

## Mount Holyoke in Word and Vision

### Meets

#### Mount Holyoke in Practice: The Plan for 2010, Democracy, Global Citizenship, and Workers Rights

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There is a growing awareness that true democracy, as a treasured ideal to aspire to, is being replaced by an imposter who, wraps herself in its name, mouths the word, and even some of the values of democracy, but in fact, has a very different agenda, as demonstrated by its actions. Many want the benefits, but not the responsibilities, of democratic governance, appalled when their own rights are eroded, but too often unconcerned that the rights of others are transgressed. Many more are unaware of the meaning of democracy and its rights and benefits, sensing the masquerader's presence without knowing and experiencing the original, akin to a child, abused from birth, not knowing the love, cultivation, and protection that is her true birthright. This child is likely to perpetuate the lessons of her childhood unless the masquerader's mask is stripped away and loving parenthood is modeled.

So it is with democracy and ethical values. Most of us "learn what we live" and it is our own responsibility as well as that of our educational institutions to assure that what we live is not a masquerade. Are we, as a revered and respected institution in the United States, part of the problem or part of the solution - or a little of both?

With a growing consensus that democracy, nationally and globally, is in crisis, institutions of higher education across the nation, including Mount Holyoke College, have put out a call to prepare students for "global citizenship." At MHC this call has, most recently and clearly, been articulated by The MHC Plan for 2010. There is a movement to reengage students, brought on by a sense, as well as empirical evidence, that our institutions of higher learning have not fulfilled their original promise of engaged citizenry. Indeed, this is exemplified by the fact that from 1960 to 1993 there was a 39%

drop in the number of students attending “collective political participation” such as rallies speeches.<sup>1</sup>

With the end of the Second World War the academy turned more towards science and technology, and away from a moral base.<sup>2</sup> MHC declares it “has remained remarkably consistent” in regards to its values.<sup>3</sup> Our mission as the Mount Holyoke community “reaffirms its commitment to educating a diverse residential community of women at the highest level of academic excellence and to fostering the alliance of liberal arts education with purposeful engagement in the world.” Yet, nowhere in the literature on the topic of the academy and civil responsibilities, can one find clear, if any, discussion of the responsibility of the university to act institutionally according to what it charges the university must enable its students to do; be outstanding global citizens. This body of literature includes that of the of the American Association of Colleges and Universities, (and of its 850 member institutions, MHC being one of them), in past scholarly work on democracy and education, such as that of John Dewey, or other current writings on democracy and education. There is a contradiction between promoting and making a public affair of the importance of “global citizenship”, and some of MHC’s labor/business practices. Though these business practices aid the institution to function financially, they cannot possibly meet MHC standards of “social justice,” and the valuing of human resources. Specifically, there is concern over MHC’s use of subcontractors, outsourcing, and anti-union practices. These practices reflect global trends, as many businesses take advantage of those who need to work, and the availability of inexpensive labor. By participating in these practices or hiring companies which do, we contribute to one of the current barriers to global democracy: we increase the disparity between rich and poor. This concentrates resources for the MHC campus, faculty and students, while excluding certain MHC workers, which strengthens the class divide. In addition, the school claims to be invested in the local community, yet the Plan focuses on “internationalizing” the students’ experience. As MHC promotes global citizenship, it

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<sup>1</sup> I have misplaced the origin of this fact. I am still on the hunt. How embarrassing.

<sup>2</sup> Geary Schneider, Carol “Core Missions and Civic Responsibility: Toward the Engaged Academy.” Association of American Colleges and Universities, May 1998, 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> Ad hoc Committee on the Future of the College (2001-2003), Chair Creighton, Joanne. *The Plan for Mount Holyoke 2010*. May 2003, 14.

must not forget, that all local areas make up the global. Mount Holyoke's business practices that gain this institution financial stability by hiring subcontractors with unfair and illegal practices, and the administration's negative reactions to student and community demands, lead us to ask what is Mount Holyoke's vision of leadership and can it be implemented to create a more just and democratic world?

The Mount Holyoke Plan for 2010, was approved by the board of trustees in May of 2003. It attempts to delineate an "aspirational" plan that helps MHC be most true to its mission. "At the heart of this document is academic excellence". the plan describes how this can be achieved, ranging from athletics, the finances of the school, to community service. The Plan is a document of 38 pages, not including an additional 19 of appendixes. Nine of these pages are contained in section III. "Engaging the World: Education for Citizenship." The sub-headings in this section include: " A diverse Community and Global Citizenship," "Leadership and the Liberal Arts," "Environmental Education and Stewardship," and "Technological Savvy and Integrated Services." These four sections give us a sense of MHC's vision as the Plan claims these areas to be its "foci" "encompassing all areas of the academic program, and potentially enrich[ing] one another, a convergence we should encourage."<sup>4</sup>

Our responsibility as engaged citizens is to thoroughly read this institution's materials and question how we fit into it, as well as how we are participating in MHC achieving its highest standards, which we internalize as our own. This process looks at the Plan for 2010 and asks how do I understand this document? What are the values and ideas motivating this document?

