



Citizenship under Fire: Democratic Education in Times of Conflict

Sigal R. Ben-Porath

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Citizenship under Fire examines the relationship among civic education, the culture of war, and the quest for peace. Drawing on examples from Israel and the United States, Sigal Ben-Porath seeks to understand how ideas about citizenship change when a country is at war, and what educators can do to prevent some of the most harmful of these changes.

Perhaps the most worrisome one, Ben-Porath contends, is a growing emphasis in schools and elsewhere on social conformity, on tendentious teaching of history, and on drawing stark distinctions between them and us. As she writes, "The varying characteristics of citizenship in times of war and peace add up to a distinction between belligerent citizenship, which is typical of democracies in wartime, and the liberal democratic citizenship that is characteristic of more peaceful democracies."

Ben-Porath examines how various theories of education--principally peace education, feminist education, and multicultural education--speak to the distinctive challenges of wartime. She argues that none of these theories are satisfactory on their own theoretical terms or would translate easily into practice. In the final chapter, she lays out her own alternative theory--"expansive education"--which she believes holds out more promise of widening the circles of participation in schools, extending the scope of permissible debate, and diversifying the questions asked about the opinions voiced.

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