

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF WYOMING

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IN THE MATTER OF THE  
NATURALIZATION AND GRANTING OF  
UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP TO:

Cheyenne, Wyoming  
March 8, 2021  
10:47 a.m.

EVEN BRANDE, ASIM JAKARAI ANDRE  
CYRILLIEN, SILJE BENNETT,  
MAGDALENA ESTRADA, TASSANEE  
SAENGMANEE, CELESTIN PICASSO  
ZEMTSOP, ANA CRISTINA SHUMWAY,  
LEONIE MAE CABRERA JOHNSON, and  
ANDREI GRAUR,

Joseph C. O'Mahoney  
Federal Center

Petitioners.

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

**BEFORE THE HONORABLE ALAN B. JOHNSON**  
United States District Judge, Presiding

**APPEARANCES:**

For the United States: JEREMY GROSS  
Assistant United States Attorney  
DISTRICT OF WYOMING  
2120 Capitol Avenue, Suite 4000  
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(Proceedings commenced 10:47 a.m., March 8, 2021.)

MS. HILLIKER: 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 Alan B. Johnson, United States District Judge.

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

JUDGE JOHNSON: Welcome, ladies and gentlemen. Please be seated.

These are ceremonies that are happy ones for the Court and, I hope, for all of the persons who will achieve citizenship today, something they've worked for for a long time and have -- and represent the dreams and plans that they've had for their lives as they become citizens of the most altruistic nation in the world.

These have been challenging times, and I look out at everyone today in this room wearing masks as a result of the pandemic. I'm going to just remove mine so you can see my face for a moment and know that you're talking to somebody who does have a nose and a mouth and is here with you today, just as you and each of you are with me during this ceremony.

The usual proceedings before this Court is conducted oftentimes with a musical group that's arranged by Kellie

Erickson, who's seated over at the defense table in this ceremonial courtroom, and a speaker who would give a patriotic speech, members of the families of each of the new citizens who are present filling the courtroom during the proceedings, and there would be other Judges seated with me, all of whom will be making remarks during the ceremony, patriotic ladies would make gifts to you of the Constitution and the history of the flag and the Pledge and everything else, so we can see that great changes have occurred as a result of the pandemic that we are in today.

And some family members have been excluded, but I want to mention that during this proceedings, for the benefit of taking pictures and memorializing this ceremony, those who are associated with our new citizens should feel free to use their cameras, to come forward within the well of the Court -- they call this -- to find a good position to take a good photograph, to stand and move closer so that that photograph can be taken.

So don't hesitate to move about and be part of this. And after the ceremony photographs can be taken with the backdrop of the flag, and I will -- I will be around for that activity.

So welcome, everyone, to be here in this sort of abbreviated but necessary time together to celebrate. I see that Jeremy Gross from the United States Attorney's Office is

present here today to make the appropriate motions and to assist me as we go forward during this proceedings.

Mr. Gross, are you prepared to present the roll call of citizens to be naturalized?

MR. GROSS: Yes, Your Honor. Thank you.

Good morning. May it please the Court.

My name is Jeremy Gross. I'm with the United States Attorney's Office, and I am here today as a representative of both the Acting United States Attorney, Robert Murray, as well as a proxy for the Attorney General of the United States, Acting Attorney General Monty Wilkinson.

Your Honor, it's my privilege to introduce the Court to the following individuals who appear in person for a hearing on their petitions for naturalization as United States citizens.

JUDGE JOHNSON: Would each of you stand when your name is called.

MR. GROSS: I think we have everybody in order, but we will --

JUDGE JOHNSON: All right.

MR. GROSS: -- I will do my best here, Your Honor.

Mr. Even Brande, a native and former inhabitant of Norway.

Mr. Asim Cyrillien, a native and former inhabitant of Antigua and Barbuda.

Ms. Silje Bennett, a native and former inhabitant of Norway.

Ms. Magdalena Estrada, a native and former inhabitant of Mexico.

Ms. Tassanee Saengmanee, a native and former inhabitant of Thailand.

Mr. Celestin Zemsop, a native and former inhabitant of Cameroon.

Ms. Ana Cristina Shumway, a native and former inhabitant of the Dominican Republic.

Ms. Leonie Cabrera Johnson, a native and former inhabitant of the Philippines.

And Mr. Andrei Graur, a native and former inhabitant of Moldova.

Your Honor, each of these individuals has been interviewed and examined under oath by an examiner for the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, who has also completed a background check and character investigation for each of these individuals. The Immigration Services indicates that each of these individuals has met all the requirements for naturalization and are all well-qualified for United States citizenship.

