

# Keeping the Promise

## Essays on Leadership, Democracy, and Education

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## Margaret Haley as Diva: A Case Study of a Feminist Citizen-Leader

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### Introduction

This chapter is about educational leadership, gender, power, and citizenship. In it, we propose a feminist model of leadership in education that allows for ambition, incorporates power, and discusses leadership as performance. We introduce the notion of diva citizenship (Berlant, 1997) as a leadership model for women who work for and with others by actively disrupting current systems of educational practice.

We use the term citizen-leader in this chapter to signal both the importance of active political citizenship and the ways in which this type of civic action paves the way for others to act in the politics and governance of the school. T.S. Marshall (1998) defines political citizenship as "the right to participate in the exercise of political power as a member of a body vested with political authority" (p. 94). Political citizenship in the United States is often seen in a most limited and limiting way, associated with the act of voting. Parker notes that we have an "impoverished notion of citizenship that involves little more than civic voyeurism—watching other people (elected representatives) act like citizens" (Parker, 1996, p. 121). Similarly, participation in educational institutions can take on the same spectator role: watching the federal government, legislators, school administrators, and locally elected school representatives shape schooling processes and outcomes. In this chapter we want to emphasize a notion of citizen not as mere witness but as active participant. This chapter has particular concern with the active participation of women and racial and class-based minorities in schools, for it is the interests of these individuals and groups that many public schools still largely ignore.

Schools are a domain of public life that is heavily populated by women as workers, but less often as formal leaders. Conceptions of active political

citizenship are crucial in the educational realm, where women have long been standing in the front of classrooms but only recently have stepped outside of those classrooms into informal or formal leadership roles. In using the term citizen-leader for this context, we signal an expansive meaning of leadership beyond formalized titles or hierarchical forms. For example, teachers exhibit citizen-leadership when they step out front and “speak truth to power” about inadequacies in schools by publicly framing an educational problem for others to hear and examine in a new way. In this age of top-down educational reform that emphasizes testing over learning, and punishment over relation, teachers are sorely in need of more creative models of citizen-leadership.

The notion of diva citizenship comes from postmodern feminist Lauren Berlant (1997) and provides a provocative way to think about positioning women and other historically marginalized peoples as citizen-leaders in educational sites. Through a case study of the life of early twentieth-century teacher union leader Margaret Haley (1861–1939) (see Rousmaniere, 2005), we mine the construct of diva citizenship to show how feminist and postmodern ideas of public voice and leadership might be conceptualized for schooling, particularly to be used by women, people of color, and the poor—all groups historically underserved by schools.

Margaret Haley stands as a model of diva citizenship in education. The founder of the first American teachers’ union, a passionate advocate for structural school reform and for the authorization of teachers’ voice in educational policy, Haley had a distinctive and dynamic leadership style and vision that incorporated the attributes of what we call diva citizen-leadership. Certainly many of these characteristics were Haley’s response to her own historical context; thus we do not hold Haley as a rigid model for educational leaders in other contexts who face different barriers and challenges. Still, as a woman excluded from avenues of political power, who responded to that exclusion in particular ways, Haley offers a model of political activism that is a useful way of rethinking power, leadership, and citizenship in educational reform.

The chapter is organized in the following manner. First, we introduce the idea of citizenship by exploring feminist theory’s different approaches to the topic of political participation in democratic life, and educational leadership as a particular form of that participation. Feminist citizenship theories have explored in depth the transgressive leap from private to public that has defined feminist citizenship. Schools represent a particular site in which private, domestic interests and bodies of children meet public interests and agendas, and teach-

ers—and other educators—occupy a bridge between the public and private worlds because educating and caring for children is still “women’s work.” Feminist theories of educational leadership, which we briefly survey in this section, bring into focus the ways in which women’s leadership has been theoretically configured as it has negotiated this private/public domain.

We then turn to the notion of diva. The figure of the diva is grounded in the feminine, in women’s positions and performances in public life, typically as singers or starlets on-stage. In performing as divas, women act: they use their voices, bodies, and minds to put themselves in the public eye. Similarly, when Berlant (1997) uses Anita Hill as a diva citizen par excellence, she is highlighting Hill’s simple and powerful move of speaking the truth, of standing up and using voice, body, and mind to name a problem—notably, a “public” problem that many in our patriarchal society wish to dismiss into the “private” realm: sexual harassment. We draw on the work of postmodern and other critical feminists and trace out five characteristics of the diva citizen-leader.

Next, we turn to our case study, and mine the life and work of teacher and union activist Margaret Haley to show how a diva citizen-leader makes educational change. Finally, we summarize the ways in which an educator as diva can transcribe a marginalized identity into a more powerful one through a postmodern feminist model of citizen-leadership, exploring both the problems such a model might solve, and also anticipating the sort of problems such a model will create.