Though an important ideal, and implicitly described in the Plan, the document is wary of directly claiming "democracy" as one of its core principals; instead it claims the less political terms "academic excellence," "diversity," "citizenship," "leadership," and "engagement." While using these words regularly in the document, democracy is only inserted once, in reference to other schools. None-the-less, we must not hesitate in claiming this Plan as a map to democratic ideals while simultaneously recognizing the

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

conflict of our ideals with our structure and business practices. Democracy asks its citizens to be well informed, and sees this as pivotal to their ability to participate and make fair decisions as a community, hence the importance of “academic excellence” in the Plan. Democracy is designed to be inclusive, not excluding any minority stances, and able to digest and integrate different views, which creates a common space. For these very reasons we promote “diversity” within the student body and staff. The ideals of citizenship, leadership, and engagement, are deeply intertwined. Engagement is paramount to participation that is the absolute basis of a democratically functioning community. Without the participation of all, or the majority, we have not the rule of the people (democracy), but the rule of a few (oligarchy). Invoking “citizenship” is one of the most solidifying concepts MHC promotes. How else can we interpret this concept of citizenship, other than encouraging us to build and participate in a democratic community, believing this community is best served by an educated citizenry.

While MHC uses a language set that calls upon the ideals of democracy, it refuses to claim it as democracy. I see this as being complicit with the status quo of what is expected from an elite school that wants to maintain its edge. What the Plan says is absolutely nothing new. Language similar to that of the Plan can be found on the web page of the American Association of Colleges and Universities. Not only are we a member of this organization, but one of our trustees and alumna is the president of this highly important institution.

As the Plan uses a vocabulary that harmonizes with the concept and practices of democracy, is the Plan, is Mount Holyoke, actually promoting democratic values and practices or something other?

### **Education and Democracy**

In setting the stage for the examination of MHC’s labor practices it is helpful to introduce ourselves to John Dewey’s theory of education and democracy. As one of the most influential thinkers on education in the 20th century, philosopher John Dewey (1859-1952), wrote extensively and advocated for methods of education with the preparation of

an (educated) individual in a democracy as its aim. Seeing education as a process of socialization, he is known for building learning environments around experience, reflection, community and democracy.<sup>5</sup>

Dewey ties certain practices or malpractices as having direct connections to the soundness of democracy-building practices. The theory of democratic equality, holding that all individuals' concerns are to receive "equal consideration in society" is the principle on which Dewey builds his theory, and that crystallizes the ethics of democracy.

Class and privilege are his targets of specific concern that can disable the achievement of a democratic institution or nation. These divisions are divisive to equal opportunity in a variety of areas impacting democracy. Most importantly they convolute the process of achieving common values. As Dewey states;

“ In order to have a large number of values in common, all members of the group must have an equitable opportunity to receive and take from others. There must be a large variety of shared undertakings and experiences. Otherwise, the influences which educate some into master, educate others into slaves.”<sup>6</sup>

This statement leads us to the heart of the partitioning of people; the lack of mutual interests, relating to vital issues of discrepancy and distribution that we will encounter later as we explore “global citizenship.” While lacking “shared experiences” some may still find themselves in “socially serviceable” roles, yet without an understanding or personal interest in the value of our work. That circumstance is one of “control of conduct” which can be seen as a form of slavery.<sup>7</sup> In this instance Plato’s definition of slavery is called upon, where a slave is an individual who “accepts from another the purposes which control his conduct”.<sup>8</sup> This slavery is a tool for efficiency, we become the proverbial “cog in the wheel”. Cogs have never been known as the backbone of a democracy, but the mainstay of dictators. It is industry in large part that separates “human factors” from efficiency, and is devoted to the development of specialized knowledge

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<sup>5</sup> www.infed.org

<sup>6</sup> Dewey Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education. New York: The Free Press, 1944, 84.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 86.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 85.

without context and a greater understanding of human needs. We must resist being overspecialized and not understanding the implications and context of our work.

