

**'Our vision
of the world
is outdated'**

**'This
is the
future'**

**MARK
GERZON**

Contents

Cover

About the Book

About the Author

Also by Mark Gerzon

Praise

Title Page

Dedication

Introduction: *Are You a Global Citizen?*

1. Witnessing: *Opening Our Eyes*

2. Learning: *Opening Our Minds*

3. Connecting: *Creating Relationships*

4. Geo-Partnering: *Working Together*

Conclusion: *Global Intelligence - Twenty Ways to Raise Our GI*

Appendix: *Global Citizens' Resources - An Action Guide*

Notes

Index

Acknowledgements

Copyright

About the Book

What does it mean to think globally? How can we become global citizens? Why is this so important?

Ground-breaking and provocative, this book sets out a new way of thinking. It argues that our vision of the world is outdated and that, if we are to overcome the challenges we face today (such as terrorism, the environment and financial crises), we need to free ourselves from our narrow identities. We *all* have to start thinking like global citizens if we are to effect real change.

This is not a utopian dream, but reflects today's reality. The new world order means we need the ability to influence – and be influenced by – individuals and organizations that we may never have met, with whom we may not share a common language, and who come from very different cultures – in order to achieve shared goals. And we need a new mindset to do this.

The author, Mark Gerzon, is perfectly placed to explain this important development. He lectures, consults and trains clients ranging from Chinese businessmen and American politicians to the leaders of the world's top think tanks. He shows how sharpening four essential skills – witnessing, learning, connecting and partnering – will help us become 'advocates for the whole' and start to solve the many crises facing our earth.

With the help of numerous case studies from every continent, this unique book will undoubtedly change the

way you see yourself, and the world. And it dares you to become an engaged, committed global citizen.

About the Author

As President of Mediators Foundation, which he founded over twenty years ago, Mark Gerzon has launched scores of projects that have advanced the field of global citizenship. He has also worked with a wide variety of organizations, including the US Congress, multinational corporations, and the United Nations. The author of numerous books, including the recent *Leading Through Conflict* (Harvard Business School Press), he lectures and conducts leadership workshops throughout the world.

For four decades, Gerzon has been involved in global affairs - first as a student (he lived in families in seven different cultures during his year with the International Honors Program); next as a citizen diplomat (he worked for several years bringing together Soviet and American civic leaders to help end the Cold War); then as a journalist (he co-founded *WorldPaper*, a 'global newspaper' which reached a circulation of 1.5 million in five languages); and more recently as a leadership consultant and UN mediator.

In 2006, he founded the Conflict Transformation Collaborative, a network of peace-builders from around the world which connects more than one hundred grassroots mediators. He is also designing an interactive workshop 'The Global Citizen Experience' based on this book, which provides citizens, old and young, with an opportunity to raise their global intelligence and identify how they can uniquely serve the earth.

For more information about these initiatives, go to www.mediatorsfoundtion.org.

By the same author:

The Whole World Is Watching

A Choice of Heroes

Listening to Midlife

A House Divided

Leading through Conflict

Praise for *Global Citizens*:

'Mark Gerzon's book is an intellectual tour de force, in highly accessible language, to take us through what being "global" means and how we can act differently for the greater good.'

Christine Loh, CEO, Civic Exchange, Hong Kong

'Whether you are American, German, Chinese, Indian, South African, or Indonesian, you are also a "citizen of the world". Mark Gerzon explores the realities and opportunities that lie behind that phrase, and provides the tools that can help each of us build a platform for thinking and acting powerfully as global citizens.'

Peter Goldmark, former CEO of the International Herald Tribune; currently Director, Program on Climate and Air, Environmental Defense Fund, New York, USA

'Next time you are reflecting on the turmoil on planet earth - whether as a businessman, a politician, a tourist or as a concerned citizen - read this book. It will help you focus on our dramatically changing and challenging world.'