### Feminist Notions of Citizenship and Educational Leadership

Citizenship has existed for nearly three millennia; with very minor exceptions, women have had some share in civic rights in the most liberal states for about a century. This juxtaposed contrast has sometimes been explained by the argument that citizenship, particularly in its civic republican mode, is a status invented by men for men. (Heater, 2000, p. 203)

Only until very recently have women been citizens in any full sense of the term, and the feminist scholarship on citizenship—its historical patterns, theoretical foundations, and social constructions—reveals the ways in which gender still marks patterns of civic participation. Since citizenship has been historically a practice enjoyed by one certain group in our society, the very meanings of the term are “delimited conceptually by falsely universalizing one particular group’s practice of it” (Jones, 1998, pp. 222–223). In other words, the ways in which we

envision the activities, practices, and dispositions of *the citizen* and the political realm are layered with gendered and patriarchal meanings.

The feminist scholarship on citizenship is rich and diverse. Feminist notions of citizenship can be understood as occupying three basic theoretical positions or camps: liberal feminism, difference feminism, and postmodern feminism (Dillabough and Arnot, 2000). These positions do not represent "pure" categories but general, often overlapping theoretical locations. Liberal feminists, also called humanist or equality feminists, are occupied with the simple yet fundamental challenges of integrating women as full citizens, using the current social meanings of citizen without troubling the potentially negative, gendered implications of the term itself. Liberal feminists, as scholars and activists, address the barriers to women's full participation as citizens. Redistributing family responsibilities, for example, would free up women to engage in democratic work outside the home. Assuring that all women, no matter where they worked (in an office, in the home, in a factory), have adequate health and Social Security insurance would provide women with the full benefits that civic membership should provide. Liberal feminists in education have fought for the inclusion and success of girls in areas of study typically seen as the domain of boys, such as upper-level math and science courses, or traditionally male vocational programs like computer technology, building trades, or aviation technology (see Kaplan, 2003).

Liberal feminism, at first glance, looks like a promising path for women educational leaders. For many years, the idea that women were essentially (biologically, morally, and in all other senses) different from men had justified the laws and norms that kept women out of educational leadership and policy decision making. The history of the teaching profession bears out how a feminized identity was used to diminish teaching as real work. The occupation of teaching became feminized in the late nineteenth century in order to draw upon a pool of workers who could be paid less than men and who could be told what to do by men administrators. Central to this new occupational identity was the expectation that women teachers worked out of care for children—that their work was public mothering, a labor of love, a natural feminine gift—and not a "real" occupation. Teaching was not work but a self-sacrificing mission that was not deserving of money or power (Rousmaniere, 1997). Liberal feminists argue that if these differences between men and women could be minimized in rhetoric and leadership performance, women could achieve educational equality. Liberal feminists originally argued that to be effective

leaders, women had to learn how to be like men—to take on male traits of assertiveness and independence in their leadership. Early liberal feminist theorists on women in leadership argued that simply removing the structural and procedural impediments to leadership positions, and teaching women how to gain power like men would achieve equality. Discrimination itself was irrational and could be averted procedurally if egregious barriers were eliminated and women were urged to adopt the traits of male leaders, since these were the traits that were determined to be "natural" to successful leaders. (Shakeshaft, 1989)

Some critics of liberal feminism argue that fighting for equality is inadequate, "because, within the existing patriarchal conception of citizenship, the choice always has to be made between equality and difference, or between equality and womanhood" (Pateman, 1992, p. 20). Difference feminists are concerned with reconstructing our conceptions of citizenship to include traditionally female values (caring, nurturance), making space in the public sphere for the important values and activities of women as care-givers, homemakers, and sustainers of community life. Elshtain (1998) points us to the heroine of Sophocles' drama *Antigone* (447 B.C.E), who rather than allowing her brother to be dishonored by the state, defies the political ruler for her family's honor and duty to the sacred human rite of burial. Elshtain asserts that although women in Antigone's time were denied the rights and duties of citizenship, she is an example of an "active historic agent, a participant in social life who located the heart of her identity in a world bounded by the demands of necessity, sustaining the values of life-giving and preserving" (p. 371). Jones states, "Citizenship has to be redefined to accommodate women's bodies in their concrete, historically changing forms....[constructing citizenship] that encourages the articulation of interests and the pronouncement of authority in voices of many registers" (Jones, 1998, p. 229).

Rather than perceiving gender difference as a deficiency on the part of women, feminist theorists advance women's difference as a sign of superiority. For difference feminists, the problem lies not with making women accepted and acceptable as citizens; the problem is with the meanings of citizen and public life. Educational theorists such as Noddings (1992) and Roland Martin (1992) advance similarly positioned versions of difference feminism in education, advancing modes of relationality and community, formerly associated with the women's domain of home and civic life, to be incorporated into school structures, curriculum, and moral education. Drawing on social psychology research

that claims that women and men see life differently—women through a lens of care and interdependence and men through a lens of rights and independence (Gilligan, 1982)—difference feminist educators argue that women educational leaders prioritize relationships over authority, work through collaboration and not competition, and make explicit their responsibilities to children and to human relationships. Difference feminists argue that women's leadership is guided by an ethic of care, and women leaders create "relational leadership" and a "circle of empowerment" that is based in attending to the day-to-day realities of schools (Irwin, 1995; Regan and Brooks, 1995). These characteristics are then advanced as more appropriate for leaders in a democratic school system (Shakeshaft, 1989).

