

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

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3 In the Matter of the Cheyenne, Wyoming  
4 Naturalization and Granting of March 7, 2024  
5 United States Citizenship to: 9:13 a.m.

6 DANIA MANCIA FAJARDO, Joseph C. O'Mahoney  
7 CARLOS COLIN FELICIANO, Federal Courthouse  
8 FAUSAT MONTUNRAYO HOOPES,  
9 MAHDI KHISHVAND, NEELY  
MAHAPATRA, CRISTOPHER PONTALBA  
TAGAB, PIERRETTE DENISE PLANCHE,  
UPAMA ADHIKARI, REYELL BRISETTE  
PORTILLO RODRIQUEZ,

10 Petitioners.

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

14 BEFORE THE HONORABLE KELLY H. RANKIN  
15 CHIEF UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE, PRESIDING  
16 HONORABLE ALAN B. JOHNSON  
17 UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE  
18 HONORABLE NANCY D. FREUDENTHAL  
19 UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE  
20 HONORABLE GREGORY A. PHILLIPS  
21 UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS JUDGE

22 APPEARANCES:

23 For the United States: Office of the United States Attorney  
24 District of Wyoming  
25 BY: LEVI MARTIN  
Assistant United States Attorney  
2120 Capitol Avenue, Fourth Floor  
Cheyenne, WY 82001

1 (Proceedings commenced 9:13 a.m., March 7, 2024.)

2 CHIEF CLERK BOTKINS: Oye, Oye, Oye: The Honorable  
3 United States District Court for the District of Wyoming is now  
4 open for the transaction of business, sitting pursuant to  
5 adjournment: The Honorable Kelly H. Rankin, Chief United  
6 States Magistrate Judge, presiding; along with the Honorable  
7 Nancy D. Freudenthal, United States District Judge, the  
8 Honorable Alan B. Johnson, United States District Judge, and  
9 the Honorable Gregory A. Phillips, United States Circuit Judge.

10 All having business before this Honorable Court draw  
11 near, give attention and you shall be heard.

12 God save the United States of America and this  
13 Honorable Court.

14 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Thank you. Please be  
15 seated.

16 Well, good morning, everyone. Welcome to this edition  
17 of a naturalization ceremony. We are delighted to have our new  
18 citizens -- or soon-to-be new citizens and their family and  
19 friends with us, so welcome to the Federal District Court for  
20 the District of Wyoming. What a wonderful celebration today  
21 should be. And we welcome all of you with us.

22 I understand we have today the sixth grade class from  
23 St. Mary's Catholic School here in town. We welcome you as  
24 well, and thank you all for your attendance.

25 I'm joined today by my colleagues. On my left we have

1 District Judge Alan Johnson. On my right we have District  
2 Judge Nancy Freudenthal. And on my far right is Circuit Judge  
3 Greg Phillips.

4 I'm Kelly Rankin, and I guess I get to do some  
5 speaking today, so I apologize for that, but hopefully we'll  
6 keep us moving today during the ceremony.

7 Well, the first order of business is normally we  
8 prohibit the taking of photographs and videos. Because this is  
9 a special occasion, we will go ahead and suspend that rule. I  
10 want you to feel free to maneuver around and take photos as we  
11 progress. Also, I would just kindly remind you to just please  
12 mute your phones so we don't have that extra noise during  
13 today's ceremony.

14 All right. I think we're ready to proceed with the  
15 motion. And I would like to introduce to you Levi Martin.  
16 Levi Martin is an Assistant United States Attorney. He  
17 represents the Attorney General for the United States, and he  
18 has a very important motion to present to the Court.

19 Mr. Martin.

20 MR. MARTIN: Good morning, Judge, and members of the  
21 bench. And thank you for the invitation to be here and  
22 participate in this most auspicious of occasions.

23 I would like to introduce to you the nine individuals,  
24 and I think you're all aware we had an add-on here late. But  
25 these individuals appear on hearing for the respective

1 petitions for naturalization as United States citizens.

2           Beginning on my left in the front row here, we have  
3 Dania Mancia Fajardo, native and former inhabitant of Honduras;  
4 Carlos Colin Feliciano, native and former inhabitant of Mexico.  
5 We have Fausat Montunrayo Hoopes, native and former inhabitant  
6 of Nigeria. We have Mahdi Khishvand, native and former  
7 inhabitant of Iran.