Bill Ford, international business consultant and former Head of Department of Organizational Behaviour, University of New South Wales, Australia

'Global Citizens argues very powerfully that a safer world will not come from building barriers but from building bridges of trust with others. Mark Gerzon provides a realistic, practical and optimistic strategy for moving from fear and paranoia towards trust and constructive engagement.'

Juan Dumas, Executive Director, Foundation for the Future of Latin America, Quito, Ecuador

'In a world full of tensions and divisions, this book comes as a major relief and inspiration . . . an immensely useful book for Africa.'

**Kimani Njogu, President, Twaweza Communications,
Nairobi, Kenya**

Global Citizens

*How our vision of the world is outdated,
and what we can do about it*

Mark Gerzon



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This book is dedicated to my family - the whole family.

Introduction

Are You a Global Citizen?

I am a citizen of the world.

— **Diogenes Laertius, Greek philosopher (AD 220)**

The world is my country, all mankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion.

— **Thomas Paine, American revolutionary (AD 1776)**

I am not a citizen of the world. I think the entire concept is intellectual nonsense and stunningly dangerous!

— **Newt Gingrich, American politician (AD 2009)**

Two millennia ago, philosophers in ancient Greece were already proclaiming themselves 'citizens of the world'. More than two centuries ago, American revolutionaries were declaring, 'My country is the world.' Over the past few generations, this visionary identity has been evoked by renowned political leaders (Mahatma Gandhi), endorsed by some of the greatest scientists (Albert Einstein), and even put to music (John Lennon). Clearly the idea of global citizenship is a deep and enduring part of human culture.

But here is the paradox: *legally*, none of the almost seven billion population of the planet is actually a citizen of the world. To my knowledge, no one carries a viable global passport; every one of these documents is issued by, or approved by, nation states.

So every one of us, including you and me, embodies this paradox: we are and we are not global citizens. Strictly speaking, none of us is a global citizen. Yet our only hope is to think and act as if we are.

Haven't we all been personally affected by the terrorist attacks of 2001 - or by the British and American responses to those attacks? Haven't all our finances been affected by the global economic crisis of 2008 - and the response of other countries to it? Aren't almost all of us concerned about the growing environmental crisis, including the threat of climate change, the health risks from breathing pollutants and ingesting contaminants in our food and water, etc.?

The truth is that we are *all* profoundly affected by the decisions and actions of people whose faces we may never see, whose language we may not speak, and whose names we would not recognize - and they, too, are affected by us. Our well-being, and in some cases our survival, depends on recognizing this truth and taking responsibility as global

citizens for it. Whether the problem being debated is the financial crisis or immigration, war in the Middle East or the next pandemic, we human beings are now being challenged to realize that we are something more than citizens of separate nations, members of different races, and followers of different religions. We are also global citizens.



Tong Shan University. Zhuhai, China. May 2008.

‘Why do the people in France hate us?’ a Chinese student, one of almost three hundred seated in the large lecture hall, asked me. ‘They tried to attack the Olympic torch when it was passing through Paris. Is that because they don’t like our country? Is it because they are angry that we are a rising power?’

For a moment, I was speechless. I knew the answer to the Chinese student’s question. So, I imagine, do you. The demonstrators were angry about the Chinese government’s crackdown on Buddhist monks in Tibet, and more generally about its violations of human rights.

With the Beijing Olympics only a few months away, however, my Chinese hosts had specifically asked me *not* to talk about Tibet on this ten-day book tour that they were hosting. They worked for a government-managed publishing house that had just translated my most recent book, *Leading Through Conflict*, into Mandarin, and they did not want me to stir controversy.

For that instant, which seemed like an eternity, I could not decide what to say. Do I violate my host’s request and jeopardize the rest of the trip? Do I assert that their government is at fault? Or do I sidestep the question?