While difference feminism in educational leadership has made a positive impact by showing the ways in which both "feminine" and "masculine" traits are needed in real school leaders, the construct of male/female leadership can still lead to gender stereotypes and can serve to perpetuate power imbalances that are typically not diagnosed as problematic by difference theorists. By applauding gendered leadership traits, difference feminists run the risk of reaffirming a long organizational history of women educators' confinement to caring work in classrooms, and men to higher paying, higher prestige leadership work in administration. Difference feminists' calls to make administration more "caring" still leave the burden of change on women, as they struggle to change a powerful cultural ideology that effective administration is about power and authority, and not about care.

Postmodern theories of feminist leadership have disrupted the trait-based binary of a "men's" and "women's" style of leadership. Jill Blackmore claims that such a discourse sets up new universalizing norms that idealize women as being self-sacrificing, averse to public ambition, and universally bonded to the private world of children. The notion of a "women's style of leadership" also creates a false category of women that ignores class and racial divides and political differences between women. And most importantly, the emphasis on women's traits as leaders "diverts attention away from the politics of workplaces and labour process research." (Blackmore, 1999, p. 60) Such theories perceived "the glass ceiling" "as a barrier to be penetrated rather than deconstructed in order to seek out what it constitutes, why and how has it been maintained" (Blackmore, 129). In short, theories of women's ways of leading simply reverse the sexism of traditional theory. As Jackie Blount has argued, "To say women should be school administrators because of their sex is just as dangerous as the

time-honored practice of insisting that only men be leaders" (Blount, 1998, p. 162).

Postmodern critiques that examine how power works in educational politics open up new conceptions of educational leadership. Crys Brunner draws on the metaphor of warriors to make sense of the lives and work experience of women school superintendents, as they learn to explore the "battleground" of educational leadership. She notes how battle metaphors pervade educational talk—from teachers being "in the trenches" to "fighting the good fight" for educational reform. She argues that women educational leaders are warriors because they fight for children; they are also warriors because they have entered a domain from which they and their beliefs have been historically excluded (Brunner, 2000). Brunner's use of the metaphor of warrior moves away from identifying gender traits of caring or not-caring and begins to examine how woman leaders negotiate power in a hostile territory that is not of their own making.

Postmodern feminist theory in citizenship and education seeks to trouble the dualisms between equality and difference feminisms, and "recognize more plurality in politics and society and focus on key questions around voice, identity, and discourse" (Dillabough and Arnot, 2000, p. 24). Skeptical of positions on either side of the debate, they find liberal feminism too locked into discourses of rights, reason, and universal citizenship, and difference feminism too vulnerable to essentialized notions of difference that are regressive to efforts for equality and recognition. Through deconstructing the *feminine* as well as the *citizen*, postmodern feminist Lauren Berlant (1997) offers a way to rethink women's roles in educational leadership.

### Diva citizenship

As a postmodern feminist, Berlant aims to deconstruct contemporary dominant notions of citizenship and public life and to reconstruct models of political agency appropriate for women and other groups who are still marginalized. Her concept of "diva citizenship" provides a model of narrating the truth of oppressed people and groups through performances that utilize the necessary drama of such a narration.

Diva citizenship occurs when a person stages a dramatic coup in a public sphere in which she does not have privilege. Flashing up and startling the public, she puts the dominant story into suspended animation; as though recording an estranging voice-over to a film we have all already seen, she re-narrates the dominant history as one that

the abjected people have once lived *sotto voce*, but no more; and she challenges her audience to identify with the enormity of the suffering she has narrated and the courage she has had to produce, calling on people to change the social and institutional practices of citizenship to which they currently consent. (Berlant, 1997, p. 223)

Enacting this model of political agency that hopes to shape the power of the diva toward the goals of social justice, Anita Hill countered dominant constraints of family-values citizenship when she testified against Clarence Thomas in an effort to show that the workplace is a public space in which women's so-called private, sexual, and economic vulnerabilities are exposed (Berlant, p. 227). For Berlant, diva citizenship exists in acts of pedagogy, risk, controversy, and struggle in response to emergencies—threats to human dignity, like slavery, or sexual harassment—that are embodied, and first experienced as personal, intimate, and private. Diva citizenship exists in acts of public pedagogy about conditions of oppression or exclusion, acts which transgress the public/private divide and are historically embedded in systemic relations of power. Diva citizenship is political action in the sphere of counterpublics “in which it is hoped that the poesis of scene making will be transformative, not replicative merely” (Warner, 2002, p. 122).

Mamie Till Bradley, mother of Emmett Till, provides another example of diva citizenship. After her son was brutally murdered by White racists in Mississippi in the summer of 1955, Ms. Bradley turned her private suffering into public outrage. “This 33-year-old Chicago resident ‘wanted the whole world to see’ what had happened to her son” (Feldstein, 1994). “She insisted that his battered body appear in an open casket at the funeral” (in Hill Collins 2000, p. 194). Ms. Bradley did not retreat into a secluded grief but took to the streets in the months and years after her son's death, working to make her son's death meaningful in light of the larger sufferings of the Black nation. Now, in retrospect, Emmett Till's death marks the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement in America, and Till Bradley as one of its noted citizen-leaders. Hill Collins documents the power of Black mothers who fight on behalf of their own, and their neighbor's, children. “Raising their Black children in racist environments fosters new views of motherhood for many of these women. This is an entirely different understanding of political activism and empowerment than fighting on one's own behalf” (Ibid).