8           Up in the second row, again beginning on the left, we  
9 have Neely Mahapatra, native and former inhabitant of India;  
10 Cristopher Pontalba Tagab, native and former inhabitant of  
11 Philippines; Pierrette Denise Planche, native and former  
12 inhabitant of France. We have Upama Adhikari, native and  
13 former inhabitant of Nepal. And last, but not least, we have  
14 Reyell Brisette Portillo Rodriguez, native and former  
15 inhabitant of Guatemala.

16           Your Honor, each of these individuals have been  
17 interviewed under oath by a designated examiner for the United  
18 States Citizen and Naturalization Immigration Services.  
19 Immigration Services indicates that each of these individuals  
20 has met all requirements for naturalization and are well  
21 qualified as candidates for United States citizenship.

22           As a fellow citizen of the United States, I want to  
23 congratulate and welcome each and every one of you.

24           And at this time, Judge, I move for that the  
25 aforementioned petition parties be granted United States

1 citizenship on granting of the motion.

2 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Thank you, Mr. Martin.

3 Your motion is granted, so thank you for that today.

4 We have a few more steps to go before you are  
5 officially United States citizens and the next is the oath of  
6 allegiance. So I would invite my colleagues to stand with me,  
7 and we will invite the new citizens-to-be to stand as well, and  
8 we will administer the oath at this time.

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

23 Congratulations to each of you and welcome as new  
24 citizens of the United States.

25 (Applause.)

1 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Nothing is ever  
2 official until we hand you the paperwork, in this case the  
3 certificate of your citizenship. So at this time if my  
4 colleagues would also join me once again, we will step down and  
5 present the certificates to you at this time.

6 (Presentation of citizenship certificates.)

7 MR. MARTIN: First we have Dania Mancía Fajardo.

8 Carlos Colin Feliciano.

9 Fausat Montunrayo Hoopes.

10 Mahdi Khishvand.

11 Neely Mahapatra.

12 Cristopher Pontalba Tagab.

13 Pierrette Denise Planche.

14 Upama Adhikari.

15 Reyell Brisette Portillo Rodriguez.

16 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Well, at this time I  
17 would invite the sixth grade class from St. Mary's Catholic  
18 School to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance, the very first  
19 for our new citizens as citizens of this country.

20 (Pledge of Allegiance.)

21 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Thank you. Please be  
22 seated.

23 Well, it is an honor at this time to introduce a  
24 special message from the President of the United States;  
25 President Biden has a video word for you on your special day.

1 (President's message.)

2 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Thank you so much for  
3 those wonderful words, President Biden.

4 Well, one of the neat things about becoming a new  
5 citizen, especially at these ceremonies, is we have things to  
6 give you and hand out.

7 We will begin -- as I understand, the sixth graders  
8 have cards that they've worked on and taken so much time  
9 putting together, and they are going to present those cards to  
10 you at this time.

11 So, Mr. Kennedy, would you and your students please  
12 present those cards at this time.

13 (Presentation by St. Mary's Catholic School.)

14 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: We might give you a  
15 microphone, just so you guys can present them.

16 MR. KENNEDY: This is for Neely Mahapatra.

17 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: We might have you use  
18 the microphone so we can hear your kind words.

19 MR. KENNEDY: For Cristopher Pontalba Tagab.  
20 Upama Adhikari.

21 Welcome to the improve, guys.

22 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: That's okay.

23 MR. KENNEDY: By process of elimination at the end,  
24 all right?

25 Next one.

1 Cristopher Pontalba Tagab, congratulations, sir.

2 Mahdi Khishvand.

3 That's going to be valuable some day.

4 Neely Mahapatra.

5 You got two. How did that happen?

6 Who didn't get one? Two of you?

7 We don't have another one for the ninth member.

8 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: There we go. We

9 evened it out. Thank you, Mr. Kennedy, very much.

10 Sixth graders, thank you for presenting those cards

11 today. Much appreciated.

12 Well, next I'm delighted, as usual, to have our

13 representatives, our folks that represent our congressional

14 delegation, Senator Barrasso, Senator Lummis and also

15 Representative Hageman. They each have some personalized

16 correspondence from our congressional officials. If you would

17 hand those out at this time. And thank you, as always, for

18 your presence and participation.

19 (Presentation by congressional delegation.)

20 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Thank you again to the

21 representatives from our delegation.