‘Before I answer,’ I said, ‘let me ask you all a question. In the current conflict between China and Tibet, there are two common ways of looking at it. One is that the violent behaviour of Tibetan demonstrators is the problem; the other is that Chinese policies are the problem. If you think *Chinese* government policy is the problem, please raise your hand.’

In the entire auditorium, there was not a single hand in the air.

‘If you think the *Tibetans* are the problem, please raise your hand.’

A wave of hands shot into the air until the room was filled with a sea of fingers.

‘Thank you,’ I said. ‘Now I want to tell you that a few months ago, at a university in the United States, I asked the same question. In that room, the results were just the opposite. Every single American student felt

China was responsible for the bad situation; no one felt it was the Tibetans' fault.'

The students sat in shocked silence. It was incomprehensible to them that their American counterparts could see the Tibet-China conflict so differently from them.

'Do you think that classes like these where everyone thinks exactly the same will provide the best education?' I asked.

'No!' echoed around the room.

'Do you think that diverse opinions will make you smarter and make your country safer?'

Loud shouts of 'Yes!' formed a Chinese-accented chorus.

'I agree with you,' I said, building on their energy. 'China is a great country. Your power is rising. So you need to see *all* sides. When a wall of mistrust exists between China and another country, don't stop at the wall. You must use your minds, and your hearts, to see beyond it.'



Just as these students consider themselves to be 'Chinese', so do most of us have a national or cultural identity. Rarely do we think of ourselves as truly 'global'. Yet on every other level - genetic, physical, social, economic, ecological, technological, political and religious - we certainly are. Let's look briefly at each of these eight levels.

1. Our genes are global. Our genes define with amazing scientific accuracy our family tree all the way back to the beginning of *Homo sapiens* in Africa. Genomic research can easily establish exactly who our ancestors are and where they came from. Our genes prove that we are one human family, and that all of us are related. As the activist rock musician Bono gingerly asked a US audience: 'Could it be that all Americans are . . . "African-Americans"?'[1](#)
2. Our bodies are global. If we investigate the origins of the food we eat, or the medicines we take, we quickly discover that many of the ingredients are not local. Except in a few remote areas, most of our diet is not home-grown. Furthermore, the air and water on which we depend for our survival - while it may seem local

when we breathe or drink it – are part of ecosystems that cross all boundaries.

3. Our societies are global. When we observe the communities in which we live, we no longer exclusively see people who look like us. Our neighbours or co-workers, our children's classmates, the people we pass as we travel to work – they are becoming more and more diverse. They come from other places and other cultures. In some of our communities, they come from all over the world.
4. Our economies are global. When a financial crisis strikes, as it did most recently in 2008, the shock waves are global. Not just in one country, but in scores of nations around the world, stock markets plummet. The value of the money in our pockets is determined as much by the global currency market as by the actions of our own national government that printed it. Chances are high that our jobs, and certainly our children's careers, will depend increasingly on the global economy.
5. Our environment is global. The warming climate, the loss of forest land and the increase in erosion, the acidification of the oceans, the scarcity of fresh drinking water – these are global trends. We cannot protect our air, water, soil or food supply with only national environmental protection policies. Ultimately, we need environmental policies that transcend national borders.
6. Our possessions are global. Almost everyone lives in a dwelling, or rides in vehicles, or has possessions, which contain components that were made outside the borders of their own country. We can test the accuracy of this statement simply by looking at the things we own. The clothes I am wearing, the computer on which I write this sentence, the watch on my wrist – all of these artefacts were made outside the country where I live.
7. Our civic life is global. There is no country on the face of the Earth whose politics is not influenced by forces

outside its own borders. This is true in giant nations like China, Russia, or the United States, and in small ones like Singapore, Nepal, Kosovo, or Rwanda. Today our 'internal', national political debates are more frequently than ever before shaped by 'external', international factors.