The Black feminist concept of “womanist” furthers the notion that black women's political activism evolves from a cultural standpoint of oppression and marginalization. “Womanist” characteristics are based in the realities of how

Black women have historically had to resist and advocate for themselves and their communities. Alice Walker, who coined the term womanist, described its origins in black folk expressions of mothers to their self-confident and aspiring female children, “You acting womanish,” or, like a grown-up woman. To be called womanish was, according to Walker,

usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous, or willful behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered “good” for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown-up. Being grown-up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: “You trying to be grown.” Responsible. In charge. Serious. (Walker quoted in Ropers-Huilman and Taliaferro, 2003, p. 157)

A diva is deliberately womanish in that she is acting powerfully or courageously in a way that is not befitting a person of her station. A girl-child struggling to assume adult roles and responsibilities may be accused of acting womanish. A woman citizen-leader, assuming the diva stance, is also performing a courageous act that will seem, to some, out of the bounds of normalcy or appropriate behavior.

Like a girl acting womanish, a diva is assuming power by her own initiative and performance. A contemporary diva is powerful not in spite of her marginalized location as woman or woman of color, but through the cultivation of the power that such marginality can provide.

Diva typically implies a lead performer of celebrity status, one whose power and influence within her profession allow her to dictate the terms of her performances, “asserting control over her peers and putative directors. . . . She cultivates a personality that befits such attention: a magisterial and confident pose, elegant diction, graceful movements, and a studied indifference to the mundane and tedious elements of daily life.” (Jung 1999, p. 4–5)

The diva constructs herself through an aesthetic performance of self—a self that may be, in the contemporary diva's world, an utterly feminized icon of conventional beauty and grace. Yet divas twist the feminine into a commanding source of authority through their performance *as* powerful people. Jung writes, “this aesthetic power provides [the diva] with autonomy, security, capacity for growth, and the ability to effect profound improvements in the lives of others.” (Ibid. 8). The aesthetic, performative power of the diva ironically derives from her exclusion from normal channels of power. “From marginality comes the potential for alternative resources.” (Ibid.) The diva is inherently a performer, and one in whom the performance allows a liberating and autonomous force.

In sum, we wish to make use of the construction of diva citizenship as a model for educational leadership. Five characteristics describe our model of diva citizen-leadership.

1. Diva citizens are people who are structurally disenfranchised. They are marginalized from both power and information about power. They lack the status and authority of traditional leaders, and they gain power by disrupting the structure in part through the force of their own personal will.

In describing Black feminist activist work, Hill Collins speaks to the "power of self-definition and the necessity of a free mind"—the role that a consciousness of freedom plays in resistance and agency (2000, p. 285). The diva citizen performs and gains power in her marginalized status through a strength fed by an evolving consciousness of freedom and human dignity.

2. Diva citizens gain authority and voice through performing gender in a way that may both underscore gender "differences" and also twist gender norms, making them obvious and ironic as the limitations and falsities of these "differences" are seen in the performance.

Diva starlets like Diana Ross and Madonna perform gender in ironic ways—they may project an image of supreme beauty, grace, and femininity, but they are known for their steely personal power and control over their performances, their money, their image, and their lives. Divas are akin to difference feminists in that they are not engaged in a project of apeing men or masculine ways of engaging in public life. They are unafraid to use their unique experiences as women to articulate their public voice.

3. Diva citizens disrupt the norm. Their transgression into the public sphere, their manipulation of gender roles, and their use of humor, irony, and bombast lead them to disrupt public notions of normality, undermining laws, common assumptions and rituals.

The diva is a construct that has traditionally transgressed gender norms in powerful ways—women who inhabit femininity but use it as a tool to disrupt the normal. Anita Hill, in her polished lawyer suits, channeled her cool professionalism into a testimony so jarring in its intimacy and truth that it shook "the

ground of collective existence" (Berlant, 1997, p. 223). While sexual harassment was, in the intimate spheres of gendered life, a "normal" occurrence that women have learned to subtly resist or silently tolerate, Hill disrupted this oppressive normalcy by undermining the sacred halls of the U.S. Senate with her descriptions of sexual misconduct of her former boss and now Supreme Court justice.

4. Diva citizens may have strong, dynamic and often difficult personalities. They have an attitude, a combination of ego, audacity, talent, strength, andchutzpah that combine to set them apart from many women and from people with power. They have ambition—they want to be successful, to lead, to have power, to influence others. Their ambition can be accompanied by a single-focus, domineering, autocratic leadership style, a domineering and assertive way of being that can be exclusive and difficult.