22 Last, but certainly not least, faithful participants

23 in these ceremonies, we have the League of Women Voters. They,

24 too, have some materials to hand to you. And if you would

25 kindly hand those out at this time.

1 (Presentation by League of Women Voters.)

2 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Thank you, once again,  
3 to the League of Women Voters. We appreciate your involvement  
4 and the hard work that you put into these ceremonies as well.

5 Well, we need now a special bag for all of those items  
6 so that you can take them home.

7 One of the things that we encourage, but certainly no  
8 pressure at all, is to invite you all if you would like to make  
9 any statements or remarks about, perhaps, your journey getting  
10 you to this day, what it means to be a new American, anything  
11 you may want to say about family and friends. No pressure at  
12 all, but it really is neat to hear how heartfelt and how  
13 important this day is to each of you.

14 And so if any of you would like to say a quick remark,  
15 I'll invite you to come to the podium there just so we can hear  
16 you. No pressure, but we would love to hear from you if you  
17 would like to. So would anyone like to step up and say a  
18 couple of words?

19 Thank you. We've given you a microphone. Thank you.

20 FAUSAT MONTUNRAYO HOOPES: Good day, everyone. My  
21 name is Fausat Montunrayo Hoopes. I would like to thank the  
22 United States of America for approving me to be a United States  
23 citizen. This is an amazing day for me. It's an -- it's a  
24 long journey down here. And it is a special day to me, and I  
25 will say thank you to my family who are sitting behind there.

1 Thank you to my father-in-law, thank you to my mother-in-law,  
2 and thank you to the judges.

3 (Applause.)

4 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Thank you, Ms. Hoopes,  
5 for those heartfelt words.

6 Anyone else like to step up, please?

7 NEELY MAHAPATRA: I am going to get emotional. It is  
8 a very special day for me. And I do have my dear friend with  
9 me, Mahdi, and I don't have my immediate family with me right  
10 now. But I think -- I think I will cry.

11 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: That's okay. Take  
12 your time.

13 NEELY MAHAPATRA: This country has given me the  
14 opportunity and to have the identity that I have now, who I am  
15 today, an educator, so I'm going to continue to do that, which  
16 I so much enjoy. And the most important job I would do now is  
17 to vote, which I was really looking forward to. So, yeah, this  
18 is -- I am just eternally thankful to everyone, and it is a  
19 proud moment for me and for my family. Thank you.

20 (Applause.)

21 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Thank you. Wonderful.  
22 Thank you so much for sharing.

23 Yes, sir.

24 MAHDI KHISHVAND: First, I would like to appreciate  
25 everyone, especially the judges. Eleven years ago I came here

1 as a student at the University of Wyoming and with the belief  
2 that this country will provide an opportunity. And all these  
3 years, I'm just touched by the kindness, the support, the  
4 freedom and everything else that this country has provided for  
5 me.

6 And today is a great milestone in this journey. Today  
7 I have been honored with the greatest honor that somebody can  
8 be given, the citizenship of the United States of America. And  
9 I've tried or at least I've done my best to this point to be a  
10 useful person for this country. And I also in return have  
11 received a lot of things.

12 But from this day I will double that efforts to make  
13 this country even greater and better for amazing future  
14 generation. Thank you so much.

15 (Applause.)

16 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Thank you.

17 CARLOS COLIN FELICIANO: Good morning, everyone. I  
18 just want to say a quick thank you to all the judges, to all  
19 the people in the audience. Thank you for making this morning  
20 go smoothly for this ceremony for our -- for all of us new  
21 citizens.

22 I wanted to give a thanks to my brother and my mom for  
23 being with me here today on this special day for me. Also want  
24 to encourage my mom to also become a citizen, to start her  
25 application now that she sees I went through the process, I

1 hope that gives her more hopes and it encourages her.

2 Now, as an American citizen, I plan on finishing my  
3 two years of college at Creighton University and to make this  
4 country better and greater.

5 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Great.

6 (Applause.)

7 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Wonderful. Thank you  
8 for sharing as well.

9 Yes, please come forward.

10 REYELL BRISETTE PORTILLO RODRIQUEZ: Good morning all  
11 of you. I want to say thank you, all judges, and for approve  
12 me. This is an amazing day for me. And I want to say thank  
13 you to my kids and my sister and my mom 'cause they support me  
14 all the times. And I'm very happy because, well, my daughter  
15 is born in Gillette, but my son is going to become a citizen,  
16 and I'm glad 'cause they going to have a better future. And  
17 we're going to do all effort to do -- to work hard in this  
18 country and give our best. Thank you and have a wonderful day.