8. Even our religions are global. The beliefs we hold (or which, perhaps, we have rejected) have been formed and re-formed over many centuries, and through many cultures. Whatever faith one may call one's own - Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, or other smaller traditions - it is very unlikely that it started where one lives. It is much more likely that it began far away, in another country, another culture, or even another continent.

So even if we are legally *national* citizens, every other dimension of our lives underscores that we are, in fact, *global* citizens. Narrow, exclusive human identities have reached a dead end. As separate nations, separate tribes and clans, separate faiths and ideologies, we created the problems we now face. Our vision of the world - divided along ethnic lines, national borders, and religious categories - is outdated. To update it, we must realize that the future is here, and it is global.

This shift of worldviews begins with Einstein's counsel: 'We cannot solve problems at the same level of awareness that created them.' So even as we pledge our loyalty to different nations, carry different currencies, serve in opposing armies, and follow different leaders, we must shift our level of awareness to include what is global. Split apart into diverse, sometimes clashing cultures, glib platitudes about 'oneness' and 'Spaceship Earth' are just not enough. Being a global citizen is neither a cool, ready-to-wear eco-identity, nor a chic lifestyle that we adopt by turning down our thermostats, listening to certain rock stars, eating

locally grown foods or driving a hybrid, or even writing a cheque to feed a child or free a political prisoner. Although all these activities may be worthwhile, none makes us global citizens.

The breathtaking photographs taken by the first generation of early astronauts triggered an idealistic outburst of 'global awareness'. Biologists asserted more boldly that the Earth is a 'living organism' or 'Gaia', physicists described an 'unfolding co-evolution', theologians evoked a 'sacred Creation', and philosophers proclaimed an 'indivisible oneness'. As the futurist Arthur C. Clarke predicted optimistically, the 'more extreme forms of nationalism' would not survive now that we 'have seen the Earth in its true perspective as a single small globe against the stars.'

Unfortunately, however, the heady thrill of viewing our Earthly home from outer space did not instantly transform human consciousness. Instead, those beautiful portraits of our terrestrial home have been pushed aside recently by other images: the World Trade Centre in flames, conflicts in the Middle East descending into chaos, and ethnic violence from Kenya and the Congo to Sri Lanka and Kashmir. Tribalism, ethnocentrism, and nationalism have not disappeared; in many parts of the world, they are reasserting themselves. The seamless, interconnected world that brought the astronauts to tears is the same world in which Israelis and Palestinians fight over a small hill in Gaza; in which Tamils and Sinhalese massacre each other in a struggle for their small island of Sri Lanka; in which scores of countries with widespread hunger spend lavishly on weapons, and in which rich countries erect higher walls and tighten security to keep out poor immigrants.

What is needed now is a practical, results-oriented approach to global citizenship that meets Einstein's challenge. As so many global businesses are discovering, thinking globally is no longer idealistic. It is immensely

practical. In globally competitive industries, a multinational company that fails to become a 'globally integrated enterprise' will not survive for long.[2](#)



 University of British Columbia. Vancouver, Canada. November 2007.

'Contrary to the view of Tom Friedman,' says Mansour Javidan, referring to the *New York Times* columnist, 'the world is *not* flat. Maybe it will be seventy-five years from now. But now, the global cultural terrain is pretty bumpy.'

I am sitting here on campus with Professor Javidan; we are participating in a meeting of the International Leadership Association. I wanted to talk personally with this Iranian-born professor (who describes himself as a 'Russian-Iranian mix with an Arabic name') because he knows more than anyone about how 'bumpy' the world can be. In 1994, he formed a network of scholars around the world that he calls a 'United Nations of Academia' for the purpose of developing a truly cross-cultural research methodology. With his more than a hundred colleagues, he launched the GLOBE project, which has analysed the cultural differences that prevent us from truly learning – and leading – across boundaries.

'Every society has put a lot of energy into teaching its members to learn about people like them,' Javidan tells me, between sips of his very strong coffee. 'Now on a massive scale people have to deal with people who are different from them. In the world we are dealing with right now, people are increasingly dealing with people who are different from them. Never in human history have we experienced such massive-scale short-term contact across cultures.'

