

1 IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
2 FOR THE DISTRICT OF WYOMING

3
4 In the Matter of the Cheyenne, Wyoming
5 Naturalization and Granting of March 4, 2022
6 United States Citizenship to: 10:00 a.m.

7 JOSE EPIFANIO MORENO ZAPATA, Joseph C. O'Mahoney
8 JOSE ATANACIO GOMEZ, VICKY LIANG Federal Courthouse
9 LOVELESS, CECILIA JULIA VIGIL,
10 JOHN KENNETH MURRAY, MONIQUE
11 VIVIANE LAURE EBOUMBOU, CRIS
12 MARIA DITZEL, MIQUEL ANGEL
13 MOLINA, JAMES PHIRI, ANASTASIA
14 ANDRIIVNA CORLEY, ANGELA
15 FIROELLA BEAL, BAIBA GALLOWAY,

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Petitioners.

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

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

17 **APPEARANCES:**

18 For the United States: Office of the United States Attorney
19 District of Wyoming
20 BY: JEREMY GROSS
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*Proceedings reported by realtime stenographic reporter;
transcript produced with Computer-Aided Transcription. Before*

1 (Proceedings commenced 10:00 a.m., March 4, 2022.)

2 THE COURT: Good morning. Please be seated.

3 Well, welcome, everyone, to this very special
4 ceremony. I see we've got a good number of family and friends
5 and spectators for this naturalization ceremony on March 4th of
6 2022. And we have 12 citizens-to-be today, and I'm just
7 delighted that you are here. What a special day and what a
8 special occasion for each of you and your family and friends,
9 both here in the courtroom and those that are not able to be
10 here with you.

11 I'll begin with suspending the rule that usually
12 prohibits photography and that sort of thing. Feel free to
13 take as many photos as you would like, videos and that sort of
14 thing, and when we are done, there will be an opportunity to
15 take group pictures with your families, if you would like as
16 well. So happy to allow any photography you may wish during
17 the proceeding today.

18 Also, no requirement for wearing masks today, but if
19 you're more comfortable wearing masks, please feel free to do
20 so. But we won't require it, given the fewer numbers that
21 we've seen here in Laramie County, which is a good thing and a
22 blessing for all of us.

23 Let's begin, if we could, with a roll call of the
24 citizens to be naturalized today. We will begin there and we
25 will go from there.

1 I will turn to Mr. Gross who is an Assistant United
2 States Attorney. He's representing the Attorney General for
3 the United States.

4 And, Mr. Gross, I will turn it over to you.

5 MR. GROSS: Good morning, Your Honor.

6 THE COURT: Good morning.

7 MR. GROSS: May it please the Court.

8 THE COURT: Mr. Gross.

9 MR. GROSS: Good morning, everyone. As the Judge
10 said, my name is Jerry Gross, and I'm here today as a
11 representative of both the United States Attorney for the
12 District of Wyoming, Bob Murray, and the Attorney General of
13 the United States, Merrick Garland.

14 It is my privilege to introduce to the Court the
15 following individuals who appear in person for a hearing on
16 their petitions for naturalization as United States citizens.

17 We will start with Jose Epifanio Moreno Zapata, a
18 native and former inhabitant of Mexico; Jose Atanacio Gomez --
19 I did it again. I wrote it wrong. I'm sorry -- Jose Atanacio
20 Gomez, a native and former inhabitant of Mexico; Vicky Liang
21 Loveless, a native and former inhabitant of China; Cecilia
22 Vigil, a native and former inhabitant of Peru; John Murray, a
23 native and former inhabitant of Canada; Monique Eboumbou, a
24 native and former inhabitant of Cameroon; Cris Maria Ditzel, a
25 native and former inhabitant of Ecuador; Miguel Angel Molina, a

1 native and former inhabitant of Mexico; James Phiri, a native
2 and former inhabitant of Zambia; Anastasia Corley, a native and
3 former inhabitant of Ukraine; Angela Beal, a native and former
4 inhabitant of Peru; and Baiba Galoveja, a native and former
5 inhabitant of Latvia.

6 Your Honor, each of these individuals have been
7 interviewed and examined under oath by a designated examiner
8 for the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services who
9 have also completed their character and background
10 investigation. Immigration Services indicates that each of
11 these individuals has met the requirements for naturalization
12 and that they are all well qualified to become citizens of the
13 United States.

