

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF WYOMING

In the Matter of the
Naturalization and Granting of
United States Citizenship to:

Cheyenne, Wyoming
November 15, 2021
10:11 a.m.

GABRIELA DEL PILAR CASTRO; KHANH
THI NHAT NGUYEN; MARICELA
MORENO; NAFISSA TAHIROU; EFREN
REYES; ENRIQUE GRACO BERNAL
ROJAS; MICHAEL SCHOJER; ROBERT
NDEGWA KIBURI; SVETLANA OHARA;
EVELY ROCIO FERNANDEZ; LUIZA M.
BOSCH; HA MINH PHAM; ADAM
LASSANA MANE; ESPERANZA ULLOA,

Joseph C. O'Mahoney
Federal Courthouse

Petitioners.

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

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

APPEARANCES:

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*Proceedings recorded by stenography; transcript produced by
computer-aided transcription.*

(Proceedings commenced at 10:11 a.m., November 15, 2021.)

THE CLERK: Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye. The Honorable United States District Court for the District of Wyoming is now open for the transaction of business pursuant to adjournment, the Honorable Kelly H. Rankin, Chief United States Magistrate Judge.

All having business before this Honorable Court draw near, give attention, and you shall be heard. God save the United States and this Honorable Court.

THE COURT: Thank you. Please be seated.

Well, good morning, everyone. It is a special honor and a special occasion to be here with you as we prepare to give an oath and administer the oath for the new citizens that are about to join us as citizens of the United States.

It's an honor, also, to have the families and friends with us. I see them out in the gallery. It's an important day, a special day for all of whom have supported each of you I know for a good while to reach today's events. So again, just a wonderful opportunity to be with each of you.

I'd like to begin by calling on the Assistant United States Attorney, who represents the Attorney General for the United States in these hearings, and that's Jeremy Gross.

Mr. Gross, if you would do the honors of the roll call, and I understand you have a motion, as well.

MR. GROSS: Good morning, Judge. Thank you.

As you indicated, my name is Jeremy Gross. I'm here on behalf of both the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Wyoming and also for the Attorney General of the United States, Merrick Garland. It is my privilege to introduce to the Court the following individuals who are appearing in person for their hearing on their petitions for naturalization as United States citizens.

So without further ado, Ms. Gabriela Castro, a native and former inhabitant of Peru.

Ms. Khanh Nguyen, a native and former inhabitant of Vietnam.

Ms. Maricela Moreno, a native and former inhabitant of Mexico.

Ms. Nafissa Tahirou, a native and former inhabitant of Niger.

Mr. Efren Reyes, a native and former inhabitant of Mexico.

Mr. Enrique Graco Bernal Rojas, a native and former inhabitant of Mexico.

Mr. Michael Schojer, a native and former inhabitant of Germany.

Mr. Robert Kiburi, a native and former inhabitant of Kenya.

Ms. Svetlana Ohara, a native and former inhabitant of Russia.

Ms. Evely Fernandez, a native and former inhabitant of Mexico.

Ms. Luiza Bosch, a native and former inhabitant of Brazil.

Ms. Ha Pham, a native and former inhabitant of Vietnam.

Mr. Adam Lassana Mane, a native and former inhabitant of Guinea-Bissau.

And Ms. Esperanza Ulloa, a native and former inhabitant of Mexico.

Your Honor, each of these individuals has been interviewed and examined under oath by an examiner for the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, and they've also completed a character and background check. And Immigration Services indicates that each of these individuals is well qualified for naturalization and especially to be candidates for citizenship in the United States.

So with that, as a fellow citizen of the United States and from the State of Wyoming, I want to congratulate each and every one of you on your successful petition and on this very special day.

With that, Your Honor, I would move to grant the petitioners their United States citizenship upon taking the oath.

THE COURT: Very well. Thank you, Mr. Gross, and

your motion and request is granted.

Before I swear you in and make it official, I do want to acknowledge that for the families and friends that are here, we'll waive the prohibition against using cameras and video cameras and things of that sort. So feel free, as we go along in the ceremony, to use your cameras and take pictures as you please.

Well, other than getting the official paperwork -- that is, the certificate that we'll hand out here shortly -- the next big obstacle in terms of becoming a citizen is the oath of your citizenship. And for those in the audience, on the back page of the handout, the program, you'll see the Oath of Citizenship.

