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# The Death of Citizenship

Georgie Anne Geyer

Georgie Anne Geyer's syndicated column on foreign policy and international affairs appears in 120 newspapers in the United States and Latin America, and she is a regular panelist on the PBS television program *Washington Week in Review*.

As a foreign correspondent from 1964 to 1975, she covered Latin and Central America, the Soviet Union, the Middle East, North Africa, Vietnam, Asia, Central Asia, and Europe. She has interviewed hundreds of the world's leaders, was accused of being an Israeli spy and held by the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1973, and was imprisoned in Angola in 1976 for writing about a planned coup.

The most recent of her many books, *Americans No More: The Death of Citizenship*, was published in 1996. She spoke to a Center of the American Experiment audience on this subject on September 23, 1997.

Since I went overseas in 1964 as a foreign correspondent for the old *Chicago Daily News*, I have worked all over the world. I was very young, and I was the first woman foreign correspondent.

In those years I used to come back to Chicago, my hometown, and my mother would say, "Well, dear, whom did you interview this time?" and I'd say, "Khadafy, Khomeini, Arafat, Castro, Juan Perón." She would flinch and say, "Well, dear, I don't like to interfere in your life, but I really don't approve of the company you're keeping."

Somewhere along the way, a nice girl like me from the South Side of Chicago got into the dictator business. I was realistic about these men, but I found them interesting, too. Saddam

Hussein was another one. As I was writing a biography of Fidel Castro, I began to study what all of these charismatic leaders had in common: they had to be mythological, they had to be distant, they couldn't be known, they couldn't be seen to do anything normal like tying their shoes—and they never paid for anything. Money never crossed their palms. Until I did this research, I thought that trait was restricted to my former fiancés.

The men who were my newspaper colleagues in the field were wonderful to me until I got something really good like my interviews with Castro in 1966. Then I would come down to the bar where we all met at night and hear them whispering to one another and

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saying that I must have slept with Che Guevara to get that story. In fact, I never met Che Guevara—and I keep my personal life and my professional life meticulously separate.

Then I began to interview respectable men and women too, and I saw the world changing dramatically from the sixties, when I was covering the Cuban revolution or Marxist guerrillas in Guatemala or the Soviet Union. In December 1987 five thousand journalists from all over the world came to Washington for President Reagan's meeting with Russian president Mikhail Gorbachev. I wasn't going to cover the meeting because I can't stand those mob scenes, but the White House invited me and three other columnists—three men, of course—to interview President Reagan. One of the men asked me why I thought we were chosen for this interview. That's when it's easier being a woman, because I always know why I've been chosen.

President Reagan looked slim and handsome in a beautiful suit. One of the men asked an obvious question: "Mr. President, what about the evil empire? You're meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev, and you seem to be getting along very well. What about the cold war?"

"Oh, you don't understand," President Reagan replied. "That's a thing of the past. They no longer believe in one-world Marxian domination."

We columnists looked at one another. God bless the president—I loved him—but occasionally he said goofy things. Five minutes later, we asked a similar question.

Again the same answer: "No, no, you don't understand. Can't you see the

Russians and the Americans are getting along fine now? They no longer believe in one-world Marxian domination."

Now we were getting worried. I asked a third, similar question, and he said, "Georgie Anne, I'm telling you that is all finished. They no longer believe in one-world Marxian domination."

When we left, I said to one of the guys, "I think we just heard the announcement of the end of the cold war." And we had. Historians have told me that there are other dates, but you can just as well date it to that week in December 1987. After that, of course, the Berlin Wall came down and everything changed.

## The Forces of Disintegration

The end of the cold war left the United States preeminent in the world, militarily, economically, socially, politically—and also in terms of principle. Every place I go in the world, every country, every culture is trying to copy or transform the guiding principles of our nation into workable principles for themselves. But just at this point in our national life, I began to see something that worried me. I started to think about immigration, and at the same time I was seeing many countries around the world collapse. Lebanon was the first—and of course it started in the 1970s—but there were many, many more. I asked myself, "How can that happen given our protection in the world?"

From there, I started to look into American citizenship. I feel very strongly about illegal immigration because it corrupts everyone and everything it touches.