It is this isolation of knowledge sets, tasks, and classes, that leads to the institutionalizing of life for “static and selfish ideals within the group”<sup>9</sup> that has the most sway over the socialization/ education practice. To reach our goal of democracy, which is not a mere form of government, but “associated living,” we must understand our actions in the context of others’ actions; associated living is sharing space, both public and private.<sup>10</sup> This sharing, Dewey equates to with “breaking down those barriers of class, race, and national territory”.<sup>11</sup> This is a process of breaking down barriers to reach shared concerns. This gives power to a variety of needs. As various technologies over time have often inadvertently led to this breaking, we must be intentional in our effort to include all in a community that is infused by shared ideals. This ideal clearly concerns access to education: In this society the stratification of educational opportunities means unequal ability to participate in and adapt rapidly to changes in the society. The society divided in classes “need be specifically attentive only to the education of its ruling elements”,<sup>12</sup> that is not the society we are aiming for.– it depends on what the classes are based upon)

Class and privilege are the most categorized and defined obstacles to democracy as they reveal a division of interests. These categories help us to imagine other vital aspects of democracy. A part of building a community that is working towards democratic aims means taking what is valuable and desirable in that community’s life and using it to criticize the undesirable features, and suggest improvement. The core of this practice is not to isolate what is gained from experience from what is gained in school, but to integrate them. Let us use MHC’s highest values to evaluate how we might improve.

### **Ideology meets Practice**

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 86.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 99.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 80.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 88.

The original moment when many students met the disappointing discordance of MHC as an institution and its failing to abide by democratic or fair practices was when the Student Coalition for Action was approached by the Housekeepers. In the fall of 2000, the housekeepers were attempting to assert their right to organize, when the school began an assault against the housekeepers organizing drive. The Housekeepers struggled for issues of “dignity and respect,” and concerns about the school using favoritism over seniority. They wanted more control over the cleaning products they used, specifically ones less abrasive to work with and environmentally friendly, and raised other frustrations, relating to their ability to participate in the community. In response, the college held what some consider immoral “captive audience” meetings in which Housekeepers were forced to attend anti-union meetings. The National Labor Relations Act states that: “the expressing of any views, argument, or opinion, or dissemination thereof . . . shall not constitute or be evidence of an unfair labor practice . . . if such expression contains no threat of reprisal or force or promise of benefit.”<sup>13</sup> Aside from problems with this policy, the bottom line is that many Housekeepers felt intimidated that if they organized they would lose their jobs or face other types of retaliation at work, a very common an illegal practice in the United States. But many of the Housekeepers were not intimidated, and asked students and faculty to come to their contract negotiations and put pressure on the school to act fairly, and democratically. As the students began an education campaign around campus and put pressure on the administration, we experienced our first taste of MHC’s anti-democratic, anti-citizenship behavior. Local labor organizers called MHC’s tactics “militant,” and “surprising” in the face of our institutional identity and general reputation.

When Housekeepers felt they were not being treated like valued members of the community, when as a minority (24 housekeepers), they were not invited to participate in decisions about their work and their involvement in the community, they asserted their legal right to form a union in the hopes of having their collective voice heard. Though in the end they won their union, it was appalling that the administration attempted to discourage this democratic right to organize.<sup>14</sup> The college’s actions are contradictory to

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<sup>13</sup> Section 8(c) National Labor Relations Act.

<sup>14</sup> United States Code 29 Fair labor practices, <http://www.opm.gov/omsoe/prohibit/legal.htm>

the Plan's statement that the college "will take a leadership role in the worldwide education and advancement of *all* women" (emphasis added).<sup>15</sup> This calls into question the meaning and implication of "education," and for which women around the world it is intended. If MHC asserts the importance of citizenship, and implicitly, the vital role of an informed and critical citizenry, how are we promoting this in all women of our own community? I believe that philosopher John Dewey would say we are playing into a class divide that is destructive and counter to democracy. I would venture that attempting to form a union is not only leadership, but a form of citizenship.

When women felt their voice was not heard in the community they organized. Though MHC does not presuppose to be a democratic community, our public image would lead one to think it had a pretense of acting as one. A powerful idea about how communities function is expressed in this quotation from the book *Democracy*, by Carl Cohn, "the community presupposed by democracy deteriorates when minorities within it are arbitrarily excluded, by law or in fact from participation in the life of the whole."<sup>16</sup> The very fact of exclusion from participation is a subtle form of oppression says John Dewey.

Housekeepers have a sense of pride in their work, and play a vital role in the health and smooth functioning of the community. Yet MHC seems to be saying that some women are of value and some are here to serve others' value. For many Housekeepers it is not enough that the wages here are better (though still not adequate) than other local employers: they want respect.

Was MHC purporting that women organizing democratic institutions so as to protect their rights and dignity does not contribute to their "advancement," but rather is so contrary to their "advancement" that the school must intervene and derail them? Lacking time to thoroughly explore the history, MHC does have a record of "advising" against the formation of unions. While their official line maybe that it is disruptive to the sense of

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<sup>15</sup> Synopsis of the Plan, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Cohen, Carl. *Democracy*. Athens:University of Georgia Press, 1971

community, the two unions on campus are here because workers felt, and still feel, that without them, and even with them, the college does not treat them properly. This anti-union stance of the college administration stands in conflict with any declaration leading to democratic ideals. The mere fact that the majority of workers in these unions feel so strongly that unions are needed reveals that the college is not adequately, if at all, including these “minority” groups in decision-making processes, or the in the dialogue concerning the rules of their conduct.

