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IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF WYOMING

In the Matter of the Cheyenne, Wyoming
Naturalization and Granting of November 18, 2022
United States Citizenship to: 10:00 a.m.

BIRGITTA RAMIREZ, ALEXANDRA Joseph C. O'Mahoney
CARDIN, MOLIS AL HELALI, MARIE Federal Courthouse
TELLIER, BEATRIZ BECERRA, CARLOS
HERRERA PLATERO, STEPHANY PEREZ
VALERIO, VICENTE SANCHEZ
CASTANEDA, TANYA BROWN, CARRIE
WAKKURI,

Petitioners.

TRANSCRIPT OF HEARING PROCEEDINGS ON PETITIONS FOR UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP AND NATURALIZATION

BEFORE THE HONORABLE KELLY H. RANKIN
CHIEF UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

APPEARANCES:

For the United States: Office of the United States Attorney
District of Wyoming
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Proceedings reported by realtime stenographic reporter;
transcript produced with Computer-Aided Transcription.

1 (Proceedings commenced 10:00 a.m., November 18, 2022.)

2 THE COURT: Thank you. Please be seated.

3 Well, good morning, everyone. This is a real special
4 honor and pleasure to be with you on behalf of judicial
5 colleagues and the District of Wyoming. I welcome you, your
6 family and friends.

7 I understand that you all survived the roads, some of
8 you from Laramie and Wheatland and here in Cheyenne. And it is
9 a very cold day, but hopefully adequately warm in here to
10 celebrate this big day for each of you.

11 I'm Kelly Rankin, and I'm, again, honored to preside
12 over today's proceeding. This is really a happy moment. Not
13 very many occasions that occur in this courtroom where we have
14 smiling faces and flag waving and those sorts of things.

15 So we're just delighted to be with you here today.
16 And we've got a number of guests and individuals that will help
17 make it even more special, I hope, for each of you.

18 Well, let's begin, if we could, with the roll call of
19 each of the ten citizens-to-be that are with us today. And
20 I'll turn to Jasmine Peters, Assistant United States Attorney,
21 on behalf of the Attorney General for the United States. I
22 believe Ms. Peters has a motion and she will also hopefully do
23 the honors of the roll call.

24 Ms. Peters.

25 MS. PETERS: Thank you, Your Honor. May it please the

1 Court.

2 THE COURT: Ms. Peters.

3 MS. PETERS: My name is Jasmine Peters, and I'm here
4 today as a representative of the United States Attorney's
5 Office for the District of Wyoming, and in proxy for the
6 Attorney General of the United States.

7 It is my pleasure and my privilege to introduce to the
8 Court today ten individuals who appear in person on -- for
9 their hearing on their petitions for naturalization as United
10 States citizens: Ms. Birgitta Ramirez, a native and former
11 inhabitant of Sweden; Ms. Alexandra Cardin, a native and former
12 inhabitant of Canada; Ms. Mokolis Al Helali, a native and
13 former inhabitant of Yemen; Ms. Marie Tellier, a native and
14 former inhabitant of France; Ms. Beatriz Becerra, a native and
15 former inhabitant of Mexico; Mr. Carlos Herrera Platero, a
16 native and former inhabitant of El Salvador; Ms. Stephany
17 Judith Valerio Perez, a native and former inhabitant of Mexico;
18 Mr. Vicente Sanchez Castaneda, a native and former inhabitant
19 of Mexico; Ms. Tanya Brown, a native and former inhabitant of
20 Jamaica; and Ms. Carrie Wakkuri, a native and former inhabitant
21 of Canada.

22 These individuals have been interviewed and examined
23 under oath by a designated examiner for the United States
24 Citizenship and Immigration Services, who has also completed
25 their character and background investigations. Citizenship and

1 Immigration Services indicates that these individuals have all
2 met the requirements of naturalization and are well qualified,
3 desirable candidates for United States citizenship.

4 While I was born in the United States, many years ago
5 my father went through the very same process that you all are
6 going through now to achieve citizenship. I have great respect
7 and admiration for each of you and appreciate your time and
8 effort in obtaining citizenship today.