14 So with that, I want to welcome all of you as a fellow
15 citizen. It is easy sometimes for those of us who have been
16 here all of our lives to forget some of the privileges and the
17 rights that we have, and so I always appreciate being a part of
18 these hearings because it gives me a chance to remember those
19 things and reflect on, you know, some of the difficult times
20 that you've probably gone through making it this far. So I
21 appreciate you all being here.

22 And at this time, Your Honor, it is my distinct
23 pleasure to move that each of these petitioners be granted
24 United States citizenship upon taking the oath.

25 THE COURT: Very well. Mr. Gross, thank you.

1 And upon taking the oath, I will grant your motion and
2 your petition.

3 As I heard all the names addressed and the locations
4 for all of you, what a diverse group from literally all over
5 the globe. From Mexico, China, Peru, Ukraine, we've got a lot
6 of interesting, fascinating people here from different parts of
7 the world, and I am certainly pleased to have you here in
8 Cheyenne, Wyoming today. So what a neat thing.

9 Well, there's a couple of steps that need to occur to
10 formalize your citizenship, the first of which is taking the
11 oath. So we will begin with that, and then in a little bit, we
12 will hand you your official certificates. That's the document
13 that says you are now a United States citizen.

14 So if you would please join me and stand and raise
15 your right hands, and we will administer the oath at this time.

16 And for those that are in the gallery, the oath is on
17 the back of the handout, if you would like to follow along, and
18 also for our new citizens as well.

19 We will begin with I, and please state your full name.

20 I, declare on oath, that I absolutely and entirely
21 renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign
22 prince or potentate, state or sovereignty, of whom or which I
23 have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support
24 and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of
25 America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will

1 bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear
2 arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law;
3 that I will perform noncombatant service in the armed forces of
4 the United States when required by the law; that I will perform
5 work of national importance under civil direction when required
6 by the law; and that I take this obligation freely, without any
7 mental reservation or purpose of evasion, so help me God.

8 Congratulations. I think it merits a big round of
9 applause.

10 (Applause.)

11 THE COURT: Please be seated.

12 Actually, let's have the Pledge of Allegiance as --
13 for the first time as new citizens.

14 So if you will join me and we will pledge allegiance
15 to the flag.

16 (Pledge of Allegiance.)

17 THE COURT: Now you may be seated.

18 Well, as I said, it starts with the oath and then the
19 certificates. So we will hand out those certificates now.

20 Would you like me to join you?

21 COURTROOM DEPUTY: You have longer arms for the back
22 row.

23 THE COURT: We will hand these out, so bear with us
24 for just a moment as we do so.

25 (Distribution of citizenship certificates.)

1 THE COURT: Okay. Well, it is official, and you all
2 are citizens of the United States of America. You have the
3 documentation and the proof, and that tells the story about all
4 the hurdles and all of the things that you had to go through to
5 become citizens today. So I'm very pleased to have presented
6 the documentation from the United States (indicating) that you
7 are now citizens of this great country.

8 We also have as a special honor correspondence and
9 letters to each of you from members of our congressional
10 delegation, Senators Barrasso and Lummis and Representative
11 Cheney.

12 And so at this time Tammy will hand out those letters
13 from our Wyoming delegation for you to take with you.

14 (Distribution of congressional delegation documents.)

15 THE COURT: It is actually a perfect time for a little
16 music.

17 Well, I certainly do not want to put anybody on the
18 spot, but sometimes we hear from new citizens about their
19 experience and how important this day is. And if anyone would
20 like to just say a couple of words to your families that are
21 here with you or anything else regarding this very special day,
22 now is an opportunity for you to do so.

23 Again, nobody is required to say anything, but we
24 would love to hear from you if you have anything that you would
25 like to say at this time.

1 So I think Tammy has a microphone. For those of you
2 old enough, it will feel a little bit like the Phil Donahue
3 show. But we will turn it over to -- yes, sir.

4 Mr. Zapata, am I correct? Go ahead, sir.

5 MR. ZAPATA: About 17 years old when I came to the
6 United States and my dream come true to one of those days be a
7 citizen. 40 years later, my dream come true and calling home
8 the United States. It was not easy throughout my way, but we
9 make it here. Congratulations. I'm home.

10 THE COURT: Thank you, sir. Wonderful words. Thank
11 you.

12 MS. VIGIL: I want to say -- I don't cry.

13 First, my husband, for the patience. We are from a
14 different country and adjusting is not easy for anyone, but he
15 has been patient and understanding, understanding how sometimes
16 can be difficult to adjust to a new country and also coming
17 from a big city to a small town and everything is just
18 different.