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What is the importance of citizenship? I went around the country talking to people, and I found that a lot of Americans don't know what citizenship is anymore. What is it? It is the only bond we all have with one another and with our nation. It is the only promise we make to one another. We take oaths to other things—marriage, religion—but none that involves all of us. My favorite definition is this: citizenship is an allegiance that a self-motivating people undertakes voluntarily. Remember that citizenship originated at that moment in history when people went from being subjects of history, of the crown, of the lord of the castle, to being self-motivated, free individuals making oaths to one another and to their nation.

As I looked at the countries that were collapsing, I saw that the United States was partaking in some of the disintegrating forces: the death of an all-encompassing ideology or set of truths; the deconstruction of a nation in the name of ambition and individual egos; the breakdown of a language as a unifying element in society; the growth of one definable population group at the expense of others; preferential policies that come to be perceived as unfair; minority groups insisting on their own separate law; and, finally, mainstream society waiting too long to confront the situation.

I found that our citizenship was being demeaned, diminished, and destroyed on many levels. Citizenship tests have been so dumbed down as to be simply a fraud. I said to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) commissioner, "The tests are a fraud." She

agreed—but nothing gets done. The test questions are real toughies: What are the colors of the flag? What is the capital of the nation?

The INS today is so understanding, so nice to everyone. If you call and tell them you want questions from the citizenship test to bone up on, they will send you the answers too. There are a lot of different tests, but one question keeps coming up: Name three reasons to become an American citizen. There are only three acceptable answers: to get a federal job, to bring my relatives here, to get a passport to travel abroad. I have not plucked that question out unfairly. That is the entire sense of our citizenship preparation today. It is all benefits, benefits, benefits. You can go through all the materials, as I did for several years. The other word is easy, easy, easy. The interesting thing is, I've never met an immigrant or a new citizen who wasn't deeply insulted by this.

It used to be that citizenship testing was done by the federal government, but in 1988—and this was a Republican administration—citizenship preparation and testing were given over to ethnic lobbies and to private companies. Some of them are angels and some are devils; some are corrupt, and there have been many scandals. But it really doesn't matter, because they all have their own agendas. You have the Hispanic advocacy groups who want more and more Hispanics. You have private companies who are just in it to make money. This has led to incredible frauds. As I was finishing a book in March 1996, my sources in the INS were telling me,

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“Look into the way they are pushing immigrants through for this election.” I knew they were, but my sources said, “Don’t you understand? They’re pushing them through to get them to vote Democratic.” I said I couldn’t believe it, that even I am not that cynical.

Well, I was wrong. We now know that 1.3 million new citizens were pushed through—300,000 the year before—and we have memos from Al Gore’s office saying to do this. We also know that they were pushed through without FBI checks, without fingerprinting; the FBI itself now says that 50,000 new citizens probably were criminals—some of them felons. Now they are trying to undo all that, and you can imagine what that entails.

In Chicago recently, the INS actually changed the wording in the citizenship test from “becoming Americans” to “becoming U.S. citizens” because the ethnic lobbies complained that Latin Americans are Americans too. This kind of thing is happening all over. It used to be that the radical-merit individualism on which this country was founded was also implicit in citizenship. We adopted the Protestant ethic, which is not religious so much as social and civic. Americans left behind their ethnic preferences and left behind, as we used to say on the South Side, the old country, and they joined the new country, but they joined it individually, not in groups.

Today we are being dumbed down and broken down into groups with group rights. This is exactly what the elements of traditional America eschewed and tried to escape from in the old world.

But there are many groups today—I don’t want to sound like a conspiracy theorist, but they are not even conspiracies because it is being done so openly—that are deliberately espousing group rights and ethnic purity. I covered Bosnia; I abhor what has happened there, and I see many of the same things happening here. How is this happening? Where are these group rights coming from, so that we are being dumbed down and demeaned down into a country where ethnic groups are being pitted against other ethnic groups, linguistic groups are being pitted against other linguistic groups? As I attempted to answer these questions, I found some interesting new kinds of political structures.

In the early eighties I had written about the Council of La Raza, one of the Hispanic ethnic lobbies, and they didn’t like what I had written because I’m very much against illegal immigration. I went out and talked with them, and I asked how many members they had.

“Oh, we don’t have members,” they said.

“Then where do you get your money?”