9 As a fellow United States citizen, I want to welcome
10 you and congratulate all of you on this very special day.

11 Your Honor, at this time, and on recommendation of the
12 Immigration officer, I move for these petitioners to be granted
13 United States citizenship upon taking of the oath.

14 THE COURT: Thank you, Ms. Peters. And thank you for
15 those kind words.

16 Your motion, contingent upon you taking the oath, is
17 granted.

18 I did neglect to mention that I want to suspend our
19 normal rule that prohibits the use of photography or video
20 equipment. In other words, feel free to move about the
21 courtroom and take as many pictures and video as you wish. And
22 we will have opportunities throughout the course of the
23 ceremony and even at the end to take additional photos and
24 photography and video. So please feel free to do that.

25 Again, your request and motion is granted.

1 Now is the moment where we will administer an oath, so
2 if you could all please join me and raise your right hands and
3 stand for the oath.

4 I, and please state your name, hereby declare on oath
5 that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all
6 allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince or potentate,
7 state or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a
8 subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the
9 Constitution and laws of the United States of America against
10 all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith
11 and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of
12 the United States when required by the law; that I will perform
13 noncombatant service in the armed forces of the United States,
14 when required by the law; that I will perform work of national
15 importance under civil direction when required by the law; and
16 that I take this obligation freely, without any mental
17 reservation or purpose of evasion, so help me God.

18 Congratulations. You are all now citizens.

19 (Applause.)

20 THE COURT: As new citizens, I think it is only
21 fitting that together we stand and pledge our allegiance to the
22 flag of the United States of America, so if you would all
23 please stand and join me.

24 (Pledge of Allegiance.)

25 THE COURT: Thank you. Please be seated.

1 Well, as you might imagine, although you are now
2 officially citizens of the United States, we have to give you
3 some paperwork that says so. So Ms. Hilliker and I are going
4 to take a moment and present you individually with those
5 certificates and some other documents, to include, I believe, a
6 letter from the President of the United States.

7 So we will do that at this time, and then we will
8 proceed further after we're done.

9 So, Ms. Hilliker, if you'd join me.

10 (Presentation of certificates.)

11 THE COURT: Well, now it is really official. You have
12 the documentation, the photo on your certificate of
13 naturalization in your packet, so please enjoy and cherish
14 those things.

15 I'm honored to invite and mention that we have members
16 of our congressional delegation with us today. On behalf of
17 Senator John Barrasso, Senator Cynthia Lummis and
18 Representative Liz Cheney, individuals will be handing you, I
19 think, some additional correspondence from our congressional
20 delegation and other things.

21 I always say we need some sort of naturalization swag
22 bag; you get so much stuff on this day, but it is all important
23 and very interesting. And we are thankful to have the members
24 of our delegation and their representatives here.

25 So if you would kindly hand out those items at this

1 time.

2 (Presentation of congressional delegation documents.)

3 THE COURT: Well, thank you, again, for presenting
4 those items. It's an honor to have you here today, and we
5 appreciate your participation, as always.

6 Well, you may have noticed on the handout on the
7 program, one of the items that remains is what -- second from
8 the bottom -- remarks from new citizens. And we have found
9 recently that it is really a neat opportunity for you to sort
10 of make a remark, if you would like. And there's no pressure
11 to do so. Maybe tell us a little bit about your story, your
12 journey, who is with you today. We've done this, and it is one
13 thing to hear from the rest of us, but it is your journey and
14 it is your story.

15 And so if any of you would be willing to just say a
16 quick word about what today means or anything else that may be
17 on your mind, we would welcome that.

18 We have a microphone, I believe, that we could hand to
19 you if you're interested and just make a brief remark or so.
20 And again, nobody is required to. We don't tell you this at
21 the beginning so you don't fret about it. We just sort of
22 surprise you.

23 And, again, if there's an anyone that would like to
24 say something, please feel free to do so at this time.

25 MS. RAMIREZ: Birgitta Ramirez. I came to the United

1 States in '65 as a nanny, so it has been 57 years that I've
2 been here. And now I can say my license plate is true. It
3 says "Swedish American," so -- and it is about time.

4 THE COURT: Ms. Ramirez, thank you and welcome.

5 (Applause.)