19 (Applause.)

20 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Thank you,  
21 Ms. Rodriguez. I think you get the prize for traveling the  
22 farthest. You came from Gillette today, I understand. Thank  
23 you.

24 Anyone else like to say anything?

25 Yes. You started us. Maybe you can wrap it up for

1 us.

2 FAUSAT MONTUNRAYO HOOPEES: Well, I'm going to say  
3 thank you to my husband. He make this happen. I mean, we  
4 started this from nowhere. I mean, we didn't plan it this way  
5 from the beginning, but thank God it happened this way. This  
6 has always been a dream for me. It's a dream come true. Thank  
7 God.

8 (Applause.)

9 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Thank you.

10 Yes, sir.

11 CRISTOPHER PONTALBA TAGAB: Just want to say first  
12 thank you Lord for bringing us here, and thank you to my family  
13 for being there for me to support me all the way and to all the  
14 judges and to all of you working.

15 Coming from the other side of the world, which is long  
16 partner of the United States of America, which is the  
17 Philippines, and one of the reason Filipinos come here is  
18 because of nurses, but unfortunately I'm not one of them. But  
19 all of my brothers and sisters that is here now is -- are all  
20 in the medical field, which are nurses.

21 So I want to thank United States of America for giving  
22 those opportunities for us to be -- to come here and to  
23 experience that the world is better with United States and  
24 partners like the Philippines.

25 So I want to say thank you and God bless you all.

1 (Applause.)

2 THE COURT: Yes, we're on a roll now.

3 UPAMA ADHIKARI: I would like to say thank you to  
4 judges, everyone here, my husband, daughter, and everyone here.  
5 I would like to congratulate all of us.

6 It has been a journey for me. And it has been great,  
7 and I think I'm blessed being here. It has been lucky since my  
8 daughter is here. She was born here. And all the support to  
9 my husband and my family who lives in Nepal, so thank you.

10 (Applause.)

11 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Wonderful words.  
12 Thank you all for sharing.

13 Anyone else like to say anything?

14 Well, thank you. That, for me anyway, is the  
15 highlight of the ceremony. So we appreciate you coming forward  
16 and saying a few remarks for us.

17 I would now like to invite my colleagues to make any  
18 statements or remarks that they may have. And I will begin, if  
19 I could, with Senior Judge Nancy Freudenthal. Your Honor.

20 JUDGE FREUDENTHAL: Gosh, we should have talked about  
21 this ahead of time.

22 Well, congratulations to each and every one of you.  
23 To repeat Judge Rankin's remarks, your comments today are  
24 heartfelt, uplifting and really reinforce what this country is  
25 about. So thank you.

1           Beyond that, my message today is a bit more serious.  
2 I think for me it's fair to say that my view is that we live in  
3 troubling times. In many ways we're under attack, and by that  
4 I mean our rule of law is under attack; our democracy is under  
5 attack.

6           What, you might ask, can you do as an individual or  
7 small group? As Margaret Mead once said: *Never underestimate*  
8 *the power of a small group of committed people to change the*  
9 *world. In fact, it's the only thing that ever has.*

10           You've each taken an oath today, the oath of the  
11 office of citizen, the highest office of the land. I'd like to  
12 echo the words of Mr. Khishvand: A citizen is the greatest  
13 honor a country can bestow. That oath of office is not a  
14 collection of hollow words. It is a pledge. Importantly, it  
15 is a pledge, among others, to support and defend the  
16 Constitution and laws of the United States.

17           It's a pledge to defend the Constitution and laws  
18 against those who seek to divide us. After all, in the Pledge  
19 of Allegiance we have had pledged allegiance to one indivisible  
20 nation -- indivisible. Defend the Constitution and laws  
21 against those who seek to deprive our fellow citizens of their  
22 liberties and justice under the rules of law. Defend them by  
23 educating yourselves on the principles that underpin our  
24 Constitution. Defend them by your voice, your vote, and your  
25 conduct.

1                   We need you, among others, today more than ever.  
2 Again, congratulations to each of you as new citizens. You as  
3 citizens, and many others, are our country's best hope for a  
4 brighter today and an even brighter tomorrow.