“From the Ford Foundation,” they said and smiled cheerfully—as they should, because they are getting a lot of money. When I looked into it I found that big foundations like Ford—which had gone far to the left in the seventies when Henry Ford II resigned—were forming these new Hispanic ethnic advocacy groups like MALDEF, the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, like the Council of La Raza, which then fought the citizenship issues. They fought for bilingual

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education, they fought against English as the major language, they fought against border control, and they had no members. Over and over, the surveys show that the Hispanic American community in this country has nothing to do with it. In fact, 90 percent of the Hispanic American community wants border controls, wants an end to illegal immigration, wants unilingual education. These odd new structures aren't a secret, but neither are they in the newspapers every day.

Once there were real strictures on becoming a citizen. There was no dual citizenship; history and language tests were rigorous. You had to have an "attachment to the Constitution"; you had to provide witnesses to your character and intent. There were FBI checks; you couldn't serve in a foreign army, much less as head of a foreign state. It was assumed that English was the language of the land. It was assumed that immigrants came to America to be Americans and leave their past behind. There were even moral tests.

Today, dual citizenship is common, and language tests and civic tests have become ridiculous. There are these ethnic lobbies and private companies. We have had so many Americans as leaders of foreign states—Milan Panić, prime minister of Serbia, to name just one. Nobody thinks about it anymore. Noncitizens are voting all over the country. You may not believe this, but it has all been laid out on Chicago television. All you have to do is get a library card, and then you get a voting card and can go in and vote. You don't even have to speak English.

I can't say enough about language. Many of the countries I have gone to are in danger of breaking down by language. Canada is one of them. Even Belgium, Sri Lanka—there is a terrible civil war there. But I am Miss Universalism, Miss Internationalism, and I can say that because I know exactly what I am—an American. I also speak five languages. I learned them out of joy, but also to be respectful to the countries I was visiting. The bilingual program today is not a program to teach young people English. I know how you learn languages: by hearing them constantly and being forced to partake in them. Little children learn them just like that—nothing to it.

I have come to the conclusion that the bilingual program is first of all a federal jobs program, like so many of the programs that are behind the downgrading of citizenship. Bilingual teachers now have their own lobby; they have their own federal groups; they get \$5,000 more a year than nonbilingual teachers. The ideologues, particularly in California but also around the country, really want official Spanish. They want two languages in this country. For years I did all my interviewing in Latin America in Spanish, but I think this is insane because this is what breaks people down. They can't understand one another, and conflict ensues. This is one of the things we should know from history.

Then you go to the mantra of benefits, benefits, benefits, easy, easy, easy. Soon they are going to have the English language test by phone. Ceremonies are already given in other

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languages. The pledge of allegiance to the flag is no longer given in schools and, in fact, on the southwest border it is given in Spanish, or the pledge is to the Cinco de Mayo, a patriotic Mexican holiday. The motor voter bill of 1993 has no checks on citizenship: people get a driver's license, and then it's easy to just go in and vote.

This is not the immigrants' fault. It is our fault for not prizing and protecting our citizenship. Why don't we speak up? Why are we letting civic education history in the schools fall into nothingness? When you talk to people about this, they will call you a racist. I will not be shut up by ugly epithets. I integrated the Chicago newspapers; my whole life has been the opposite of that. We all are going to have to take a lot more of that attitude. And so my answer to this is, "I'll meet you in the alley and I'll win." I'm from the South Side of Chicago, not Winnetka. I know what this country is, and I know it is the hope of the world. All over the world I see people trying to learn the underlying principles of our country, and they can't often do it. Russia can't do it because they never went through the Enlightenment, the Reformation, the Hanseatic League.

### Multiculturalism, Immigration, and Citizenship

What will happen? First, let me comment on multiculturalism. On the South Side of Chicago, every neighborhood had different European and African American ethnic groups, if you want to call them that. (I don't even like the term.) We had Serbian church-

es, we had a lot of Irish Catholics, we had synagogues, we had black mosques. People could speak whatever language they wanted to speak at home. We were always multicultural, but "multiculturalism" is something very different. We all accepted the citizenship requirements of the United States, which are not very onerous: to speak the language, to obey the law, to prize unity and the unified principles of the country, to adopt the Protestant ethic, to leave the divisions of the old world behind.

