



Responding to Trump: The Need For A Populist Globalism November 22,2016

**By Ron Israel
Director, The Global Citizens' Initiative**

If you see yourself as a global citizen, you are probably dumbfounded by the election of Donald Trump, Brexit, and the possibility of nationalist focused regimes in France, Austria and other countries. How could such events happen in an inter-connected and interdependent world, a world greatly in need of global citizenship? Is it a step backwards?

The Trump election, and others like it, is being described as a populist revolution. Populism is defined as “the belief in the power of regular people to have control over their government rather than a small group of political insiders or a wealthy elite.” * Forces driving modern day populist nationalism have successfully motivated voters to associate the political elite in their countries with what they perceive to be the negatives of globalization and free trade, and the associated loss of jobs and corruption. Their solution seems to be to elect governments that withdraw from the world and focus on “making their countries great again.”**

In populist nationalism messaging “making countries great again” usually means making countries great for a few. It often refers to attempts to re-establish a privileged political position that a group of people (often white males) used to have in days gone by. These people now feel alienated by forces that are propelling us to engage beyond traditional borders and realize the benefits (as well as the necessity) of coming together as a global community.

So populist nationalism has thrust the world into a major identity crisis. Are we (A) A collection of countries stuck in the assertion of sovereign rights, each wanting to make our own country great again and butting heads with one another in the process? Or (B) an emerging inclusive world community composed of countries and people committed to working together to solve pressing global problems, such as the environment, human rights, and poverty, that no single country can solve on its own.

If we choose (B) we must recognize that our countries will not collaborate and help us build a sustainable world community for all unless we demand that they do so. This is why there is a need today for a populist movement that is global rather than national in scope; that wakes people up to the urgent need for country collaboration. Such a movement of course should also address criticisms of globalization by supporting free trade agreements that provide for workers rights and protection of the environment. But most importantly such a movement must unmask the illusion of populist nationalism that falsely labels globalization and globalism as villains that worsen peoples' lives. It needs to raise awareness that we all live in a globalized inter-connected and inter-dependent world. It needs to demonstrate how the real villains are those who stoke the fires of nationalism that keep us from realizing the benefits and meeting the challenges of this world; who keep us chained to a past where nations, unless attacked, did not have to care about what went on beyond their borders.

Populism need not belong exclusively to nationalists. There is a huge need for a global brand of populism that recognizes the borderless connectivity and inter-dependence that increasingly binds us all; a populism that supports our desire to work together within and across countries and reclaim our planet for all of us who live here.

**** [Www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/populism](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/populism)**