5. The history of women's political participation and activism is typically narrated as cooperative, relational work that is characterized by solidarity and the communal networks which embed the single activist in a larger associational web (see Eisler, 1987; Welch, 1990). As progressive educators, we go against the grain to hold up a model of political activism and leadership that is characterized in part by its acknowledgment of the benefits of individual strength and the singular ambition to influence others. While we understand the limits of the diva citizen—progressive politics cannot survive without cooperative, communal models of political work—there are many moments in schools and in public life at large that call for the diva's assertive, near domineering power. Diva citizens work for the good of others. Originating outside of power, their motivation is to make power available to others from the margins. They have a strong understanding and respect for the every day struggle of every day people, and their leadership is informed by resistance strategies and a "logic of survival" intended to obtain dignity for ordinary people amongst the institutions and policies they did not build. (Bettina Aptheker quoted in K. Jones, 1993, pp. 114-116).

Ours is a reconstructed model of the diva, in which a disenfranchised person uses the performance of a diva in order to bring attention to a suffering or an injustice that is being silently, duplicitously tolerated by the majority, rather than to herself alone. Theologian Katie Cannon (1985) describes the importance

of a biblical faith in the prophetic tradition that helped Black women to "devise strategies and tactics to make Black people less susceptible to the indignities and proscriptions of an oppressive white order" (in Hill Collins, 2000, p. 213). While prophets have traditionally been men, their courage, audacity, and truth-telling power make them a likely parallel to the model of diva citizenship that we construct here. Diva citizens, like prophets, lead resistance efforts and loudly testify to the injustices of our society. Like the examples of martyred prophets such as Martin Luther King or the historical Jesus, divas also take many public risks in inhabiting this role.

There are many cultural moments that demand the performance and work of diva citizens. In what follows, we describe an historical moment in which a diva citizen emerged from the ranks of an immigrant family and school-teacher vocation to become a powerful activist for public schools. In examining this case of diva citizen-leadership, we show how one woman used this model to make progressive change for schools.

#### Margaret Haley: Diva Citizen-leader

Born in 1861 into an Irish immigrant family in rural Illinois, Margaret Haley became a country school teacher at age sixteen. She later moved to Chicago where she taught in one of the city's poorest school districts for over a dozen years before she joined the newly formed Chicago Teachers' Federation in 1897, an organization founded and led by women elementary teachers for the purposes of protecting their pension and improving working conditions in city schools. Haley immediately led the Federation into the heart of urban school politics by directing a successful legal challenge of corporate tax deductions that had emptied the city school board coffers. In 1900 Haley left the classroom to become the paid business representative, lobbyist, and administrative leader of the Federation, a position which she held until her death in 1939.

During Haley's tenure, the Federation fought for increased salaries, a stable pension plan and tenure laws, and it led investigations into teachers' working conditions and school funding. Haley negotiated an unprecedented affiliation between teachers and the Chicago Federation of Labor and led her organization to become Local 1 of the newly formed American Federation of Teachers. Haley worked at the national level too, traversing the country to promote political activism among the nation's predominately female teaching force, and pressuring the powerful, administrator-dominated National Education Association to include the representation of women teachers.

An early critic of what she called the "factoryization" of education, Haley fought not only for teachers' rights as workers but also, for teachers' authority to shape the classroom into a caring and supportive environment for children. Echoing John Dewey's faith in the school as a potential agent of social change, Haley believed that the classroom teacher could be the center of humanitarian reform. If the school could not "bring joy to the work of the world," she argued, then "joy must go out of its own life, and work in the school as in the factory will become drudgery." (Haley in Reid, 1982, p. 286) Haley's progressive vision to make schools more humane was embedded in a larger vision to make the American political system more democratic, and she also campaigned for electoral reform, the revision of city government structures, women's suffrage, and school finance reform.

Margaret Haley covered a wide range of political playing fields, linking teachers with labor, the feminist reform movement, municipal reform, and progressive education. At the height of her political activism (1900–1920) she was constantly in the news of Chicago and educational politics, butting heads with captains of industry, challenging autocracy in urban bureaucracy and school buildings alike, arguing legal doctrine in state courts, and urging her constituents into action. Contemporaries described Haley as a dynamo of integrity who "flung her clenched fist" into the faces of men in power (Sandburg, 1915).

Margaret Haley fought for power and voice in the name of citizenship, and she did so by hurling herself from the sidelines of the political playing field into the fray, using her identity as a disenfranchised woman teacher to assert her rights on behalf of children, women, and working people. Throughout her political career, she disrupted, disobeyed, annoyed, and enflamed the early-twentieth-century narrative of how women teachers should behave, who should direct school policy, and what roles educators should play in a democracy. In so doing, she pulled the world of the school, and the lives of children and women teachers into the public political discourse.

Margaret Haley lived out the five characteristics of diva citizenship that we delineated above: she was disenfranchised from avenues of power by both her identity and her occupation; she performed her gender identity as a woman teacher in order to achieve power; she was audacious, outrageous, and fearless; she was ambitious and domineering; and she committed her life's work to improving the day-to-day experiences of teachers and students in schools. Her work as a leader was one of disruption and twisting of norms as she wormed

her way from the outside of political legitimacy into the halls of power. We examine her life and work through the five characteristics of a diva citizen-leader outlined above.