As a fellow citizen of the United States myself, I -- I do want to welcome all of you and appreciate you allowing me to be here as part of this ceremony.

And at this time, Your Honor, it's my pleasure to move that each of these Petitioners be granted United States citizenship upon the administration of the oath.

JUDGE JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Gross.

Ladies and gentlemen, will you all stand to take the oath of citizenship with me.

Please raise your right hands and repeat after me.

I hereby declare . . .

THE PETITIONERS: I hereby declare . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . on oath . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . on oath . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . that I absolutely and entirely . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . that I absolutely and entirely . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . renounce and abjure . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . renounce and abjure . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . all allegiance and fidelity . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . all allegiance and fidelity . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . to any foreign prince . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . to any foreign prince . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . or potentate . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . or potentate . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . state or sovereignty . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . state or sovereignty . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . of whom or which . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . of whom or which . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . I have heretofore been a  
subject . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . I have heretofore been a  
subject . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . or citizen.

THE PETITIONERS: . . . or citizen.

JUDGE JOHNSON: That I will support and defend . . .

THE PETITIONERS: That I will support and  
defend . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . the Constitution and laws . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . the Constitution and  
laws . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . of the United States of  
America . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . of the United States of  
America . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . against all enemies . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . against all enemies . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . foreign and domestic . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . foreign and domestic . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . that I will bear true faith and

allegiance to the same.

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

JUDGE JOHNSON: That I will bear arms . . .

THE PETITIONERS: That I will bear arms . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . on behalf of the United States . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . on behalf of the United States . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . when required by law . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . when required by law . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . that I will perform noncombatant service . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . that I will perform noncombatant service . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . in the armed forces of the United States . . .

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

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . when required by law.

THE PETITIONERS: . . . when required by law.

JUDGE JOHNSON: That I will perform work . . .

THE PETITIONERS: That I will perform work . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . of national importance . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . of national importance . . .



JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . under civil direction . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . under civil direction . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . when required by law . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . when required by law . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . and that I take this obligation  
freely . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . and that I take this  
obligation freely . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . without any mental  
reservation . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . without any mental  
reservation . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . or purpose of evasion . . .

THE PETITIONERS: . . . or purpose of evasion . . .

JUDGE JOHNSON: . . . so help me God.

THE PETITIONERS: . . . so help me God.

JUDGE JOHNSON: Congratulations, ladies and  
gentlemen.

(Applause.)

JUDGE JOHNSON: Please be seated. You have taken the  
oath. That is a long oath.

And for those of you who were born in the  
United States, you didn't have to take that oath. Your  
citizenship is something you take for granted. But all of  
those duties, all of those obligations, apply to each and

every one of us in our lives.

All who are citizens, both born in the United States and our new citizens -- and I should say at this point, Mr. Gross, that I grant your motion in this case and am proud to sign the documents, the order granting the petitions of naturalizations in this court proceedings.

Tammy.

MS. HILLIKER: Thank you.

JUDGE JOHNSON: One other document here.

Now, would all of us, all citizens of the United States, please stand, face this flag, raise your right hand, place it over your heart, and repeat after me.

(The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.)

JUDGE JOHNSON: Well, you'll have many, many other opportunities to take that pledge of oath in your lives as we proceed.

And, Tammy, do we have our certificates made to distribute?

MS. HILLIKER: Yes.

(Certificates presented individually by Judge Johnson.)

JUDGE JOHNSON: Please be seated, ladies and gentlemen.

I wanted to spend a few minutes with you before everyone goes on their busy lives and leaves this courtroom just to make a few very, very brief remarks to you.

You have made sacrifices in your lives and difficult decisions. I'm sure it is not an easy decision that you've made at this time. And I wanted to start first by this long oath that we went through, and it's always seemed to me that the important part of this oath is that each of you have renounced and abjured "all allegiance to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or a citizen."

It is, it seems to me, momentous and really important to think that you have now taken an oath to a nation that is supported by law. We look to a constitution, a written document, not to any king or -- the president certainly is not a monarch or a king or a potentate. He is elected by the people of a nation, elected by you, as citizens, who will be exercising your right to vote.

So this is a nation of laws, and this courtroom is a place where those laws are enforced, where those laws are respected, and where the law is taught from time to time. And we conduct ourselves in accordance with those laws, and it is that rule of law that guarantees the freedoms that we enjoy, but it depends so much on each one of you and how you live your lives, in peace and participation in this nation.

