

Rights and the Challenge of Belonging

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CEDAR
Communities Engaging with
Difference and Religion

Strategic Multilayer Assessment

February 26, 2020

The Politics of Rights and the Need for Belonging

- “To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul.... A human being has roots by virtue of his real, active and natural participation in the life of a community which preserves in living shape certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future.” – Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties Towards Mankind*
- Belonging is specific / particular – exclusive
- Rights are generalized – framed as inclusive

Exclusion and the Need for Boundaries

- If boundaries are to include in any meaningful sense, they must also exclude
- Exclusion is the bugbear of liberal politics; efforts to overcome fall short
- Boundaries allow group cohesion – and community – but are not impenetrable

The Political Right and Left's Use of Rights and Belonging

- Political Right's framing of Belonging – totalizing
- Political Left's framing of Rights – overrides communal belonging
- The missing middle – rights and belonging moving along diverging paths

Demarcating Rights from Belonging

Rights

- Multicultural values
- Community of rights bearers
- Value of justice
- Difference
- Disparate moral values
- Others experienced as a danger
- Danger requires security

Belonging

- Shared dispositions
- Moral community
- Value of peace
- Sameness
- Shared moral dispositions
- Others experienced as a risk
- Risk leaves room for doubt

Difference and Discomfort

- Differences extend across multiple levels of social organization
- With increased diversity, differences more frequently encountered
- Rights and Belonging approach the Other differently
- Addressing the challenge of living with difference – ambiguity and discomfort

What Can Be Done

- Rights/Belonging diagnosis calls for responses to be built across communities
- Small scale – CEDAR programming and pedagogy
- Larger scale – collaborative civic engagement

Backup slides

Further information on CEDAR pedagogy:

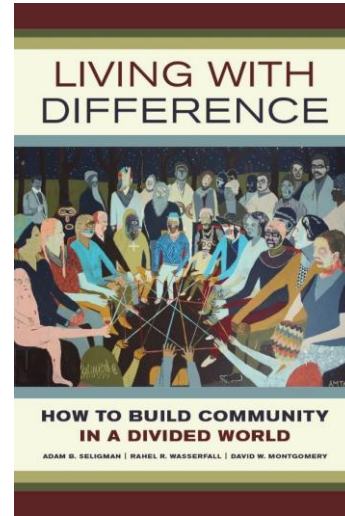


CEDAR

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www.cedarnetwork.org

CEDAR is a global educational network enabling members of disparate communities to recognize and accept their differences as they work toward a civil society.



Adam Seligman, Rahel Wasserfall, and David Montgomery. 2015. *Living with Difference: How to Build Community in a Divided World*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ongoing programs:



Central Asian Program
on Pedagogies of
Solidarity



Adam Seligman and David Montgomery. 2019. The Tragedy of Human Rights: Liberalism and the Loss of Belonging. *Society*. 56: 203-209.

Speaker bios

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Adam Seligman is the founding director of CEDAR – Communities Engaging with Difference and Religion; professor of religion at Boston University; and a research associate at the Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs. His books include: *Living with Difference*, *Rethinking Pluralism*, *Ritual and Its Consequences*, *Market and Community*, *The Problem of Trust*, and *The Idea of Civil Society*, among others.

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