'Do you think we can cope with this?'

'Yes,' Javidan answers directly. 'But we will need a global mindset to do it.'[3](#)



Aware of this challenge, the global citizens from all over the world who you will meet in the following pages are not only creating a more just and peaceful world. They also are deepening the meaning of their lives. Global citizenship is both an 'inside' and an 'outside' job because the inner work of raising our awareness enables us to act in the world in more effective, transformative ways. When we truly

understand our inter-connectedness, we realize that caring about the welfare of 'humanity' or 'the planet' is also *self-care*.

Although global citizenship is more urgent and more relevant than ever before, the leaders who dominate the world stage are national figures working in their national interest, not global statesmen working in the planetary interest. A 2008 World Public Opinion Poll asked a global sample of twenty thousand people which leader on the world stage inspired their confidence. Not one – not the USA's George Bush, not China's Hu Jintao, not Russia's Vladimir Putin – gained widespread support.⁴ Only ex-leaders, such as Nelson Mandela or Bill Clinton, receive wide respect when they are clearly working on behalf of causes that transcend the agendas of a single nation.

If genuine 'global citizens' are to rise into positions of leadership, they must make this identity more concrete, specific, and grounded in tangible daily actions. It can no longer just be an educational ideal ('We are developing a curriculum to ensure that every one of our students becomes a responsible global citizen,' one elementary school principal told me). It can no longer just be a corporate mantra for pumping up global sales figures ('When we promote executives to the senior level nowadays,' said one CEO of a high-technology company, 'we look for experienced global citizens.') Nor can it remain a vague, high-minded cliché. (Even *Global Issues for Global Citizens*, the tome recently published by the World Bank, never managed to define what a 'global citizen' actually is.)⁵

To shift our level of awareness from the ethnocentric to the geocentric, we must challenge ourselves to leave our comfort zone. Whatever narrow identity we were born into, it is time to step out of it and into the larger world. We can still cherish our own heritage, lineage, and culture, but we

must liberate ourselves from the illusion that they are separate from everyone else's.



Dubai, United Arab Emirates. July 2007.

'My name is Mark,' I said, shaking hands with one of the Muslim journalists. Like me, he was attending a small meeting between Western and Middle Eastern TV news editors who were concerned about how the media's coverage had increased tension between the regions.

'Hello,' he replied in English, but with a heavy Arabic accent. 'I am Jihad.'

'I'm sorry,' I said quickly, unsure about what I had heard. 'I didn't catch your name.'

'*Jihad*,' he repeated more clearly.

'Good to meet you,' I replied before moving on and introducing myself to the other participants in the meeting. But I promised myself that I would seek out Jihad during a break to find out more about his name.

'It is actually not an uncommon name,' he told me later. 'I was born in the mid-Fifties, and many Muslim parents were drawn to this name.'

'Why did they *pick* that name?' I probed, still puzzled.

'My parents wanted their son to succeed, and to excel at school. "Jihad" roughly translated means "hard work" or "perseverance". That is what my parents expected of me, and so they gave me that name.'

'But how—?'

Jihad raised his hand and smiled. He knew what I was going to ask before the words had left my mouth.

'The word has been hijacked by the extremists,' he said. 'When I was born, it simply meant to be diligent, devoted, and willing to work hard to become the best you could be. Now, in some circles, it means to wage a holy war. But that is not the original meaning of the word at all. If anybody knows the difference, it's me!'



Ultimately, the challenge of global citizenship involves building a bridge that connects 'us' and 'them'. In the following pages, we will look closely at what makes global citizens so effective at working beyond the borders that divide most of humankind. As we become acquainted with them, we will discover that they have developed four capacities which, taken together, enable us to meet Einstein's challenge and shift our level of awareness. These

four capacities each express themselves through parts of our bodies: eyes, minds, hearts, and hands.