*One: Diva citizens are people who are structurally disenfranchised, and who gain power by disrupting the structure in part through the force of their own personal will.*

In 1900, women's capabilities as citizens were constrained by their inability to vote and by their relegation to low paying and marginalized occupations, absence of information and access to the public sphere, and inaccessibility of political and economic information. While all women suffered this marginality, some were more excluded from public discourse than others: white middle-class women maintained some informational access and power as a result of their class and racial status, while African American women and immigrant and working class women had much less access. Irish American Catholic women in early-twentieth-century America stood in a particularly marginalized location, barely one foot up from their African American and darker-skinned immigrant peers. Even those who had fought their way into the security of such civil service positions as teaching were still marginalized by their ethnic identity (Ignatiev, 1995; Roediger, 1991). In turn-of-the-century Chicago, a large proportion of elementary teachers were Irish Catholic women, and this group identity worked against their attaining political or social legitimacy.

Most elementary teachers in 1900 Chicago worked in under-funded, overcrowded schools, and they had little or no voice in their school management or curriculum design. As women, they could not vote in state elections until 1913, or in federal elections until 1920. Although by the turn of the century, women urban teachers across the country had reaped some benefits such as the pension, higher salaries, and the right to work after marriage, they faced the encroaching authority of centralized city school administrations that emphasized economic efficiency and accountability for educational expenditures. The gendered dynamics of new school administration was not lost on teachers, most of whom were women who worked under an increasing bureaucracy of higher paid men. Haley joined other progressives in her critique of the new school system as being built around "the ideal of the industrial factory system, which made the man at the top the only person with power, and the thousands below him the mere tools to carry out his directions" (Haley in Reid, 1982, p. 86).

Margaret Haley saw such power inequity as the source of all educational problems: the persistent cost cutting of school administrators was driven by wealthy city business interests that maneuvered tax cuts, corrupt deals, and

deflated civil service budgets in order to enhance private interests at the expense of the public. Citizen activism was the answer to this problem. In both schools and society, Haley championed political reform in which citizens would be the democratic vanguard against "the political machines and the entrenched vested interests of the city and state" (Haley, 1911, p. 118). Citizens needed to be prepared to take on this new guardianship, and it was the double role of the school to both train future citizens for this task and prepare current citizens to protect the school. Teachers played the central role in this calculus of civic defense, but teachers were disenfranchised from political work, economically marginalized, and woefully ignorant of their own rights. Women teachers were systematically socialized to think of their work as a natural female occupation that deserved little pay or recognition, and they were dangerously ignorant about basic economic practices. Haley argued that teachers needed to develop their own "science of political economy" which would educate them about their own economic rights and make them more alert citizens (Haley, 1901a). Her vision was to educate women teachers into power: the Chicago Teachers' Federation was founded in part for women teachers to study law and to learn how to participate in the political structures that marginalized them. As a leader, Haley acted as educator by providing teachers with access to information about state laws, economic and legal principles, educational theory, and political processes. She taught teachers about the rights that had been denied them in order to change the public world from which they had been excluded. Only by organizing together in educative groups to study economics and political processes could women teachers gain power—both power over their own consciousness and in the halls of the government.

*Two: Diva citizens gain authority and voice through performing gender in a way that may both underscore gender "differences" and twist gender norms.*

Excluded from political power as a woman and as a teacher, Haley used both of these identities to claim authority. She played on the image of moral authority of the schoolmarm, but instead of the punishing paddle, she drew on a more nationalist metaphor of the warrior. Haley's public image itself was a double imagery of female selflessness and masculine military valor. Like Joan of Arc, with whom she was often compared, reporters inevitably described her by both her femininity as a school teacher and simultaneously by her inherent masculinity as a union powerhouse from Chicago. Reporters described her as both a petite feminine schoolteacher and as a searing politician; she was one of Chicago's "Five Maiden Aunts," and she was a "lady labor slugger" who "stirred



Chicago upside down until she had her way." (Hard, 1906) She was one of the women in politics who were "Soldiers in Second American Revolution," wrote one reporter, who simultaneously described her as "a trim little woman" with "soft brown hair . . . whose blue eyes are soft except for the occasions when she is excoriating some especially repellant abuse, some dishonest politician or some time-serving interest." But she was "absolutely, entirely feminine," assured the reporter, who described her as "A Joan of Arc setting her helmet on straight before the battle—but none the less a Joan!" (Synon, 1914). Describing her own political tactics, Haley twisted President Theodore Roosevelt's imperialist and masculine dictum, "Speak softly and carry a big stick" into her own version of public leadership: "I didn't have a big stick," she recalled, "But I had a little one with nails in it" (Haley in Reid, 1982, p. 230).

Haley began her autobiography with the simple phrase of a humble schoolteacher: "I never wanted to fight" (Haley, 1935). But whether she ever wanted to or not, fighting turned out to be what Margaret Haley did best, and she seemed to enjoy doing it. Battle imagery pervades her autobiography which she called "Battleground." In this memoir, she recalled, "that, like all crusaders, I have stormed in where kings and courtiers feared to tread. I have beaten my fists, and sometimes my head, against stone walls of power and privilege. I have railed at mayors, at governors, at legislators, at presidents of great universities. I have banged machine-guns in defense of certain basic principles" (Haley in Reid, 1982, p. 3). Nor was she reluctant to draw on even more visceral imagery. When describing the teachers' first victory over a despised education bill, she wrote that the women teachers in the Federation "had tasted blood, and we liked the taste" (Haley in Reid, 1982, p. 40).