6 THE COURT: Ms. Cardin.

7 MS. CARDIN: Yes, good morning. So my name is
8 Alexandra. I'm from Montreal, Canada. And I moved to Laramie
9 in 2016, and my husband is here today. He got his citizenship
10 in April. He's from India. And I'm very grateful that I can
11 be a U.S. citizen.

12 THE COURT: Well, welcome. Thank you for sharing.

13 (Applause.)

14 MS. HELALI: My name is Mokolis Al Helali. I am from
15 Yemen. I come in 2020. I hope -- I am happy today. Thank
16 you.

17 THE COURT: Thank you so much.

18 (Applause.)

19 MS. TELLIER: Marie Tellier; I'm from France. I came
20 almost 25 years ago. It was a very long, quite difficult
21 process, and so I'm a little bit teary today.

22 THE COURT: How long was the process itself to become
23 naturalized today? When did you begin that journey?

24 MS. TELLIER: Two years and a half ago.

25 THE COURT: Two and a half years. Wow. Well,

1 welcome. Thank you.

2 (Applause.)

3 MS. BECERRA: My name is Beatriz Becerra, and I come
4 25 years ago. I am very happy.

5 (Applause.)

6 MR. PLATERO: My name is Carlos Platero. I'm from
7 El Salvador. I met my wife and she's from Guatemala, and we
8 got married in Costa Rica and we have three kids. And I came
9 here about five or six years ago -- 2017 -- and I'm very happy
10 today to be able to be a citizen of the United States. Thank
11 you.

12 THE COURT: Excellent. Thank you, Mr. Platero.

13 (Applause.)

14 MS. VALERIO: Hi. My name is Stephany Valerio. I
15 became a resident permanent six years ago, and I'm really
16 grateful with God and all my family for the support they give
17 me and to -- I'm glad that I am a United States citizen now.

18 (Applause.)

19 MS. WAKKURI: My name is Carrie Wakkuri. I've been
20 here 22 years now and it is nice to share my citizenship with
21 my kids. Thank you.

22 (Applause.)

23 MS. BROWN: Hi. My name is Tanya Brown. I moved here
24 20 years ago and it is really great to be here today. I'm
25 currently in Laramie pursuing a Ph.D. in counseling education

1 and supervision. My advisor and biggest supporter is here with
2 me today. I am just happy for this moment. It has been long
3 overdue, so here we go.

4 MR. CASTANEDA: My name is Vicente Castaneda. I'm
5 originally from Mexico. I became a permanent resident back in
6 2012, long journey since then, kind of ups and downs a bit.
7 Glad to be a citizen.

8 My family is here; my wife, three kids, my sister,
9 brother-in-law. Something I don't say very often, but sister
10 over there, she's my role model. She went through this process
11 a few years back, way back, and got citizenship, and I want to
12 be something she can be proud of, too, including my wife and
13 kids.

14 I want to say thank you for everyone sitting up here
15 with me, everyone that came out to support us all. Judge,
16 everyone, thank you for your time.

17 (Applause.)

18 THE COURT: Well, thank you all very much for sharing
19 those stories. We put you on the spot, but you did marvelous.
20 That was just terrific. So thank you. And I don't think we've
21 had everyone speak before, so that's a first for us. But,
22 again, congratulates and thank you for saying a few words.

23 Let me say a few words. As I said earlier, you're all
24 now Americans. Congratulations to each of you. And I love to
25 see the smiling faces out in the audience of your friends,

1 family and colleagues, and I love also to hear the stories that
2 other family members or spouses have been in this courtroom or
3 have been recently naturalized as well. It is wonderful to see
4 those folks back with us and to have you here together.

5 An interesting side note about the oath of allegiance
6 that you gave -- that you -- that you each took a few moments
7 ago. It is a long oath, but it has been given and for a very
8 long, long time. In fact, the first officially recorded oath
9 of allegiance were made in 1778 at Valley Forge during the
10 American Revolutionary War. So now you join Americans like
11 yourselves who for some more than 240 years have taken the same
12 oath. And so you have all of that in common with all of the
13 many, many people that have taken the oath that you did today.

