, as means of advancing the democratic basis of the nation my project. The Public Knowledge Project, as we call it, is exploring how our scholarly activities could do more to support the deliberative qualities of the democratic state and to extend this spirit of deliberation to more of our lives.<sup>15</sup> It is work that draws inspiration from Dorothy Smith when she advocates a social science “that would extend people’s own good knowledge of the local practices and terrains of their everyday/everynight living, enlarging the scope of what becomes visible from that site, mapping the relations that connect one local site to another. Like a map it would be through and through indexical to the local sites of people’s experience, making visible how we are connected into the extended social ruling relations and the economy” (1999, pp. 94-95). The Public Knowledge Project’s challenge is to situate and support this large and unwieldy body of research so that people can readily connect local understandings and ruling relations. Smith offers a helpful guiding principle for this work when she allows that, “though some of the work of inquiry would be technical, as making a map is, its product could be ordinarily accessible and usable as a map is” (p. 95).

Yet we also realize that simply creating access to this body of knowledge will not be enough. As Smith insists, “knowledge must be differently written and differently designed if it is bear other social relations than those of ruling” (p. 94). Our belief is that we can actually facilitate a greater public engagement with research and researchers in the social sciences, it is bound to change how research is conducted and written, encouraging, for example, a greater concern with the coherence and connection not only research studies but with work going on within that greater public realm, as researchers begin to see how the work they do can better serve those whom they would help.

Bringing this social sciences research to bear on national debates over First Nation rights, immigration, education, and social welfare is, of course, only one potential playing field for this work. But my point is that the nation offers both opportunity and motive when it comes to a rethinking of how it has positioned who-belongs-where, in schools and out, in ways that work decidedly against its democratic aspirations.

One reason for this concern that we work more directly on exploring democratic processes is the notable loss of faith and confidence in the democratic governments of Europe, North America, and Japan over the last three decades (Pharr, Putman, and Dalton, 2000). We may be bowling alone now (which is totally understandable to me, at least, given those bowling-team shirts), but we are also far better informed and ready to act on that information, if only in the areas of health, finance, sports, and comparison shopping.<sup>16</sup> Surely, there are political lessons to be learned from this knowledge economy. Consider this declaration of independence from October 6, 2000: “A revolution ... has occurred. You won. Never before have individual[s]... had the power and access they have today. Information and opportunities previously available only to large institutions and the very wealthy are now in the hands of the people – in your hands.” It does sound like a renewed sense of the political state. But, of course, it’s from a two-page spread for E\*TRADE, guided by the fundamental democratic principle, “It’s your money.”

Let us at least imagine an education system that prepared students with “information and opportunities previously available only to large institutions and the very wealthy” that supported their participation in a nation largely concerned with democratic deliberation. As we think of democracy as an ongoing experiment, then here is, perhaps, a chance to work afresh with how it is served by the nation-state. Here is a chance to see if education within democratic nations, once it is far less absorbed in questions of nationality and national identity, can do more for the exercise of public reason. The historical and present lessons that we learn within this national forum, in defense of minority rights, on the art of political compromise, and in setting up checks and balances, can then be applied to full and very wide range of political demarcations that we now face, which might, in one instance, be focused on neighborhood efforts to extend green spaces or, in another, on global initiatives to counter sweatshops.

The modern nation-state has a history that we are by no means done with yet. It will take more than all of the cyber-hype of globalization to sweep away such history. But then I am not keen on having us rush into becoming citizens of the world – as easily distracted as we are by all that glitters – at least not before we have finished learning how to be citizens of this earlier democratic experiment of such promise. The nation is not, then, to be discarded. It is, however, ready to be moved along, if not into a higher state, then into being less of a state of being and more of a place where we gather to recognize what we owe each other and this land. It begins with challenging our own seemingly natural perceptions of who-belongs-where. It means calling ourselves on this need to constantly position others, to fix them as we ourselves would not be fixed, by such categories as nationality with all of its racial overtones. The nation is a habit of mind that is reinforced by school and media, a habit that seems based on our experience and travels. But if the mind needs ready ways of organizing how the world comes to it, by labeling the parts and people, then we need to study how those labels work with and against what we want of the world. We need to challenge and check those habits of mind, to reduce their consequences, if not eliminate the habits

This is why we, as educators, need to take hold of this idea of the nation, calling it current state into question in our research and with our students. We need to ask how our work can advance the nation as far more of a political forum and civil space concerned with the making of local and larger worlds. We need to better understand how the nation-state can facilitate and structure a fair and cooperative agreement among people to work and live together, as well as how it can do a better job of mediating between local and global concerns. We have too often taken the nation as a given, a product of history and a source of identity. The modern nation, as an association of people who have agreed to work together on improving the quality and degree of self-governance, has all along been within our reach and responsibility to ensure that it delivered a greater part of its promise, a greater part of our hopes for it. We are here, then, to demonstrate with research and scholarship that we have the means and the will to welcome a rethinking of what could be made better, as Vince Stogan would have welcomed us, to a place that is by no means ours to take for granted.