Haley carefully monitored her image, creating a complex identity that balanced traditional female gender roles with more dynamic and masculine roles of the citizen, patriot, and military hero. Throughout her forty years of public life, she relied on a strategy to publicly justify her very unfeminine public life by continually claiming that she was not looking for trouble, thereby placing the weight of the trouble on the offending party. If it was not her intention to create a problem, then the problem must have existed there in the first place, whether it was undemocratic processes or unqualified leaders. Like a classroom teacher forced to punish a badly behaved boy, she justified the severity of her actions by the seriousness of the problem. This tactic allowed her to spin the teachers' fight into a dramatic battle between the sexes where prim and proper schoolmarms took on cigar-smoking bureaucrats. In these popular images,

teachers' labor claims—for salary increases, rights to decision making, and so on—were downplayed and the moral highroad of the lady schoolteacher was promoted. Illustrating a battle in the National Education Association (NEA) where Haley had won the right of classroom teacher to have a voice in that organization, one newspaper portrayed the teachers' victory in a cartoon where Margaret Haley was the stern and upright schoolmistress behind her desk overlooking the schoolboy versions of two male university presidents and NEA leaders, Charles Eliot and Nicholas Murray Butler. The image of the prim and moral schoolmarm who was also a domineering force over masculinity refashioned traditional gender roles into a powerful political force.

*Three: Diva citizens disrupt the norm.*

Distinctive about Haley's work was that she did not *break* the law, but rather *used* the law even as she as a woman was denied her rights to the law, and as a teacher was conceived as passive, almost domestic figure with no interest in politics or law. By pulling women teachers into discussions about law, she disrupted normative assumptions about citizenship, moving women into men's spaces and reaching for men's power. In so doing, Haley "shattered the simple world view of clear dichotomies, sharp boundaries, and established expectations" and accomplished what Marjorie Garber calls a "category crisis"—a "failure of definitional distinction, a borderline that becomes permeable." (Garber, 1992, p. 17). Furthermore, as her opponents organized to discredit Haley, she further disoriented them by fighting back, drawing on humor, mockery, and irony.

The Chicago teachers were constantly reminded that they had no role in public decision making. One elected official told Haley that "when you teachers stayed in your school rooms, we men took care of you," but when they left that sanctity for the political world, they should expect to be punished (Haley in Reid, 1982, p. 72). Public officials echoed the popular press by sharply disapproving of the teachers' political work to revise tax laws to raise more money for schools, arguing that the problem of taxes was "outside the teachers' province" and that it was "impertinent for public employees to lobby to get more pay for themselves" (Herrick, 1971, p. 103.) Men educational and political leaders expressed their horror at the notion of women teachers claiming any sense of authority, and they organized quickly to delegitimize Haley. When she first spoke up at the NEA meeting in 1901, the first time a woman or classroom teacher spoke up at such a meeting, Commissioner of Education William T. Harris denounced her and advised the crowd to ignore everything said by that

"grade teacher, just out of her classroom at the end of the school year, worn out, tired out, hysterical." Haley responded by mocking him. She pled guilty to being a common classroom teacher and admitted that if what she had just done was hysterical, then she hoped it would be contagious so that teachers all over the country would rise up and claim their rights (Haley in Reid, 1982, p. 133).

As her work continued, she faced lawyers and legislature who yelled at her, tried to bribe and threaten her, and made sexual innuendos about her. Haley took advantage of these behaviors by unveiling them to public view. In her speeches and writings, she belittled the enemy, reinforcing her larger portrait of corporate corruption by rhetorically creating an image of hordes of greedy politicians and "oily" lawyers who "bared fangs" at her (Haley, 1911, p. 81). She described the bizarre length to which the captains of industry would avoid facing the small citizen calling for justice, regaling teachers with stories of corporate lawyers hiding in closets to avoid her, legal forms that vanished in thin air, and grown men who turned pale at the sight of the diminutive Haley. She carefully documented official's harassments and bribes and she hired a stenographer to coolly record everything that was said in public meetings, including the curses, to use later in public testimonies (Haley, 1911, p. 120; Winship, 1902).

Haley also developed a popular practice of allowing the opposition to speak at a Federation meeting, thereby presenting the enemy in full view of the antagonistic membership. Male officials who naively volunteered to explain politics to the women teachers found themselves on a stage in front of hundreds of well-educated women, only to be teased and humiliated by them. Sometimes, Haley reflected, "the enemies of a cause do it far more good than do its friends" (Haley in Reid, 1982, p. 36-37). Indeed, Haley increasingly promoted the image of women teachers as tough minded, independent women who would not put up with men, thus crafting a new image of the woman teacher. In one of the Federation monthly bulletins, for example, an article explained why so many Federation teachers were single. It wasn't because they could not get husbands, but because

they do not care to be bothered with taking care of big, stupid men. They enjoy their freedom and independence and the knowledge that they are members of the most useful and important of callings...why should she descend from this high estate to become the keeper of a blundering, self-sufficient male animal who will have to be watched all the time to keep him out of mischief? ("Why Our Schoolmarm's Don't Get Married," 1907.)