Out of this struggle, workers, students and many faculty alike, decided that we needed to institutionalize standards of fair labor practices at MHC, since the administration had shown itself to stand in the way of its workers’ right to organize. As we began to strategize for a fair labor code of conduct, our understanding of MHC’s unjust practices was expanded when we the Student Coalition for Action was approached by the Western Mass Carpenters Union, local 108 in the fall of 2001. Their lead organizer, Jon Avery informed us that the college had hired the building contractor Cutler to build the new “green” science building, later named Kendade. Cutler then hired Optimum systems. Optimum (already in legal trouble in New Hampshire) participated in an illegal hiring practice called 1099ing which is a form of misclassifying workers.<sup>17</sup> 1099 (ten ninety-nine) is a tax form that is filled out by an independent contractor. In this case an independent contractor is an individual negotiates for themselves how much they get pay, when they work, provide their own equipment and medical benefits etc. For the employer this means they don’t pay the taxes or benefits (workers compensation, insurance coverage, unemployment taxes, social security and income tax withholding), as they would on an employee. For the worker it means they are offered a higher dollar wage, but ultimately does not compensate for the loss of benefits an employee would have received. Initially the school seems to benefit, and chooses a contractor such as Cutler because they

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<sup>17</sup> Upon investigation of the Kendade construction site carpenters from the brotherhood and MHC students, stepped onto the construction site and interviewed workers to investigate the situation. What we had understood to be true was confirmed, many workers who were not independent contractors were working as such. The majority were French Canadian or Mexican nationals, not fluent in English and unaware of what their pay was.

offer a lower price in comparison to unionized work which guarantees that it follows labor laws, pays a living wage, and has benefits.

In spring of 2003, a new member was added to the Labor coalition, the community organization known as the Anti-displacement Project. They informed us of the illegal and unfair situation day laborers were facing who worked on this campus. Day laborers arrive at the hiring hall at five in the morning, and then are informed if they have a job by eight (three unpaid hours of waiting, with no guarantee). Then they must pay for their own transportation which may cost up to ten dollars. On the job, day laborers receive \$6.75-\$7.50 an hour (out of the \$19.00 per hour that the broker receives), but to get their pay many must use an illegal check-cashing machine, which costs a dollar plus the amount of change in their check. At the end of the day the laborer receives less than the minimum wage in Massachusetts which is \$6.75. The low wages that the broker, Labor Ready, in Springfield pays, allows companies like Cutler to offer a lower bid to buyers like Mount Holyoke.

Though housekeepers are kept at the periphery of the community, day laborers are made invisible at MHC. People whose ethnic and class backgrounds might have contributed to MHC's diversity, quietly build the structures that will house our growth and ideas, not even knowing the purpose for which they are building. Dewey in his concerns for democracy and Robert Greenleaf in his ideas of leadership, are just two authors who deeply stress the necessity of common understanding and experience for productive outcomes. Indeed, the Plan includes how important it is that all members of the community work with the mission and great vision of the college infusing the meaning of their work – but the day laborer, though often a very thoughtful person, is not considered a part of our community and thus the vision is not shared. Though it seems that the buildings we use are culturally and historically significant to us, the people who build them are treated as though they have little value or meaning to us. The disconnect of the “community” is made official by the fact that day laborers, like other outsourced or sub contracted workers on campus, are not on the Mount Holyoke pay rolls. Therefore MHC is not responsible for them or to them, even though they are working to build our vision.

The perspective of the administration was made painfully obvious when a group of us had a meeting with Joanne Creighton about the situation of workers on campus. When Joanne Creighton said, something to the effect that, “we have to see what the community thinks,” day laborer Emma said “I am a member of the community, and this is what I think,” Creighton promptly replied, saying “no,” she meant the MHC community.

When MHC hired the contractor that uses day laborers, among other unfair and often illegal cost cutting practices, we had other options. We had been informed as to the occurrence of these unfortunate business practices, that undercut the construction market in Western Mass, but we chose cost effectiveness over having workers who would receive a fair wage and be able to do skilled work. Ultimately, MHC suffered as some of the work was done poorly, since the workers were inadequately trained.