Witnessing: Opening Our Eyes. The journey toward global citizenship begins when we open our eyes. As the Buddhist masters put it: 'right seeing, right intention, right action'. Once we begin to *see* the world, then we can learn about it, connect to others, and partner with them.

Learning: Opening Our Minds. Once we can envision the world, we naturally want to learn. We can sense how our mind's full range has been narrowed. We are not satisfied with whatever our own culture (or subculture) calls 'learning'. Instead, we recognize that we can embrace the world only if our mind, like a door, is opened. Only then can we cross the threshold to the other side.

Connecting: Creating Relationships. The mind alone is not a passport across borders. To bridge the divides that separate us from others, global citizens need to navigate rivers of feelings as well as thoughts. We need to open our hearts and connect to the hearts of others, creating relationships even with those who may be called 'enemies'.

Geo-partnering: Working Together. With our eyes, minds, and hearts open, we are ready to act. But global citizens soon realize that no one of us can build a bridge alone. We need a counterpart on the other side. Ordinary partnerships will not suffice because we need an ally who is different from us. We need to open our hands, reach out and take theirs, and work together.

The Conclusion highlights twenty different ways to help us develop these four core skills more fully - witnessing, learning, connecting, and geo-partnering. Taken together, these twenty strategies are a curriculum for raising our 'global intelligence'.

After a lifetime of work in this field, I believe that as a species we face a choice about whether or not we will invest in developing our 'GI'. If we do not raise our collective, global intelligence, we may close our eyes and become

blind; close our minds and become rigid; close our hearts and become callous; close our hands and become aggressive. History shows that we human beings have both the capacity to open our eyes, minds, hearts, and hands - and to close them. We have the capacity to build an interdependent, peaceful global civilization and to splinter and fragment into endless conflict. We can see the world narrowly, or broadly, depending on which parts of ourselves we are able to develop. Indeed, wherever we may live, the drama of the Earth itself is occurring within each of us.

If we are willing to open our eyes, minds, hearts, and hands, then every one of us can become a global citizen.

Yes, everyone.

Chapter 1

Witnessing: Opening Our Eyes

The purpose of life is . . . to know oneself. We cannot do so unless we learn to identify ourselves with all that lives.

— **Mohandas K. Gandhi**

The first day or two we all pointed to our countries. The third or fourth day we were pointing to our continents. By the fifth day we were aware only of the Earth.

— **Sultan bin Salman al-Saud,
Saudi astronaut**

WHEN THE NATIONAL Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced Project Mercury in October 1958, it committed the USA to putting a man into orbit around the Earth. But NASA officials soon found themselves in a power struggle with the astronauts. The men who were rocketing into space insisted on having a window in their tiny capsule. But NASA engineers argued that, given the dangerous temperatures upon re-entry, it would be an unnecessary safety risk.

‘We won’t fly without a window,’ the astronauts said.

‘We can’t allow you to create hazards that could endanger your safety,’ the NASA executives replied.

Although the astronauts eventually won the argument, soon afterwards the next conflict emerged: cameras. The technical experts and safety engineers argued that cameras would add unnecessary weight and increase risk. But the astronauts countered that recording what they had seen was a vital part of their responsibility. What good was seeing the cosmos if they could not share it?

To the enduring benefit of all humanity, the astronauts prevailed again. Thanks to these men and women from scores of countries - what astronaut Rusty Schweickart called ‘sensing elements for mankind’ - we all became witnesses to planet Earth.

Since then, human beings have repeatedly conducted the same radical experiment on members of our own species. The subjects of the experiment were men and women, Russians and Americans, Arabs and Europeans, Christians and Muslims, Hindus and Jews. They were sent into space in the tip of a rocket; they orbited the Earth, sometimes walking in outer space. Then they looked at the Earth from their magnificent, awe-inspiring, global perspective. When