14 Well, let me just say what a long road I'm sure it has
15 been for you and your families. We heard mention about the
16 time that you have been in the United States and the time it
17 took for the process itself. And I'm sure it has also been a
18 struggle at times, leaving your homeland, saying good-bye to
19 family and friends and traveling to this country, finding a
20 home, a job, adjusting to a new culture and a new way of life.

21 But the good news for all of us is the best of your
22 culture and way of life is the best of ours, and your
23 traditions enrich not only your family, but they enrich
24 America.

25 Always remember that this country was founded on the

1 diversity of many tribes, countries and cultures. We have been
2 blessed by the rich traditions and culture of so many people
3 like each of you and those that came before you.

4 America is truly a combination of the best of everyone
5 who comes here. This great country depends on new citizens
6 such as you to learn and grow. Our survival depends on the
7 values of diversity, tolerance, dignity and respect that we
8 live by and teach each other.

9 Our very first president, George Washington,
10 recognized the importance of immigrants to our land, not just
11 the rich and high-ranking newcomer, quote, "but the oppressed
12 and persecuted of all nations and religions whom we shall
13 welcome to a participation in all our rights and privileges,"
14 close quote.

15 Being a United States citizen, of course, also means
16 that you are free. The Constitution and laws of this country
17 are designed to protect your freedom. You are free to think on
18 your own and to form your own opinions, and you may voice those
19 opinions, whether many people or few people agree with you.
20 You are free to work where you want to work, to read what you
21 want to read, to say what you want to say. You are free to
22 believe what you want to believe, to openly practice any
23 religion or not practice any religion at all. There is no
24 single American way to think or believe. As a citizen of the
25 United States, you are free to follow your own path, wherever

1 it may lead you.

2 It's also important to realize you are doing more
3 today than completing a legal process. You are making a
4 life-long promise to uphold the laws and the values that make
5 America what it is. That promise comes with great privileges
6 of American citizenship, and it also comes with great
7 responsibilities.

8 The freedom of democracy comes with the responsibility
9 to participate in the Democratic process by voting, not
10 casually or carelessly, but in a way that is thoughtful and
11 informed. And, darn it, if we had been about a week earlier,
12 you would have been able to exercise that right here very
13 quickly. But you will have many opportunities, and I encourage
14 you to take it and take it seriously.

15 You have a responsibility to educate yourself so you
16 can make good choices for yourself, your family and this
17 country that is now your country. This democracy so hard
18 fought for only works when its people participate fully by
19 helping to choose who will govern us all and by taking that
20 process seriously.

21 The freedom of democracy also carries a responsibility
22 to your community and to your country. You must be willing to
23 serve this country as you can. Use your talents. Be active in
24 your community. Give back to your new country through civic
25 participation and service. Help someone else who needs a leg

1 up. Your new country, our country, will only continue to
2 thrive if we care about our fellow citizens as human beings.

3 Again, congratulations and welcome. You have worked
4 incredibly hard to earn your citizenship, and I know I speak
5 for all of your Wyoming neighbors when I say we are grateful to
6 have you. Congratulations.

7 And now I think we can take another picture or two.

8 Anything else, Tammy, that I may have missed? because
9 I usually do.

10 We're in good shape? All right.

11 So at this time it is an opportunity for you to gather
12 with your friends and family. We will be happy to take
13 additional photos and the like. But, again, I just want to
14 thank you all for your presence, for being here through the
15 cold and wintry weather that we're currently experiencing.
16 The good news is I think it is supposed to get warmer in the
17 coming days.

18 Welcome to you on this very important day in your
19 lives, and congratulations once again.

20 We will stand in recess.

21 (Applause.)

22 (Proceedings concluded 10:30 a.m., November 18, 2022.)

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I, JANET DAVIS, Federal Official Court Reporter for the United States District Court for the District of Wyoming, a Registered Diplomat Reporter, Federal Certified Realtime Reporter, and Certified Realtime Reporter, do hereby certify that I reported by machine shorthand the foregoing proceedings contained herein on the aforementioned subject on the date herein set forth, and that the foregoing pages constitute a full, true and correct transcript.

Dated this 8th day of December, 2022.

/s/ Janet Davis

JANET DAVIS, RDR, FCRR, CRR
Federal Official Court Reporter