Even when faced with the voice of the majority, MHC administration did not act according to popular demand. In the spring of 2002 the Student Coalition for Action (SCA) collected 1,300 signatures from the community, supporting a fair labor code of conduct on campus. The faculty senate voted unanimously in support of a code, and the majority of the SEIU union local 615 representing facilities management, and UAW local 2232, representing the housekeepers, voted in support as well. There was a massive education campaign and dialogues were taking place between the president’s office and students. Students were told publicly by the president’s office that administration supported the code, but “we” (the administration) would not adopt one that was not in our language, and not without surveying the staff who would be affected. While the SCA was urging a adoption of a plan before graduation 2002, the administration put the code to a committee, the Fair labor Practices subcommittee, under the Multicultural Committee for Community Living. This committee focused on interviewing non-unionized staff, though they were charged with interviewing all staff. Though the code was meant to protect a general sector of workers, while endangering no one, the school felt the non-unionized staff would be most affected by a change in policy. The committee process neglected to interview *any* individual from dining services, and never spoke with any day laborers, or subcontracted workers in general, the most severely affected group, and one of the main reasons many were advocating for a code. When their report was published they

announced a set of unspecific recommendations that the SCA, labor, and faculty allies agreed would not serve to strengthen labor practices at MHC.

Putting the Code into the Multicultural Committee for Community Living, has been interpreted as a way of side-lining labor concerns. Many feel that the college was hoping a few individuals would graduate, things would quiet down, and the college could go back to business as usual, but the next generation of activists did not have any short-term memory problems nor a lack of passion. Instead we refuse to let this community ignore these issues that threaten the respectability of this institution. We explain the situations that reveal what is really happening: unacceptable and often illegal labor practices that violate the very ideas for which MHC claims to embody.

Evaluating MHC's labor practices I do not believe that we are promoting democratic ideals. I think it is incumbent upon all of us who have the privilege of attending a school such as MHC to remember "to whom much is given much is expected." If only a few can be leaders, and MHC claims those as her ranks, we must be leaders not only in academia but in compassion, respect, and understanding for all others. Though we may learn well these ideas in theory we must practice them, and see them exemplified by our home institution. As Dewey states "we cannot seek or attain health, wealth, learning, justice or kindness in general. Action is always specific, concrete, individualized, unique."<sup>18</sup> To develop the best leaders there must be a commitment to providing students with the best opportunities possible, including educationally, in accommodations, food, and more. MHC offers the best to its students from around the country and around the globe, while leaving its subcontracted workers the least.

Mount Holyoke needs to be more aware whether the employment practices of contractors are fair, because unfair treatment undermines democracy. It is incumbent upon MHC to model behavior that shows respect for everyone, and in this area MHC falls short. Schools such as MHC are constantly in danger of perpetuating elitism and many students as well as administration are blind to the elitism itself.

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<sup>18</sup> <http://cuio.uchicago.edu/~cac/dewey.htm>

This investigation is not meant to argue that MHC should be run in a strictly democratic way. What I do wish to point out is how un-democratic it is. Though there are multiple forms of democracy, such as direct participation, or representative, the idea is that all opinions will be present and well considered. Our college is not run by its members nor elected officials, ultimately the executive decision-makers are the trustees, the president of the college being one of them. The college's explication of the work of the trustees is: "The property, business, and affairs of the College are the responsibility of the Trustees, who shall have and may exercise all the powers of the College, and who shall also be members of the College." (*Bylaws*, II:6). Trustees' main responsibility is fiduciary, as without business and property the school cannot persist. This becomes even more explicit as we consider who the trustees are, Daniel J. Altobello, retired Chairman of the Board of Directors of Onex Food Services, Jeanne Amster 77', Head of School at the San Francisco University High School, Barbara Baumann 77' Executive Vice President of Associated Energy Managers Inc. These are just the first three trustees listed on the MHC website, and are fairly representative of the makeup of the board with nineteen of the thirty-three coming from the business community, and the majority of the remaining one-third having a career in education administration. The decision making of the institution largely comes down to financial choices; lacking funds we do not function, maintaining the endowment becomes a number one priority and necessity. Though there is the student conference committee that meets with the board, and there are other decision-making bodies on campus, essentially the trustees can veto, recall, or ignore, as they see fit. This has meant that minority factions who are essential to the functioning of the college, yet not a part of our public image or attraction are sidelined, or hushed. The administration attempted to hush the housekeepers by intimidating them, and the struggle of misclassified workers and day laborers was sidelined. We must ask how this forwards our aim of global citizenship, how do we model it in our institutional behavior?

### **Global Citizenship in the Plan**

Let us attempt to clarify what the Plan means when it uses the word "global citizenship". In section III A.2 *Global Citizenship*, MHC promotes global citizenship in terms of "internationalizing" students' experience through various means. Connected to

internationalizing is the key concept of maintaining a diverse community. This section leads one to surmise that global citizenship is achieved only by studying international issues, traveling, and maintaining international students in our presence. All of these practices have their aim in fostering a greater understanding of what is going on in the world. Knowing people from various places certainly makes foreign issues more real, but mere proximity is not enough, as we often recreate in our relationships divisions that mimic global as well as local patterns and antagonisms. Focusing on general international experience is insufficient to infuse students with substantial citizen-like characteristics. A student can learn without being engaged, and can learn and use knowledge in a destructive manner in local and international settings if the student's concept of citizenship is incomplete and lacks inclusiveness. This section does not address what global citizenship means, or an effective way of attaining it. It is an apolitical statement about the importance of "global awareness", but too vague to have significant impact.