And so now I'll ask our new citizens to please stand and raise your right hands, and please repeat after me:

I, and then state your name --

THE PETITIONERS: I, (stating names) --

THE COURT: -- hereby declare, on oath --

THE PETITIONERS: -- hereby declare, on oath --

THE COURT: -- that I absolutely and entirely
renounce --

THE PETITIONERS: -- that I absolutely and entirely
renounce --

THE COURT: -- and abjure all allegiance and
fidelity --

THE PETITIONERS: -- and abjure all allegiance and
fidelity --

THE COURT: -- to any foreign prince or potentate --

THE PETITIONERS: -- to any foreign prince or
potentate --

THE COURT: -- state or sovereignty --

THE PETITIONERS: -- state or sovereignty --

THE COURT: -- of whom or which --

THE PETITIONERS: -- of whom or which --

THE COURT: -- I have heretofore been a subject or
citizen.

THE PETITIONERS: -- I have heretofore been a subject
or citizen.

THE COURT: That I will support and defend the
Constitution --

THE PETITIONERS: That I will support and defend the
Constitution --

THE COURT: -- and Laws of the United States of
America --

THE PETITIONERS: -- and Laws of the United States of
America --

THE COURT: -- against all enemies, foreign and
domestic.

THE PETITIONERS: -- against all enemies, foreign and
domestic.

THE COURT: That I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same.

THE PETITIONERS: That I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same

THE COURT: That I will bear arms, on behalf of the United States --

THE PETITIONERS: That I will bear arms, on behalf of the United States --

THE COURT: -- when required by the law.

THE PETITIONERS: -- when required by the law.

THE COURT: That I will perform noncombatant service --

THE PETITIONERS: That I will perform noncombatant service --

THE COURT: -- in the armed forces of the United States --

THE PETITIONERS: -- in the armed forces of the United States --

THE COURT: -- when required by the law.

THE PETITIONERS: -- when required by the law.

THE COURT: That I will perform work of national importance --

THE PETITIONERS: That I will perform work of national importance --

THE COURT: -- under civil direction when required by

the law.

THE PETITIONERS: -- under civil direction when required by the law.

THE COURT: And that I will take this obligation freely --

THE PETITIONERS: And that I will take this obligation freely --

THE COURT: -- without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion --

THE PETITIONERS: -- without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion --

THE COURT: -- so help me God.

THE PETITIONERS: -- so help me God.

THE COURT: Well, congratulations to all of you.

(Applause.)

THE COURT: I think it's only fitting, as you're standing, that we pledge to the flag. So if you want to turn and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance.

(Reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.)

THE COURT: Please be seated.

I should note there are 14 new citizens, and as I heard Mr. Gross introduce your names and where you came from, what a diverse group of people we have here from all over the world, very literally. So it's just a fantastic opportunity for myself and everyone involved in this proceeding to see

this and to enjoy and sort of soak up the wonderful opportunity that we each have to share this with you.

We are now, the final hurdle to make you officially new citizens of the United States, handing you your certificates. This is the piece of paper, if you will, that says that you are American citizens.

So I'm going to be joined by Ms. Hilliker -- and we'll have you guys step down -- to hand you the certificates. I'll come down and congratulate you individually, and then we'll convene our ceremony. So I'll step down at this time.

(Distribution of certificates.)

THE COURT: The reason we had you turn around is the Congressional Delegation, our two senators from Wyoming, have written letters to each of you congratulating you on this big occasion. And so from Senator Lummis and Senator Barrasso, I know Ms. Hilliker has those letters for you at this time. She'll hand them out.

(Distribution of letters from Congressional Delegation.)

THE COURT: Okay. You guys are welcome to have a seat again. You didn't know you were going to get your exercise in today.

Well, you need a special bag or carrier for all this stuff you're getting today. One of the things that's really been neat in the past is opening up to you the opportunity, if

any of you would like, to say a couple of words -- you don't have to, certainly -- about your journey and anything special that you would like to say about how you got here or about your family or anything at all related to this process.

For those of us that sort of realize that we were just fortunate enough to be born in the United States and given citizenship, we don't maybe fully appreciate just how hard you have worked with your family and friends to get to this point. And sometimes, it's kind of nice to hear your story if you would like. But again, no pressure.

If anyone would like to just briefly speak about that, we do have a microphone set up over there, and you can volunteer by just raising your hand to let us know that you would be happy to say a couple of words.

Anyone interested in doing that? Don't raise your hands all at once. That's okay. If there is anybody -- all right. Good. We've got somebody. Please step forward. We'd love to hear from you. Why don't you just speak from there. That'd be great. Thank you.

(Petitioners giving remarks.)

(Applause.)