5                   CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Thank you, Judge.  
6 Wonderful.

7                   (Applause.)

8                   CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Judge Johnson.

9                   JUDGE JOHNSON: Thank you.

10                   It is an honor to be here as the final step in the  
11 long journey to become a citizen of the United States is taken,  
12 your oath to accept the duties and sacrifices that citizenship  
13 in this nation may require. To be present to celebrate with  
14 you and with your families and friends is special indeed. This  
15 day that you have become a United States citizen will be  
16 remembered with pride as a significant day in your personal  
17 history. Congratulations and best wishes for achieving this  
18 important goal.

19                   On this day the United States should celebrate as  
20 well. By taking the oath and accepting the benefits and duties  
21 of citizenship, you have strengthened this nation with your  
22 presence, your energy, and all that you have brought from your  
23 homeland to contribute to the work and culture of the United  
24 States.

25                   History confirms the benefits to society that we

1 receive from the diverse population coming here to better their  
2 lives and the lives of their families. Those benefits are  
3 witnessed each day in all forms of industry, vital services,  
4 and government.

5 I can't help but wonder that you, like me, may be  
6 bewildered by the issues that affect our lives as citizens. We  
7 are all bombarded with information from many sources, often  
8 conflicting, often questionable, sometimes seeking to take  
9 advantage of us, at other times beneficial. How to sort  
10 through all of it to make decisions that we as citizens should  
11 make as part of our lives and civic duty is challenging to each  
12 of us.

13 The United States is entering a periodic election  
14 cycle. Your choices as you vote are as significant as those of  
15 any other citizen. Your judgment based on your experience and  
16 your best effort to sort through and evaluate sources of  
17 information will serve you well as you exercise your right to  
18 participate in the democratic system of voting.

19 One of the great judges expressed these thoughts about  
20 being a citizen and our shared responsibilities and values.  
21 Our president of the United States spoke this morning from the  
22 screens here in this courtroom about possibilities. They are  
23 possibilities, but each of you and each of us in this room make  
24 those possibilities become real, as Judge Freudenthal has just  
25 told you.

1           The values I'm speaking of are the values of liberty.  
2 Judge Learned Hand said many, many years ago: *Liberty lies in*  
3 *the hearts of men and women. When it dies there, no*  
4 *constitution, no law, no court can save it. No constitution,*  
5 *no law, no court can even do much to help it. While it lies*  
6 *there, it needs no constitution, no law, no court to save it.*  
7 *And what is this liberty which must lie in the hearts of men*  
8 *and women? It is not the ruthless and unbridled will. It is*  
9 *not freedom to do as one likes. That is the denial of liberty.*  
10 *It leads straight to its overthrow.*

11           *What, then, is the spirit of liberty?* That's the  
12 question that Judge Hand asked.

13           *I cannot define it. I can only tell you my own faith.*  
14 *The spirit of liberty is the spirit which is not too sure that*  
15 *it is right. The spirit of liberty is the spirit which seeks*  
16 *to understand the minds of other men and women. The spirit of*  
17 *liberty is the spirit which weighs their interests alongside*  
18 *its own without bias. The spirit of liberty remembers that not*  
19 *even a sparrow falls to earth unheeded.*

20           Judge Hand's words seem to be good ones for both new  
21 and old citizens to consider as we go forward together.

22 Congratulations, ladies and gentlemen.

23           (Applause.)

24           CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Thank you, Judge  
25 Johnson.

1 Judge Phillips.

2 JUDGE PHILLIPS: Thank you, Judge Rankin. This is  
3 such a special occasion and ceremony. I love attending these  
4 because you can feel as you stand up and even as you look out  
5 across the crowd -- you can feel the love, the warmth and the  
6 pride in this occasion.

7 I salute your determination. I know it is a long way  
8 from a dream of citizenship all the way to taking the oath as  
9 you did today, and I can imagine the obstacles that you  
10 overcame to do that. So congratulations there.

11 And, finally, I would say, I'm very proud to be your  
12 fellow citizen. The country is stronger today as a result of  
13 your joining its ranks as citizens. And so very proud to be  
14 here with you today. Good luck.

15 (Applause.)

16 CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Thank you, Judge  
17 Phillips.

18 Well, briefly, welcome. You are all now Americans.  
19 Congratulations to each of you and your families. I can't help  
20 but note there are nine of you from all over the State of  
21 Wyoming: Casper, Cheyenne, Rawlins, Gillette, Laramie, and  
22 nine of you from all over the world, nine different countries  
23 that you arrive here from.