Today we are creating conflicting ethnic groups that barter for privilege and position. In fact, this "multiculturalism" is a downgrading of American principles. Multiculturalists aren't talking as I am talking about prizing other cultures or learning languages and history. They are talking about a specific political breaking down of the country, destroying the American ethic, destroying American principles and replacing them with divisive principles. There is no question in my mind that this is what is happening.

Mary Ann Glendon, a splendid legal specialist at Harvard, wrote, "If we continue the way we are, we will be roaming in a land of strangers." We will be clients of the state instead of citizens, consumers of benefits instead of citizens, lonely people without the equality that citizenship brings. I can already hear people protesting that this is a "country of immigrants." Of course it is, and I'm proud of that. Three of my grandparents were immigrants. I want immigrants. But above all we are a country of citizens; immigration is simply the first imperfect, unfinished

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step. When you become a citizen, then you are taking part in the perfect equality of the nation.

How did all of this come about? I blame groups on both ends of the political spectrum. Surely, the far left is most to blame, because they are the “multiculturalists” who come out of the Marxist experiments of the thirties and forties adapted to the United States. They are the source of the overarching philosophy and ideology, the breaking down into group rights, and they are the most active. But I also blame big corporations on the right that disavow the nation-state because they are now global. My South Side of Chicago answer to that is, Don’t call me when you need a cop. The globalizers are having dinner in Singapore and lunch in Italy, but the working people of America want to feel they belong to a nation-state. We have a lot of Christian guilt in this, too, and some of us think that we must take all the people of the world. In doing this, we refuse to think about a nation’s carrying capacity. We have utopian ideas of new citizenship that are simply impossible. We have diaspora citizenship, binational citizenship, global ethnoscares, transnational identity. All of that sounds very nice, but it isn’t; it all contributes to the breakdown of this country.

Immigration is behind a lot of the questions about citizenship. Between 1924 and 1964 we had a moratorium on immigration because people were not assimilating, they were not Americanizing. That was followed by the 1965 immigration bill giving preference to Third World people and also to family reunification, so that now

decisions about who comes here essentially are made by the new citizens, who are sometimes bringing eighty or ninety members of their families. We have no policy about whether we want people with skills, whether we want people who speak English, whether we want people who are high school graduates, and so we find the level of immigrants to America going down. There is massive proof of this. California households are paying \$1,200 a year each for the cost of immigration while hospitals are closing all over Los Angeles. There are problems all over the country. Even here in St. Paul, as I understand, with the many Hmong children.

All I’m asking is that we hammer out a reasonable, mature policy on immigration that will benefit the United States of America. Every country in the world does this except us. Canada has changed, Australia has changed, but we are still not dealing with it. In 1986 we had an amnesty for illegals, and about 3 million people who came here illegally—deliberately breaking the law—pushed to the head of the class and were naturalized while people who want to come legally are waiting all over the world. Now we have 5 million illegal immigrants in the country, according to the INS. We are heading toward another amnesty, and again illegality is being rewarded and the people who want to come here legally, who have skills, who have education, are waiting.

I’m not without hope. Citizen groups are bubbling up all over the country. One of them is here at the Hubert Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota.

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The rest of the world already has looked at these problems of massive movements of people, of illegals all over the world, of the spread of diseases, and they have closed down. When they haven't closed down, they have just said, If you want to come here, you must partake in our polity, in our ideas. Holland, which used to be very open, in 1996 passed a bill saying that new immigrants have to take what amounts to a month of training in Dutch language, history, and principles. We are the only country in the world that doesn't do this.

"Who belongs?" is going to be the question of the turn of the century. For we cannot allow our environment, our cities, our hospitals to be changed beyond recognition. We cannot continue to keep waiting all of the people around the world who want to come here legally while we embrace the lawlessness and corruption that illegal immigration brings.

A break for a few of my favorite quotes that I think reflect on our citizenship and immigration questions:

I asked an elderly Belgian diplomat who had been a great friend of Winston Churchill if he could tell me something wise that Churchill said that is not in his books, and he replied, "Once we were talking about pessimism and optimism, and [Churchill] said, 'Pessimism is the cleverness of the weak; optimism is the courage of the strong.'" My favorite quote from Churchill is this: "Courage is the most important virtue because it guarantees all the rest."

Kierkegaard said, "Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards." That is surely what we have to do now on these issues.

