

Global citizens found in the most unlikely places

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Unauthorised immigrants are the most direct enactors of global citizenship according to a new book by a human rights expert at the University of Birmingham.

In his latest book, *The Practice of Global Citizenship*, Senior Lecturer in Political Theory, Dr Luis Cabrera, explores what it means to be a global citizen – a person who takes responsibility for helping to protect human rights - in today's society.

Cabrera conducted extensive field research in the United States, Mexico and Western Europe, interviewing more than 260 activists, unauthorised immigrants, human smugglers and law-enforcement officers, on their differing notions of citizenship and how they put this into practice.

One aspect of the field research was carried out in the Arizona desert, on the Mexican border that, in the last 15 years, has seen more than 2,000 people die trying to cross it in the ultimate pursuit of happiness and a better life in America. Cabrera spoke to unauthorised immigrants, the humanitarian volunteer group 'No More Deaths' seeking to protect the immigrants' rights, and the armed 'Minuteman' activists trying to keep them out.

Although each group has juxtaposing citizenship outlooks, Cabrera argues that they share a common practice. Desert humanitarians are reaching across boundaries of national citizenship to protect the core rights of others. 'Minutemen' see themselves as protecting the worth of their own state citizenship by helping patrol for illegal entries. Unauthorised immigrants, Cabrera suggests, are global citizens engaging in a form of 'global civil disobedience' when they challenge entry restrictions in the US and Europe in order to improve their own lives, often supporting more vulnerable family members who are left behind.

Cabrera calls for greater recognition of the ways in which even the very poor within poor countries can, and routinely do, protect the most vulnerable among them. Dr Cabrera said:

"My field research introduced me to hundreds of people who make truly inspiring efforts to act as global citizens. This book is my attempt to share what I have learned from their lives, and to highlight ways in which we can make real contributions to human rights protections wherever we are placed.

"All of us practice aspects of global citizenship when we contribute directly to human rights protections, especially for the vulnerable in poorer countries."

The book calls for increased practice of global citizenship to promote political integration between states; such as admitting Turkey to the European Union, or permitting freer movement from Mexico as part of a deeper North American integration, both of which are vital to enhance the human rights protections of tens of millions of individuals, with deeper and broader integration between states the key to realising a truly global state.

For more information, please contact Dr Luis Cabrera via tel 0121 414 6520 or email a.l.cabrera@bham.ac.uk.

Notes to Newsdesks

- The *Practice of Global Citizenship* by Luis Cabrera is published in paperback by Cambridge University Press, priced at £18.99.
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