24 So we are so pleased to have you and, as mentioned by  
25 the others, can't wait to join you as fellow citizens.

1           And I know what a long road, I'm sure, it has been.  
2 We heard a little bit about that from a couple of you, for both  
3 you and your families, this long journey. And I'm sure it has  
4 not been easy. It has been a struggle at times, I would  
5 imagine, leaving your homeland, saying good-bye to beloved  
6 family and friends, traveling to this country, finding a home,  
7 finding a job, schools for your family and children, adjusting  
8 to a new culture, really a new way of life.

9           But the good news for all of us is that the best of  
10 your culture and way of life is the best of ours, and your  
11 traditions enrich not only your own families, but they enrich  
12 the United States of America.

13           Always remember that this country was founded on the  
14 diversity of many tribes, countries and cultures. We have been  
15 blessed by the rich culture and tradition of so many people  
16 like each of you and those that came before you. America is a  
17 combination of the best of everyone who comes here. This great  
18 country depends on new citizens such as you to learn and grow.  
19 Our survival depends on the values of diversity, tolerance,  
20 dignity, and respect that we live by and teach each other every  
21 day.

22           Our very first president, George Washington,  
23 recognized the importance of immigrants to the land, not just  
24 the *rich and high-ranking newcomer*, quote, *but the oppressed*  
25 *and persecuted of all nations and religions whom we shall*

1 *welcome to a participation in all our rights and privileges,*  
2 end quote.

3           Being a United States citizen also means that you are  
4 free. The Constitution and laws of this country are designed  
5 to protect your freedom. You are free to think on your own and  
6 to form your own opinions, and you may voice those opinions  
7 whether many people or few people agree with you. You are free  
8 to work where you want to work, to read what you want to read,  
9 to say what you want to say. You are free to believe what you  
10 want to believe, to openly practice any religion or not  
11 practice any religion at all.

12           There is no single American way to think or believe.  
13 As a citizen of the United States, you are free to follow your  
14 own path wherever it may lead you.

15           But, as noted by Judge Johnson, with that freedom  
16 comes responsibility. The freedom of democracy comes from the  
17 responsibility to participate in the democratic process by  
18 voting, not casually or carelessly, but in a way that is  
19 thoughtful and informed. And your timing couldn't be more  
20 perfect as we head toward a very important election season.

21           You have a responsibility to educate yourself so you  
22 can make good choices for yourself, your family, and this  
23 country that is now your country. This democracy so hard  
24 fought for only works when its people participate fully by  
25 helping to choose who will govern us all and by taking that

1 process seriously.

2           The freedom of democracy also carries a responsibility  
3 to your community and your country. You must be willing to  
4 serve this country as you can. Use your talents. Be active in  
5 your communities. Give back to your new country through civic  
6 participation and service.

7           I'm sure all of you have had someone who has helped  
8 make today possible -- a friend, a mentor, a family member, a  
9 teacher. And perhaps a wonderful way to honor them for their  
10 service to you is for you to reach out and hand someone else a  
11 leg up that may need your help. Your new country, our country,  
12 will only continue to thrive if we care about our fellow  
13 citizens as human beings.

14           Again, congratulations and welcome to each of you.  
15 You've worked incredibly hard to earn your citizenship, and I  
16 know I speak for all Wyoming neighbors when I say we're  
17 grateful to have you. Thank you.

18           (Applause.)

19           CHIEF MAGISTRATE JUDGE RANKIN: Well, once again, we  
20 are blessed to have the Daughters of the American Revolution  
21 provide some refreshments. I believe -- I see members of the  
22 DAR are here, and I think there are refreshments outside of the  
23 courtroom when we complete this ceremony.

24           In a moment we will adjourn, but, again, feel free to  
25 move about the courtroom, take photos. We're happy to be a

1 part of that if you would like, maybe near a flag, but we are  
2 just delighted to spell -- rather, share this very special day  
3 with each of you.

4 I believe, unless there's any further business, we are  
5 ready to adjourn. Anything else?

6 All right. Again, congratulations to each of you and  
7 welcome. We'll stand in recess.

8 (Proceedings concluded 10:02 a.m., March 7, 2024.)

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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 April, 2024.

*/s/ Janet Davis*

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