In closing, I want to make three points about principles and the American dream and the American experiment. First, you can't have leadership without generally agreed upon principles because without principles, leaders dissipate their energies as referees among competing, squabbling interest groups that have little real interest in the unity of the whole. That is what we are seeing in Washington today.

Second, you can't have balanced, intelligent children without principles. Haven't we seen enough of the boredom of suburban children and the homicidal madness of inner-city children to say that they are suffering from a lack of the teaching of principle in our nation?

And, finally, you cannot have a strong, coherent, just democracy without the principles that hold it together. It's really all quite simple. Every poll, every survey, every study shows that the majority of Americans believe in this country, believe in our principles. But our history and our citizenship are being thwarted by small groups. Somehow, we are going to have to break out of that. I applaud Center of the American Experiment for bringing these subjects to the fore.

Vin Weber and Tim Penny, former Minnesota representatives to Congress, and members of the audience spoke with Georgie Anne Geyer after her talk.

Vin Weber: Are you saying that immigration per se is a problem right now, and that we should be curtailing it, period? Or are you saying that the

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process through which we are assimilating immigrants is fundamentally flawed, but if we fixed it, a high level of legal immigration would still be desirable?

Georgie Anne Geyer: Of course we want legal immigration. I would say 200,000 to 300,000 men and women of honor a year—a low number. Responsible people can say we need 800,000. If that's decided by our government after rational reflection, fine, but I don't want decisions about who is going to be an American being made in Mexico City or Seoul or Warsaw. Illegal immigration corrupts everyone it touches; it debases what this country stands for and debases the new immigrants. I want a national discussion on immigration and citizenship, but we can't even talk about it: you mention immigration and you are a "racist."

The other factor we haven't talked about is the dramatic and exciting factor of bringing people off welfare. Welfare recipients who are now going to work are going to become the labor market that should have been taking these jobs all along. I was out at Vail Valley Institute speaking at a seminar on immigration, and Alan Simpson was telling us what happened with immigration, which finally got Al, who is a real fighter, to resign from the Senate. He said he just couldn't take the conflict anymore, and he blamed a lot of the big companies. Bill Gates's name kept coming up because he wants cheaper engineers. Well, this isn't field labor, but Microsoft is getting cheaper engineers from overseas. There are so many factors that go into it.

Tim Penny: Eugene McCarthy, one of Minnesota's many great thinkers, made the same point about immigra-

tion in a recent book titled *America, Colony to the World*. His main criticism of the current policy—setting aside whether the number should be 200,000 or 800,000—is that it's dominated by family reunification, which in essence means that individuals who want to bring family members over are defining our immigration policy, rather than the government. But to what standards should we give preference?

Georgie Anne Geyer: Again, honorable people can differ on this, but what seems obvious to me is that we should have a point system like Canada has, like Australia now has. They went through the "multicultural" program. Canada five years ago was far more "multicultural" than we are. The point system would reward education, English proficiency, skills. Peter Salins, in his book *Assimilation American Style*, says that there is no assimilation, which is absolutely true. Barbara Jordan said, "Americanization? We have no Americanization."

There used to be something in the citizenship test actually called "attachment to the Constitution"—beyond skills and education and language—something about people who want to partake in this polity. That's very subjective. It used to be done in twenty-minute interviews with the INS. Now there are no personal interviews, and there are these multiple choice tests. So, really, the new citizens don't learn anything about this country, and that is the real tragedy. But it is not going to change when you have people at the head of the INS like Robert Bach, who was head of a multicultural institute in the state universi-

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ties of New York. He is the INS executive director, in charge of all the programs. He said, "The problem with America is not diversity, but homogeneity." That's a direct quote. They want to break down the homogeneity of this country.

Tim Penny: Is multicultural programming—which is an issue in Minnesota schools—in conflict with the assimilation process, or is it a way of being more egalitarian, an educational tool that helps all students understand the diversity in their classrooms?

Georgie Anne Geyer: All my life I have thought of true multiculturalism as knowing and prizing other cultures, but also judging them analytically and learning their languages. But multiculturalism as it is being put into practice in America is deliberately meant to downplay, or even destroy, what is American, what brings us together. Whenever you see "multicultural" programs, you will also find that there are no American history programs, no American civics programs. Children don't get that anymore. If I could wave a wand, I would go back to the way it was in our neighborhood in Chicago, where people spoke different languages at home if they wanted to. They had the churches; the synagogues had their cultural festivals. We all did that, but we did it in our communities, we did it in our homes. It was not expected that our schools should parrot the glories of Germany or Ireland or Ghana. Those were things you learned on the side. What you learned in American schools was what it meant to be an American.