While the above section offers a superficial treatment of global citizenship, the Plan's opportunity to broaden its understanding of global citizenship is in the section called "Engaging the World Education for Citizenship." In this section engagement becomes a key consideration. It can be understood as "making real world" connections through one's liberal arts education. This education "helps to develop rhetorical, critical, and analytical skills; respect for difference, ambiguity, and complexity the reflective and ethical habits of mind that are essential to effective leadership."<sup>19</sup> The term "enlightened citizenship" is used without further explication. In the context of the Plan we can relate this to the importance of living in common and how this helps us to deepen our "commitment to social justice" (though social justice is not referred to again, nor further detailed).

At first read, global citizenship seems very positive, but upon mild consideration, the Plan is so vague that it almost denies global citizenship a meaning. While an admirable part of the goal of a Mount Holyoke education is to enable its students to think for

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<sup>19</sup> Ad hoc Committee on the Future of the College (2001-2003), Chair Creighton, Joanne. The Plan for Mount Holyoke 2010. May 2003, 17.

themselves, the school also professes to include morals and values, and unlike many other types of institutions, we feel this infuses and vitalizes our experience.

In applying relevant theories, such as Dewey's on education and democracy and some ideas about global citizenship's wealth disparity it is revealed that MHC's practices collaborate in strengthening a class polarization at MHC and in the world.

### **Global citizenship**

Understanding how to be a global citizen demands understanding "globalization" (popularly understood as the globalization of economic relationships). As one author puts it "A closer look at globalization will reveal . . .the project is about the freedom of capital to maximize its accumulation potential, not about libertarian ideals."<sup>20</sup> Many academics note a phenomenon of "corporate globalization," with nation-states setting up policy agreements that benefit transnational corporations, but that involve no public input. This phenomenon that is ever increasing the wage gap (in 1998 the richest 20 percent of the world's population receives 82.7 percent of the worlds total income and the bottom 60 percent receives 5.6 percent)<sup>21</sup> puts capitalism and profit over democracy. But if we profess freedom or democracy in this country or community, we must consider the statement " the price of freedom is redistribution."<sup>22</sup> This brings us to the theory of distributive justice, a key element in the discussion about global citizenship.

John Rawls wrote most famously on this topic in the 70s, and since then a whole body of work has emerged theorizing and strategizing on this topic. The concern is that "there is increasingly less symmetry between the effects of a policy and the people included in the forum of decision making."<sup>23</sup> Distributive justice holds the concept that if decisions for governance were made "under circumstances of rough equality and risk aversion," then "people would choose a principle of equal liberty, . . . and a second

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<sup>20</sup>Overbeek, Henk. "Neoliberalism and the regulation of Global Labor Mobility." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 581 (2002), 75.

<sup>21</sup> Collins, Chuck, and Yeskel, Felice. *Economic Apartheid in America: A Primer on Economic Inequality and Insecurity*. New York : New Press, 2000, 63.

<sup>22</sup>Gills, Barry. "Democratizing Globalization and Globalizing Democracy" *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* Gills, Barry, and Munck, Ronaldo, eds. 581 (2002) 167.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 163.

principle that would distribute benefits and burdens equally to all” though he acknowledged that inequality could be justified when it was in the aid of the worst off.<sup>24</sup> Leaving the much larger discussion of this theory and its practice aside, its basic tenant is that within the nation-state, and the relation of nation-states, as we enter into a globalized world, we have been left with an imbalance of power due to concentrations of wealth. This advocates that we need wider democratic participation, and distributive justice is a part of the means to achieving it. This also implies that all communities that make up the nation-state, such as Mount Holyoke, must claim their responsibility with its use and distribution of resources. We must enter into the global community knowing that:

“a new model of global citizenship would not require the existence of a global state but of a global community that provides protection against the overwhelming power of nation-state to its own citizens and the power of multinational corporations over peoples lives. . . . therefore global citizenship should mean that people show their sense of justice and responsibility to care for all other human beings anywhere in the world: but it also has a component of accountability of global decision-making and component of duties to contribute to global redistribution.”<sup>25</sup>

MHC’s main duty is not redistributing wealth, the concern is that it concentrates it. It is hypocritical to do this while promoting global citizenship, not offering a meaningful understanding of the concept in our literature.

