I am submitting this evidence as Associate Professor in Political Theory at the University of Leeds. My research expertise lies in theories of citizenship, civic engagement and community, and civic virtue and public ethics. I seek to address the following two questions:

1. What does citizenship and civic engagement mean in the 21st century? Why does it matter, and how does it relate to questions of identity?
10. How do you see the relationship between citizenship and civic engagement on the one hand and social cohesion and integration on the other? What effect does the level of diversity in schools and workplaces have on integration in society as a whole? How can diversity and integration be increased concurrently?

1. We usually think about citizenship in quite formal terms, as a legal status embodying a bundle of rights, or as a collection of civic duties, or again, as a condition of membership in the polity. And we usually fill out these dimensions of citizenship by reference to an ideal picture of the ‘good citizen’. But by thinking of citizenship in this way, we are likely to miss important aspects of its character and value. Namely, we are likely to miss much of the character of what might be called ‘ordinary citizenship’ – the kind of citizenship that most of us hope to enjoy most of the time. The ‘ordinary citizen’ is part of the political vernacular of democratic societies, and yet we have only a limited grasp of its meaning. In the context of our present uncertainties and anxieties about citizenship, it is imperative that we learn to make sense of what it means to be an ordinary citizen.

2. To understand ordinary citizenship, we do well to turn away from our idealistic pictures of good citizens and to take the perspective, instead, of those at the margins of citizenship – those who have been denied, or who struggle to enjoy, its basic decencies. By reflecting on what they lack, we will be able to appreciate more fully what ordinary citizenship is and why it matters. And we will also be able to shed new light on the character of civic engagement and on its relationship to social cohesion and integration.

3. Ordinary citizenship is not, as often portrayed, just a legal status or a membership badge, but nor is it the kind of dedicated participation cherished by republican political thinkers. There is what might be termed a ‘dignity’ of ordinary citizenship that consists simply in the normal participation in the routines of everyday life, and in a secure sense of one’s good standing (not just membership) in the community. It is the sort of thing we take for granted, at least until we are deprived of it. The ordinary day-to-day experience of citizens is typically not about voting, writing to MPs, community organising and participating in protest marches. It is more often a matter of everyday cooperation, modest sacrifices, and small-scale resistance to low-level injustice. These are the difficulties of everyday democracy in a free and diverse society, especially in urban settings: the way we dress (e.g. debates about Islamic veiling practices), the way we talk to each other (insulting speech, proselytism), the way we moderate our public behaviour (‘manspreading’ on public transport, spitting in the street), and the way we speak out for each other in the face of unfairness (everyday racism and sexism). It is ultimately a question of how we relate to one another: with kindness or suspicion, with respect or contempt. These mundane transactions and micro-encounters are easily overlooked, but they compose the raw fabric of a democratic culture and underpin effective engagement. Those deprived of citizenship, and those who have seen their

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citizenship emaciated by political change, only seldom seek the glamour of deep civic involvement. It is easy to underestimate ordinary citizenship, but its dignity has been appealing enough to those who have struggled and died in its pursuit.

4. And from the perspective of ordinary citizenship, there is an intimate link between citizenship and social cohesion, because a fundamental part of the work of the ordinary citizen is the work of getting along with one’s fellow citizens. And it sheds interesting light on the familiar difficulty of increasing diversity and integration concurrently. It is typically thought that diversity must work against integration, and of course in practice it often does. This has led to a range of initiatives intended to promote shared national values as a way of securing cohesion in conditions of diversity. But diversity does not always work against cohesion – often enough in the cosmopolitan spaces of major cities, like London, we see cohesion and cooperation among citizens very different from one another. And that success has relatively little to do with a deep sense of shared values.³

It is much more to do with the successful practice of everyday cooperation and civility, irrespective of the divergent values upheld by the parties to the cooperation.⁴

5. There is an important implication here for the manner in which we seek to cultivate social cohesion in a diverse society. The promotion of shared values is doubtless part of any programme of community-building that is to have any chance of success, but it is not the only part and it is probably not the most important part. Far more fundamental on the ground of everyday living and ordinary citizenship is the development of the skills of everyday cooperation with people different from oneself, techniques of conflict negotiation and management, the will to find a way to live together and the recognition of society as a problem we share. The development of such skills is a key task for civic education, but also (albeit in a less immediate sense) for the designers of the public spaces that house the rituals of everyday civic life.

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³ Edyvane, D. Community and Conflict: The Sources of Liberal Solidarity (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007).