Now, I don't know what's ahead for you. I see one of our new citizens is wearing the uniform of the military, and his future is -- is tied to those obligations, wherever they

may lead, and each of you to find work, to follow children who may be moving as their lives dictate or your education is maybe ongoing or maybe you, yourself, are teaching. But all of those things may lead you outside of Wyoming. I hope you'll remember this day.

We are in a time where we have witnessed great stress, not only as a result of this pandemic that changes each and every one of our faces when we are in a public setting, such as this courtroom. We may see you here again as jurors now that you're citizens, where you'll be asked to judge your fellow man for various -- for various purposes. We hope you'll answer that call of your government because that is part of the government service that you've promised to provide in your oath.

This past year, with the pandemic, has been almost like a period of war by this country. This entire nation has had to mobilize in many respects to develop the vaccines that were developed so quickly in this nation, and most of the people who are older have now had their opportunity to have their vaccinations and receive that benefit, and other groups are now receiving that benefit.

Many, many years ago, during World War II, the critical year 1944, there was a naturalization ceremony conducted in Central Park in New York City. Thousands of new citizens were in that location, not a small group of folks

like us, and a brief presentation was made at that time by a famous jurist by the name of Learned Hand.

And he said, "We have gathered here to affirm a faith, a faith in a common purpose, a common conviction, a common devotion. Some of us have chosen America as the land of our adoption. Others have come from those who did the same. For this reason we have some right to consider ourselves a picked group, a group of those who had the courage to break from the past and brave the dangers and the loneliness of a strange land. What was the object that nerved us or those who went before us to this choice? We sought liberty; freedom from oppression, freedom from want, freedom to be ourselves. This we then sought; this we now believe that we are by way of winning.

"What do we mean when we say that, first of all, we seek liberty? I often wonder whether we do not rest our hopes too much upon constitutions, upon laws, and upon courts. These are false hopes; believe me, these are false hopes. Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women. When it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it. No constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it. While it lies there it needs no constitution, no law, no court to save it.

"And what is this liberty which must lie in the hearts of men and women? It is not the ruthless, the

unbridled will; it is not freedom to do as one likes. That is the denial of liberty and leads straight to its overthrow. A society in which men recognize no check upon their freedom soon becomes a society where freedom is the possession of only a savage few; as we have learned to our sorrow.

"What, then, is the spirit of liberty? I cannot define it; I can only tell you from my own faith. The spirit of liberty is the spirit which is not too sure that it is right; the spirit of liberty is the spirit which seeks to understand the minds of other men and women; the spirit of liberty is the spirit which weighs their interests alongside its own without bias; the spirit of liberty remembers that not even a sparrow falls to earth unheeded.

"There may be a kingdom where the least shall be heard and considered side by side with the greatest. And now in that spirit, that spirit of an America which has never been and which may never be; nay, which never will be except as the conscience and courage of Americans create it; yet in the spirit of that America which lies hidden in some form in the aspirations of us all; in the spirit of that America for which our young men" at that moment were fighting and dying; in that spirit of America and liberty they pledged allegiance to the flag.

Well, that was a day. On January 6 you saw that spirit of liberty being violated on your television sets as

individuals who felt they could do whatever they wished stormed the citadel of the Capitol of the United States.

Each of you will be voters and have the privilege of exercising your vote, and I pray and hope that you will treasure that opportunity to express yourself at the polls and that when the call comes for you to come for jury service or to provide other service to your fellow citizens, that you will answer that call and, as citizens, participate to the very fullest in the benefits of your citizenship.

And I'm so proud to call you fellow citizens at this point and wish you Godspeed in your lives going forward.

Mr. Gross, anything further that we need to conduct today?

MR. GROSS: Not from the United States, Your Honor.

JUDGE JOHNSON: There being nothing further, Court will stand in recess.

And, ladies and gentlemen, feel free to use this courtroom to take photographs as you see fit to honor this occasion, which is so important to these folks who are seated here.

MS. HILLIKER: All rise.

This Honorable United States District Court for the District of Wyoming now stands adjourned subject to call.

(Proceedings concluded 11:16 a.m., March 8, 2021.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, MELANIE HUMPHREY-SONNTAG, Federal Official Court Reporter for the United States District Court for the District of Wyoming, a Registered Diplomate Reporter, Certified Realtime Reporter, and Certified Realtime Captioner, 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 10th day of March, 2021.

/s/ Melanie Humphrey-Sonntag

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MELANIE HUMPHREY-SONNTAG  
RDR, CRR, CRC  
Federal Official Court Reporter