Tim Penny: The book *Lies My*

*Teacher Told Me* talks about how our traditional history books omit both the pitfalls in American history and the contributions from some segments of our society. Isn't there a way to accomplish both objectives?

Georgie Anne Geyer: Absolutely. I'm all for that, and particularly for African Americans, who were so tragically and desperately left out of the history books. But bringing more people in doesn't mean that you have to diminish the principles and the teaching of what this nation is all about. When I talk to some African Americans, and often on the radio shows, they say that this country was never for them. My answer to that is, If it weren't for the principles of this country, you probably wouldn't be alive today. It doesn't mean that we haven't made awful mistakes, but that we have gone through tremendous struggles to bring more and more people in. In fact, until what—1917?—women couldn't vote. I rejoice in how we have changed. I rejoice in civil rights and how the status of black Americans has changed, rather than being bitter about it and saying the principles are no good.

Ruth Wollenberg: The Minnesota Board of Education just issued a multicultural rule. They also issued the rule in 1988, but it was not as forceful as it presently is. The Hopkins school district—where all of my children have gone to school—tried to implement it. I was on a curriculum-review committee at that time, and I was trying to figure out who was driving multiculturalism into the public school district. The coordinator of curriculum told me it was the state board of education. I asked if it

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was a law. “No,” he said, “but it has the force of law because if we don’t do it, we don’t get funding.” This new rule is an expansion of the 1988 rule, and it has been stated that they really are going to enforce it this time. By 1999 this has to be put in place. Multiculturalism cannot be a supplement to the curriculum; it has to be a core of the curriculum, and this means all new textbooks. It is going to cost \$15 million in 1999 to implement this in Minnesota. I am very concerned because I don’t understand how I as a parent can influence this, and I want to.

Georgie Anne Geyer: This is the kind of thing I came upon all over the country when I was doing my book. In Brownsville, Texas, on the Mexican border, for instance, the school superintendent and two of the deputies told me an incredible story. They have 40,000 students in a city of 120,000, which is a vast number of students, too many. Many of them are illegals, or they come across from Matamoros. The school officials said they are forbidden to ask the students if they are citizens. But for federal grants, they also have to tell the government how many noncitizen students they have. “If you can’t ask them or count them, how can you do this?” I asked. We make up the numbers, they said. There’s a law, they said. When I got back to Washington, I was on the phone for two days looking for this law. There was no law. I finally discovered that it was a ruling or regulation of the state board of education. So it was exactly the same thing.

Vin Weber: Are you aware of examples around the country where people

have rebelled against this and fought it politically? It sounds to me like the only solution is political.

Georgie Anne Geyer: It’s the only way I can see.

Tim Penny: A California school board discontinued its bilingual education programs. It is now being litigated. The first court to review the case reinstated the programs; the second court upheld the school board’s decision to suspend the programs. It goes on and on. It’s difficult to address this issue within the community because the local school board is subject to penalty if it doesn’t abide by state requirements. This is clearly an issue that we are going to have to debate more vocally, and I imagine state legislators are going to hear a lot about it.

James Serrin: I am a professor emeritus at the University of Minnesota. My question concerns something our president—whose name I won’t name—said to a group of journalists: “Americans can live without, in effect, having a dominant European culture. We want to become a multiracial, multiethnic society, and we will not disintegrate in the face of this.” Do you agree or disagree?

Georgie Anne Geyer: Of course, I heartily disagree. There has to be a big core of Americans who believe in the system, and again I say, we’ve got the system and we’ve got the story and at this point it is the system and the story for all mankind. History and common sense say you can’t break countries down into squabbling, conflicting ethnic groups. The words become treacherous because of course we’re multiracial, of course we’re truly multicultural, of course we’re

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multiethnic, but when you put the words in quotes and give them a political meaning, it is very, very different. This is what confuses well-meaning and intelligent Americans who don't understand that our children are being taught not what it is to be an American, but what it was to be a member of the country immigrants voluntarily left behind.