19 Also, my family -- his family first, and now my
20 family, thank you, Patrice, for being with me and welcoming me
21 into your family.

22 And, of course, my friends from -- I didn't want to
23 cry. Sorry.

24 THE COURT: It is okay.

25 MS. VIGIL: But thank you for being so welcoming. I

1 thank you for welcoming not just into your homes, but your
2 church, consider me a friend. I appreciate that so much.

3 And I feel like now we are happy and we -- you know,
4 everyone wants to feel like you belong someplace, to maybe come
5 here, because you start working, you start a family, and at the
6 end you want to belong. You want to make this place your
7 place. And that, I think, is the final step to feel that way,
8 that we belong here. And our boys will be here from now on
9 when we go to our own home, the way that we choose to
10 participate. So thank you.

11 THE COURT: Thank you, Ms. Vigil. Thank you for those
12 heartfelt remarks.

13 MS. DITZEL: I would like to thank my husband for all
14 his love, devotion and all his help, patience especially.

15 I would like to thank my parents, my stepdaughter, my
16 kids. Thank you so much.

17 I would also like to express my solidarity to Ukraine.
18 I am very sorry for everything that is happening. Thank you.

19 THE COURT: Thank you, Ms. Ditzel. I appreciate your
20 nice remarks.

21 MR. PHIRI: It has been a long, long, long road to get
22 to where we are today. Personally, I just want to thank my
23 wife for being there and that to get to this point, you need
24 support, and she gave me that.

25 And I want to thank my brother and friend, sister and

1 friend, Nicole and Aaron, just for prayers. I can't get here
2 without prayers. I couldn't get here without prayers. I just
3 want to thank you.

4 I just want to thank you, United States, for giving me
5 this opportunity and just welcoming me into your country. I am
6 grateful. Thank you so much.

7 THE COURT: Thank you, Mr. Phiri.

8 Ms. Galloway.

9 MS. GALLOWAY: First of all, I want to thank you, my
10 husband, who is somewhere out there with my kid and my love for
11 being my biggest cheerleaders all through this process. It
12 wasn't easy; it was lengthy, but definitely worth it because
13 now I'm, like, really happy. I can finally be part of this
14 country fully. I can be part of everything that's been
15 missing. Because as I heard before, before you are a citizen,
16 there's still something missing, like you can't be fully into
17 the process, like the right to vote and so on. So I couldn't
18 be more happier finally being able to take full part of this.

19 Thank you for this opportunity.

20 (Applause.)

21 THE COURT: Thank you, Ms. Galloway.

22 Ms. Corley.

23 MS. CORLEY: I just wanted to thank, first of all, to
24 my husband, Logan, who is in heaven right now, and to my
25 American mom, Debbie, and all of my family that supported me.

1 And I'm thankful to all of the Americans and the state
2 of Wyoming and all the beautiful people for supporting me.

3 And also I pray for peace and -- peace in the world
4 and for friendship between the nations. Thank you.

5 (Applause.)

6 THE COURT: Thank you, Ms. Corley. And, Ms. Corley, I
7 would remiss if I didn't comment to all of your family and
8 friends in Ukraine, please know that we are -- our thoughts and
9 prayers are with you during these very difficult times.

10 Yes, sir.

11 MR. GOMEZ: I say thank you to my wife for everything.
12 And I'm happy right now because it is too scary, but I am a
13 citizen of the most power possible. Thank you.

14 THE COURT: Thank you, Mr. Gomez.

15 Mr. Molina.

16 MR. MOLINA: Well, this is a very emotional moment for
17 all of us because I believe that we all have been dreaming for
18 a long time to accept this achievement to get naturalization,
19 citizenship, to a country that has one single and particular
20 thing compared to the rest of the world: It's liberty.

21 And I was talking to my wife about this particular
22 word, liberty, and I believe that from my country and from
23 different countries, we're going to see that that isn't really,
24 really, the way it should be. In this very moment we are
25 struggling as a world because there's right now a conflict that

1 is putting a lot of tensions in all of us. And I really think
2 that we need to help them to get and achieve peace as long as
3 possible, as soon as possible. It is important.

4 So going back to citizenship, it is a privilege. I'm
5 very honored receiving it. It's -- it has been a long dream
6 for all my life to be part of this country, and right now I got
7 it.