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<sup>1</sup> This is quoted from the University of Washington geographer Katharyne Mitchell (1996) who offers an excellent reading of the city within the tensions of the global and the local and, I would add, the nation and race question.

<sup>2</sup> See Anthony D. Smith (1991) for a detailed discussion of the elements of national identity.

<sup>3</sup> In acting on the nation out of a regard for something larger, Amy Gutman cites Martin Luther King Jr. speech opposing the Vietnam War, in which he speaks of “us who deem ourselves bound by allegiances and loyalties which are broader and deeper than nationalism and which go beyond the nation’s defined goals and positions...” (1999, p. 310).

<sup>4</sup> The liberal principles of free association and informed consent among equals gathered together to protect the rights and liberties of all are secured in the Western tradition through Locke and Mill: “That which begins and actually constitutes any political society,” John Locke held, as the very voice of reason in the seventeenth century, “is nothing but the consent of any number of freemen, capable of majority, to unite and incorporate into such a society” (p. 166). Or as John Stuart Mills had it nearly two centuries later: “The ideally best form of government is that in which the sovereignty, or supreme controlling power in the last resort is vested in the entire aggregate of the community every citizen not only having a voice in the exercise of that ultimate sovereignty, but bring at least occasionally, called on to take an actual part in the government, by the personal discharge of some public function, local or general”(1910, p. 207).

<sup>5</sup> Nearly three decades ago, Walker Connor estimated that only a very small portion of nation-states – he put it at 10 percent – come even close to lining up with a single ethnicity (1972). This move toward the civil state is also been picked up by Jean-Marie Guéhenno, France’s ambassador to the European Union: “The nation is no longer camouflage for the tribe, but a political space in which democracy can be constructed” (1995, p. 3).

<sup>6</sup> For examples in history, geography, science, language, and literature, see my Learning to divide the world: Education at empire’s end (1998a).

<sup>7</sup> It would also be misleading to overlook the non-Western influences on what we take to be Western thought, as George Siuoi’s (1992), for example, demonstrates Amerindian influences on the democratic thinking of Rousseau, Diderot and others (1992). See also Tu Wei-Ming’s analysis of Confucian thought: “It seems reasonable that one can endorse an insight into the self as a basis for equality and liberty without accepting Locke’s idea of private property, Adam Smith’s and Hobbe’s idea of private interest, John Stuart Mill’s idea of privacy, Kierkegaard’s idea of loneliness, or the early Sartre’s idea of freedom” (1985, p. 78).

<sup>8</sup> Also see Dirlik (1996) on the local organizations as a source of hope against global forces.

<sup>9</sup> I discuss these issues of the public sphere elsewhere (2000, pp. 195-220; 1999b, pp. 126-152). See also Calhoun (1997).

<sup>10</sup> However, the recent evidence drawn from the Los Alamos National Laboratory indicates otherwise, at least for the FBI, U.S., Department of Justice and New York Times, in the case of Wen Ho Lee. On September 26, 2000, the New York Times published extraordinary critical appraisal of its own handling of the Wen Lo Hee case, in which Lee was charge with multiple counts of mishandling U.S. atomic secrets, allegedly betraying them to China (p. A2).

<sup>11</sup> Although I am only examining the national aspect in this paper, I have considered the blend elsewhere (1999a).

<sup>12</sup> In this province, the study of the nation, as an idea, formally takes place in grade 9 social studies in which students, in the course of studying Europe and North America, 1500-1815, are expected to “define colonialism, imperialism, and nationalism; analyze factors that contribute to revolution and conflict; and analyze the contributions of the English, French, and American revolutions in the development of democratic concepts.” Prescribed Learning Outcomes, Grade 9, B.C. Ministry of Education, <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/curric/sslo810/lo2.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> In introducing a recent book on globalization and education, Nicholas Burbles and Carlos Torres warn that if public education ignores globalization, “it runs the risk of becoming increasingly superseded by educational influences that are no longer accountable to public governance and control,” to which they add (open to the misreading that the current nation-state is what needs to be protected) that “in our view,



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nothing less is at stake than the survival of the democratic form of governance and the role of public education in that enterprise” (2000, p. 23).

<sup>14</sup> This reference to the need for roots is borrowed from Simone Weil, whose work on this topic I deal with elsewhere (1998b).

<sup>15</sup> See Willinsky (1999b; 2000).

<sup>16</sup> The bowling hypothesis, which addresses a more general decline in civic participation, is found in Robert D. Putman (2000).