THE COURT: Well, thank you all for sharing. I'm going to pick on my courtroom deputy for a moment, MiYon Bowden, who's down here in front. She was naturalized when she was 11 years old, and she came to the United States when

she was 5 from South Korea. And I don't think I've ever seen a child in these naturalization ceremonies take the oath and sworn in. But Ms. Bowden was in your chair a few years ago, and so she can relate to your happiness and your experience today.

So thank you for letting me share that story, Ms. Bowden, but thank you all for sharing your stories today. What a wonderful, wonderful occasion.

Let me just close with a couple of remarks of my own. Again, I want to welcome you all. You are now Americans. Congratulations to each of you and to each of your family members and friends that are here and those that are not here, because I know that there's been a lot of people support you along the way. And just because they're not here today doesn't mean that they didn't help you get to this very important day.

You took an oath a few moments ago, and it's a very long oath. It takes a while to get through, but I want you to know that this oath has been given for -- well, since 1778. It was first recorded at the Oaths of Allegiance at the Valley Forge during the American Revolutionary War.

So now, for some 240-plus years, the very oath that you just took has been given by citizens and naturalized citizens for a very long time. And so you should be proud of the fact that you've taken that same oath that has been given

for as long as it has.

Well, what a long road and journey I know that it's been for each of you and your families. I'm sure it's also been a struggle at times: leaving your homeland, saying goodbye to beloved family and friends, traveling to this country, finding a job, adjusting to a new culture or a new way of life. But the good news for all of us is the best of your culture and way of life is the best of ours, and your traditions enrich not only your family but they enrich America.

Always remember that this country was founded on the diversity of many tribes, countries, and cultures. And we have been blessed by the rich cultures and traditions of so many people like yourselves and those people that came before you.

America is the combination of the best of everyone who comes here. This great country depends on new citizens such as you to learn and grow; and our survival depends on the values of diversity, tolerance, dignity, and respect that we live by and teach each other.

Our very first president, George Washington, recognized the importance of immigrants to our land. Not just the rich and the high-ranking newcomer, quote, but the oppressed and persecuted of all nations and religions whom we shall welcome to a participation in all our rights and

privileges, end quote.

Being a United States citizen, of course, also means that you are free. The constitution and laws of this country are designed to protect your freedom. You are free to think on your own and form your own opinions. And you may voice those opinions whether many people or few people agree with you. You are free to work here -- where you want to work, to read what you want to read, to say what you want to say. And you are free to believe what you want to believe, to openly practice any religion or not practice a religion at all.

There is no single way to think or believe as an American. As a citizen of the United States, you are free to follow your own path wherever it may lead you. It's also important to realize that you are doing more today than completing a process, a legal process. You are making a lifelong promise to uphold the laws and values that make America what it is.

That promise comes with great privileges of American citizenship, and it also comes with great responsibilities. The freedom of democracy comes with the responsibility to participate in the democratic process by voting, not casually or carelessly but in a way that is thoughtful and informed.

You have a responsibility to educate yourselves so you can make good choices for yourself, your family, and this country that is now your country. This democracy, so hard-

fought for, only works when its people participate fully by helping to choose who will govern us and by taking that process seriously.

The freedom of democracy also carries a responsibility to your community and to your country. You must be willing to serve this country as you can. Use your talents. Be active in your communities. Give back to your new country through civic participation and service. Help someone who needs a leg up. Your new country, our country, will only continue to thrive if we care about our fellow citizens as human beings.

Again, congratulations and welcome to each of you and your families and friends. You have worked, I know, incredibly hard to gain your citizenship, and I know that I speak for all of your Wyoming neighbors when I say we are grateful to have you. So again, congratulations. We are really pleased to be a part of this very, very special day for you.

I think that covers the formality of this ceremony. Ms. Hilliker, anything else that we've left off or I need to do?

MS. HILLIKER: No, Judge.

THE COURT: All right. Well, again, thank you for letting me share in your special day today, and I'll allow for you another round of congratulations.

(Applause.)

THE COURT: At this time, we'll stand in recess.

(Proceedings concluded at 10:39 a.m., November 15, 2021.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, MEGAN E. STRAWN, Court Reporter in the state of Wyoming, a Registered Professional Reporter and Certified Realtime Reporter, do hereby certify that I reported by machine shorthand the proceedings contained herein on the aforementioned subject on the date herein set forth, and that the foregoing 15 pages constitute a full, true, and correct transcript.

Dated this 17th day of November 2021.

/s/ Megan E. Strawn

MEGAN E. STRAWN
Registered Professional Reporter
Certified Realtime Reporter