Being responsible global citizens, we must go beyond what the law requires of us, what is the bare minimum “Legal duties correlate with legal rights, but what is needed is an ethical commitment to exercise one’s rights responsibly, to underpin law and to make a better world.”<sup>26</sup> We can do this is by not only upholding labor laws but considering what a “living wage” is in this area. One study states that to maintain a modest two bedroom home, a worker in Massachusetts must receive a minimum of 21.14 dollars an hour.<sup>27</sup> There are other measures of what is needed such as the self-sufficiency standard which says “in Boston a single person with no children needs to earn \$7.52 per hour to be

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<sup>24</sup> Ven den Anker, “Global Justice, Global Insitutions and Global Citizenship in *Global Citizenship: A Critical Reader* Dower, Nigel, and Williams, John, eds.. New York: Routledge, 2001, 159.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid,167-168.

<sup>26</sup> Section introduction, Dower, Nigel, and Williams, John, eds. *Global Citizenship: A Critical Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2001, 128.

able to meet her/his basic needs,”<sup>28</sup> though in this part of the state they would need more. Let us recall that day laborers make under \$6.75 an hour, and most have families, and a housekeeper’s starting pay is \$10.75 (Agreement between Housekeepers Unit UAW 2322 and Mount Holyoke College, June 14, 2002- June 30, 2004). The children of Mount Holyoke workers will be hard-pressed to have the opportunity to attend school here. If we wish to be global citizens, if we believe we have anything to do with social justice, we must consider our business practices. “Reducing inequality requires the strengthening of and expansion of the ethical business sector concerned not only for the bottom line profit but the social bottom line as well.”<sup>29</sup>

On Thursday the 11th of December, 2003, I, as a member of the MHC community, received an email, informing the community and congratulating us on achieving our goal of raising 250 million dollars. “Looking at the vitality of the campus, we can all attest to the impact the campaign has had on our college.”<sup>30</sup> But what is becoming common knowledge on campus is that our operations budget is a million dollars short for the year. Hours are being cut all over campus, students can’t make their work-study hours, worker’s raises have been delayed, and a myriad of related conflicts have arisen, but we have just raised 250 million dollars that can not be used for any of this. In general, donors earmark their funds for certain projects. MHC plays into this by running capital campaigns that encourage this kind of contribution while the everyday lives of students affected, and workers are cheated out of what is fair. The word in Facilities management is that the president does not like the chandelier in Kendade, so it will be replaced to the tune of 10,000 dollars. If this is true is this a responsible use of our resources?

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<sup>27</sup> “Minimum Wage doesn’t Pay the Rent” *Washington Post* September 18, 2002.

<sup>28</sup> *The Massachusetts Project for Family Economic Self-Sufficiency, convened by the Women’s Educational and Industrial Union The self-sufficiency standard for Mass families Selected Family Types* [http://www.weiu.org/pdf\\_files/SSSReportOriginal.pdf](http://www.weiu.org/pdf_files/SSSReportOriginal.pdf) September 1998.

<sup>29</sup> Collins, Chuck, and Yeskel, Felice. *Economic Apartheid in America: A Primer on Economic Inequality and Insecurity*. New York : New Press, 2000, 126.

<sup>30</sup> email Joanne Creighton, subject heading “campaign”

## Wealth disparity in the USA

Theories about Global Citizenship have their concerns around issues of income and wealth disparity corroborated by the book, *Economic Apartheid in America*. Disparity in the global economy is stark, with some CEOs making thousands of times the income of their lowest paid employees

In the U.S. specifically, there is concern around the real wage stagnation or decreases income for the poorest and the incredible increase for the wealthiest, again resembling global trends. We can see this increase in income disparity growing, by way of a statistic using data from the census that shows between 1979 to 1998 the real family income of those in the bottom 20% of the nation (earning 21,000 dollars or less a year) saw a 5% decrease in their wages, while those in the top 1% (260,000 dollars a year or more) saw an increase of 106% in their wages.<sup>31</sup> The day Laborers at MHC are clearly in the bottom 20%, and housekeepers are just barely above it, making approximately 24,000 dollars a year in 2003. In contrast, our president of MHC is in the top 1% of family incomes, not including even her benefits or her husband's income, with her salary alone being 290,900 dollars. On the average the incomes of Blacks and Latinos remains significantly lower than those of whites. We replicate this at MHC when we consider the ethnic makeup of day laborers. The only "unique" aspect of all this, is that a woman is the highest paid person on campus.

Quite simply, the poor are getting poorer while the rich get richer; undemocratic wealth and income disparity is increasing. One gets a better sense of what this means to democratic participation in the electoral process via the fact the households with incomes over 75,000 dollars a year are twice as likely to vote than households with incomes under 25,000 dollars.<sup>32</sup> Many people already feel that their vote is not of great significance, but rather nullified by those who vote by funding certain campaigns, or legislation. Voting by donation is disturbingly exemplified in an interview by Senator Lieberman with Roger Tamraz from Oil Capital, Ltd. When Lieberman asked if Tamraz was registered to vote he replied "no". Instead he donated 300,000 to a campaign; he thought that was more

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<sup>31</sup> Collins, Chuck, and Yeskel, Felice. *Economic Apartheid in America: A Primer on Economic Inequality and Insecurity*. New York : New Press, 2000, 43.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 35.

important than voting.<sup>33</sup> Another major concern is that of corporate lobbying and contributions that have been notorious for going against popular sentiment and the greater common good. If we create an atmosphere that is more participatory at MHC perhaps it will have some small effect on the hopelessness about the democratic process in general.