*Four: Diva citizens may have strong, dynamic and often difficult personalities.*

Dynamic, wildly popular on stage, and highly articulate, Haley was also widely criticized as being a demagogue and an obnoxious colleague. Men were not her only critics; many women claimed that Haley was a devious leader who had an abrasive personality and who was self-centered and conceited. Haley's contentious leadership style aggravated other teachers who on a day-to-day level who found her to be opinionated and bull-headed, incapable of compromise, and unwilling to work in any organization that she could not control. One opponent in the Federation charged that Haley was "a dangerous leader" who "hypnotized" members into acquiescence and who believed that people who did not take her point of view had simply not thought enough about the issue. Other teacher leaders charged Haley with undermining other groups if they did not do what she wanted and freely promoting social gossip, innuendo, and manipulation to denounce opponents. She was suspicious about other teacher organizations, including the American Federation of Teachers, which she helped to create, seeing them as encroaching on her own authority, and she criticized their leaders as being politically naïve, inconsistent, and unprepared for the difficulty of political combat (Rousmaniere, 2005, pp. 114-118).

One of her methods of maintaining power was her skill at parliamentary procedure, which she used to disarm her opponents in formal meetings and to force her own issues. Another skill was her ability to obsessively record and recount years of legislative detail, a tendency described by one observer as "forensic combat." She spent years forging connections with reporters, judges, and politicians and documenting the evidence retrieved from them. Such tactics enhanced Haley's power but also furthered the public image that the Federation was not a struggling little organization of lady schoolteachers but an entrenched insider power broker (Wattenberg, 1936, pp. 112-113).

Haley was unapologetic about her character, describing herself as someone whose only flaw was her unbridled passion for justice. Ultimately, she crafted her image as a solitary figure, even as her life's work was the development of democratic processes for teachers. She worked closely and respectfully with only two other women—Catherine Goggin, who shared the leadership of the Federation with Haley until her death in 1916—and Ella Flagg Young, the famous Chicago school administrator. But in her autobiography and public writings, Haley primarily described herself as working alone and accomplishing victories alone, ignoring the collective work of the hundreds of women teachers who made up her organizations.

*Five: Diva citizens work for the good of others.*

Haley's life goal was to make public the plight of public education. She did this through complex legislative battles through which she revealed corporate and political graft and by publicly describing the desperate physical and social conditions faced by thousands of children and teachers in city schools. She spoke constantly about underserved children, exhausted teachers, soulless curriculum, and nonsensical school management policies that crippled efforts to improve schools. She revealed to the public the role of economic interests in schools and argued that these interests worked at the expense of the humane education of children.

Haley made education a public issue, and in so doing, she changed the shape of American educational politics forever. She drew teachers out of the isolated nineteenth-century schoolhouse and into a cohesive labor unit committed to school reform and teachers' professional development. She encouraged women teachers to take on their own political education, and urged them to step into the public sphere, even as law and social custom excluded them from it.

All of this she did out of her inherent belief that schools were the heart of the civic organization, and the teacher was its steward. "The cause of the teacher is the cause of the people and vice versa, and their common cause is that of the children," she wrote in 1901 (Haley, 1901). The driving force behind all of Haley's activities was her vision of citizenship—that women, teachers, parents, and children had the right and responsibility to be involved in the democratic process and that only education would lead them into that process. In the years before women could vote, and before most Americans even earned a high school diploma, Haley asserted that women public school teachers were citizens who were obligated not only to teach citizenship but to engage in public policy decisions. Teachers' responsibility was to preserve the academic freedom and public nature of schools, guarding against those private interests that tried to exert influence in public schools. She saw the ongoing battles over school funding and administrative control over public schools as nothing less than a battle for the soul of American democracy.

### Caveats, Conclusions

The diva creates her image through performance, spectacle, and a public moral critique; she thus creates a new icon of power. There are, of course, appropriate limits on how this power might be usefully taken up in progressive work to

reform schools. Diva citizen-leadership should not replace models of cooperation and solidarity-building; it should punctuate, ignite, and inspire such coalition-building. To do so, the diva will need to contain her raw ambition at times and will need to consider the needs of others with whom she leads. This will be a considerable challenge for true divas like Margaret Haley.

But many of us who may not be "true" divas can *perform* diva citizenship in the same way that Anita Hill did—in decisive moments, we are sometimes called upon to publicly speak the truth, in the face of risk to our selves, our job stability, our professional status, and our futures. In these times, the truths of marginalized students, parents, and teachers in schools are whispered, but shouldn't we be shouting? Diva citizen-leaders can provide models and inspiration for those who wish to proclaim their struggles to receive a quality education as public problems. In these times of Title IX rollbacks, standardized high-stakes testing, increasing privatization, and continued struggles to adequately fund public schools, the performance of divas is needed now more than ever. The diva citizen-leader can help bring attention to persistent problems that are right in front of us but which we cannot see. The diva citizen-leader brings her rage, courage, and strength to help us see, with new eyes, the problems of equity and funding that Haley sought to solve and that we continue to battle.

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