8 I'm going to say also that I thank all the members of
9 my family because they supported me. And thank you all for
10 this opportunity. Thank you.

11 (Applause.)

12 THE COURT: Thank you. Anyone else?

13 Well, there's nothing more powerful than your own
14 words, nothing that any of us could say that would resonate any
15 more than what you just shared with us. So thank you all for
16 those very heartfelt words and thoughts about your family and
17 your loved ones and your home countries.

18 And it is just very powerful, and I think that
19 everyone should hear those words. And lucky for those that are
20 here, we got to hear what you had to say. But very, very
21 powerful messages provided by each of you, so thank you for
22 sharing.

23 I would like to just make a few words of my own and
24 share with you some thoughts that I think resonate with what
25 you've already said, but perhaps this will aid you in this,

1 really, day of celebration.

2 First of all, I want to say welcome. Congratulations
3 to each of you and to each of your family members and friends
4 for this enormous accomplishment. I know that this has been a
5 process that has taken a good amount of time for each of you.
6 Each of you have different stories about just how long it took
7 and what exactly got you to March 4th of 2022, where you are
8 now naturalized citizens and citizens of this great country.
9 So congratulations.

10 A interesting side note about the oath that you all
11 just took. It is a long oath. My arms started to get tired
12 and I'm sure yours did as well, but it has been given to new
13 citizens such as yourself for a very long time. In fact, the
14 first official oaths of allegiance were given in 1775 at Valley
15 Forge during the Revolutionary War. So now you join Americans
16 who like yourselves who for 240 years have taken that very same
17 oath, and I know that you take it seriously.

18 Again, what a long road it has been for you and your
19 families. I know it has been a struggle at times, leaving your
20 homeland, saying good-bye to beloved family and friends,
21 traveling to this country, finding a new home, a job, adjusting
22 to a new culture, a new way of lie.

23 But the good news for all of us is the best of your
24 culture and your way of life is the best of ours and your
25 traditions enrich not only your own families, but they enrich

1 America. Always remember that this country was founded on the
2 diversity of many tribes and cultures and countries. And we
3 have been blessed by the rich culture and traditions of so many
4 people like yourselves and those that came before you. America
5 is a combination of everyone that comes here. This great
6 country depends on new citizens like yourselves to learn, to
7 grown. Her survival depends on the values of diversity,
8 tolerance, dignity and respect that we live by and we teach
9 each other every day.

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

16 And, of course, as we heard during your own comments
17 today, being a United States citizen means that you are free.
18 It means that you have liberty. The Constitution and laws of
19 this country are designed to protect your freedoms and your
20 liberties.

21 You are free to think on your own, to form your own
22 opinions and you may voice those opinions whether many people
23 or few people agree with you. You are free to work where you
24 want to work, to read what you want to read, to say what you
25 want to say. You are free to believe what you want to believe,

1 to openly practice any religion or to practice no religion at
2 all.

3 There is no single American way to think or believe.
4 As a citizen of the United States, you are free to follow your
5 own path, wherever it may lead you. It is also important to
6 realize that you are doing more here today than completing a
7 legal process. You are making a life-long promise to uphold
8 the laws and the values that make America what it is. That
9 promise comes with the great privileges of American
10 citizenship, and it also comes with great responsibilities.

11 The freedom of democracy comes with the responsibility
12 to participate in the democratic process by voting, not
13 casually or carelessly, but in a way that is thoughtful and
14 informed. You have a responsibility to educate yourselves so
15 you can make good choices for yourself and your family and this
16 country that is now your family and your country.

17 This democracy so hard fought for only works when its
18 people participate fully by helping to choose who will govern
19 us all and taking that process seriously.

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

1 thrive if we care about our fellow citizens as human beings.

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

6 (Applause.)

7 THE COURT: Well, I wish we had a big cake and
8 celebration of some sort for all that are here, but again, I
9 just appreciate everyone being here. This is a real special
10 honor and privilege for myself and my judicial colleagues and
11 everyone involved in this process to prepare for and
12 participate in. So thank you to all of you for being here and
13 letting us celebrate your special day.

14 I believe that's all we have officially, but as I
15 mentioned earlier, happy to let you roam about and take as many
16 pictures as you would like. I can pose for pictures if you
17 would like. I may break a camera or two. But, in any event,
18 again, congratulations.

19 And we will stand in recess at this time.

20 (Proceedings concluded 10:33 a.m., March 4, 2022.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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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 25th day of March, 2022.

/s/ Janet Davis

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