In addition to wealth disparity there is leisure time disparity. Today the number of two income households (married mothers in the work force) has doubled from 38 percent in 1969 to 68percent in 1996,<sup>34</sup> and increasingly longer work days (economist Julia Schor reports that since 1972, U.S. workers have had an increase of three and a half work weeks a year), leading to less time to spend with the family or in civic organizations. Also pertinent is the fact that Day Laborers and misclassified workers do not receive paid vacation, meaning they have even less time to spare. *Economic Apartheid* argues not only that the growing wealth gap in this country and the world is detrimental to democracy, they also point to its troubling deliberateness.

While there are multiple culprits in this inequality: decline in independent politics, rise in corporate power, decline in influence of the civil sector and importantly, the decline in the lowest 20% wages since the 70s has been “directly linked to the decline in unionization in the U.S.”<sup>35</sup> At the time this book was written Manpower Inc, a temporary worker agency was the largest employer in the country, now Wall Mart is. These are both employers that do not allow unions, but are notorious for being workplaces without security, upward mobility, or a living wage. This relates to the Day Laborers on campus as they are in a non-unionized sector, but also forces us to recall the situation of the housekeepers, and MHC’s anti-union campaign. Though MHC does not and cannot disallow unions, it has done its best to discourage them. Our very own campus models what is NOT working with democracy in this country. Eighty percent of companies hire a consultant to stop employees from forming a union.<sup>36</sup> There are also important books such as *Winning NLRB Elections: Avoiding Unionization Through Preventive Employee*

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 181.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 85.

*Relations Program* (NLRB stands for National Labor Relations Board). Did MHC hire such a consultant, did our administration read this book? Who's rules is MHC playing by, those of Global citizenship, or those of capitalist interest?

The Plan, not surprisingly is student-centric. This of course does not seem unreasonable, as we are an institution for higher learning, but we must question the soundness of the concentration of so many resources around students; are we often just perpetuating the class privilege of those who were able to make it here, are we being good democratic citizens when we take to the exclusion of others or to the point that they don't have, so we can have?

What about other institutions, our peers of Yale and Harvard have not been doing so well, as revealed by their recent national battles over the poor pay and treatment of workers. How can a whole tier of schools, some of the best in the country, charged with the mission of preparing its students for citizenship, maintain institutional practices do not meet up with their stated mission. It seems having a diverse student body is a much more engaging popular issue than the wages and conditions of the workers. But it is our job as citizens of MHC to take the mission of this institution, and what we have learned seriously to help it build an institution that might not be democratic per say, but that does a much improved job practicing democratic, and democracy building ideas. We must not set up a model, where the ends simply justify the means. In this case, educated engaged citizens are the end, but the practices to produce them cripple democracy's vitality, and perpetuate an anti-democratic system. Critically engaged members of the MHC community will not stand for this, but will stand by measures that arise democratically out of the community, such as the Fair Labor Code of conduct which seeks to aid the administration in maintaining practices that align with our stated values.

In the end issues of efficiency and cost-effectiveness, that privilege the worth of and advancement of the students win-out, while workers receive wages that disable them from participating. To be a day laborer often means to struggle to meet your basic needs, it is a social disadvantage, that diminishes democratic participation because of the disenfranchisement that is often connected to it. MHC is modeling a global trend of

wealth disparity, in its business practices, while in its materials maintaining a commitment to “social justice;” It appears that we are not aware enough that this justice should be extended, or what that means. This makes us look as if we are only interested in this justice in certain locations, as in our interpersonal relationships on campus, and in an understanding of global issues.

The other important lens through which to understand this situation is that of dichotomies. At MHC we have at least four separate worlds; administration, students and faculty, MHC payroll staff, and outsourced workers. The two most important divides to understand are that of the “community’ and the non-community. Though in word we have commitment to the local area, and to our staff as an important human resource, certain contingents are being seen as separate, not included in the community or our mission. Day labors are less than second-class citizens, they are what many in the social justice realm consider modern day slaves. MHC administration seems at ease with this dichotomy of student and worker, community member and non-payroll worker, that leaves open the doors for exploitation. This is not a world lived in common, the building blocks of democracy by perpetuating income disparity, and denying many workers and students the possibility for common experiences. To truly and deeply enjoy a rich life in a democratic society our educational system must produce citizens who are hopeful compassionate and respectful of all others, this can only be accomplished if our institutions of higher learning such as MHC practices these values everyday.

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