James Van Houten [a member of the Center of the American Experiment board of directors]: One of the most integrating experiences most of us have had was facing the draft and going into the military after high school. I'm talking about people who graduated from high school around 1960. The first time a lot of us were ever around black people is when we went into the military, and we found out that people are pretty much OK and not too threatening, whoever they are.

You weren't allowed to hang out on the street corner if you dropped out of high school then. You served your country for a few years; if you had never been exposed to any discipline in your life, that's where you got it. You had to face the fact that you had this obligation to your country, and most of us took it in stride. We haven't replaced that integration of young males in this country with anything else. I don't know if we could ever bring up the draft again, but I think great harm has been done by not having anything to replace that with. I would be interested in your view of this.

Georgie Anne Geyer: The military has done a great job in integration of the races and in true fairness and equality and upward mobility. They've done a remarkable job despite all the sexual scandals

and so on that are going on now. What can you replace it with? Well, you sure can't replace it with anything if people don't know what it is to be an American. Why would you fight for a country that's "multicultural"? Are people going to die for "multiculturalism," or die for "diversity"? No, they're not. It all fits together for me. I agree that we need some of these more disciplined groups, but I really don't know where to find them.

Allen Olson [former governor of North Dakota]: My friends in the news media over the years have convinced me that they don't tell us what to think, but they tell us what to think about. I was interested in your comment about public interest groups that are never challenged about membership. What is the role of journalists and the news media in setting the agenda to review our responsibilities as citizens?

Georgie Anne Geyer: That's a very good question, because immigration, naturalization, and citizenship have not been covered very much recently. When I started doing my research on citizenship, I found very little written about it until 1996, when all the scandals broke out. Now there has been a lot in the Washington papers, a lot in the Chicago Tribune. There is a mood of antiauthority in the press. It is not that they are liberal or conservative, or that they are really ideological; it is that they are ahistorical. Most of the younger journalists don't know history, they haven't been foreign correspondents so they don't have a sense of the world. There is very much of a get him, gotcha journalism. I call it an amorphous antiauthority mood, and difficult issues like immigration and citizenship

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simply were not covered until the scandals. What can you do about that? People who care can write to papers, go to the editorial boards of the papers, support the journalists who do write about these things. There are organizations like the Federation for American Immigration Reform and English First. They are good, responsible people; I know them well. They're not nuts, they're not extremists. I call them radical moderates, which is what I consider myself.

Vin Weber: When you meet with the Minneapolis Star Tribune people later today, I think you will find them quite ideological on this question. That is one of the difficulties in dealing with the arguments that you have made today: even if you can demonstrate specific harms that flow from multiculturalism as it is practiced, that doesn't end the argument, because it is an ideological issue, and a very deep-seated one. It extends to the relativism of the whole later part of the twentieth century and an inability to make a definitive judgment about what might constitute a superior culture. I always thought that there were ways you could look at Western European American culture and say objectively that this culture—which has reduced infant mortality, extended life expectancy, and created a middle-class economy and a political liberal culture—is superior to almost any other that we see around the planet. But you can't say that because there is an inability to make that kind of judgment, which leads to this inability to say we want the kind of assimilation that we traditionally had. With most people, it is ideological in that sense.

Tim Penny: Diversity is a grand thing. My kids went to a very diverse elementary school during the twelve years we lived in the Washington, D.C., area, and they learned a lot from that exposure, but I think too often we take it a step too far and suggest that somehow diversity has to come first, and being an American citizen is second. I was taken by your remark that although recent immigrants may not come here expecting benefits, they are told when they arrive that there is this whole array of benefits and that is what being a citizen is all about. I don't think that's why anybody has ever come to America. For opportunity, yes; for freedom, yes. But not because there is a check waiting at the shore.

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani of New York City said at a conference here in the Twin Cities not long ago that diversity should be recognized, respected, and even celebrated, but instead of calling ourselves Arab Americans or Norwegian Americans or whatever, we should reverse it—American Arabs, American Africans, American Norwegians, American Irish—to put the emphasis on what unites us. I think we are seeing that view more and more among journalists and columnists and in the editorial pages of our major newspapers and in some of our newsmagazines. Leaders like Mayor Giuliani, governors, and national politicians who are beginning to talk about diversity in that way are likely to find that it resonates well in all sectors of American society. n