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

www.cedarnetwork.org

Ongoing programs:


Speaker bios

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