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**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF MONTANA
MISSOULA DIVISION**

IN RE THE MATTER OF)
) **TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**
NATURALIZATION CEREMONY)
_____)

**BEFORE THE HONORABLE DONALD W. MOLLOY
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT JUDGE
FOR THE DISTRICT OF MONTANA**

Russell Smith United States Courthouse
201 East Broadway
Missoula, Montana 59802
Thursday, March 20, 2025
10:59:37 to 11:29:55

Proceedings recorded by machine shorthand
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PROCEEDINGS

(Open court.)

THE LAW CLERK: All rise. The United States District Court for the District of Montana is now in session, Honorable Donald W. Molloy presiding.

THE COURT: Good morning. And I would ask everybody to remain standing for the presentation of the colors.

(Colors posted.)

THE COURT: All right. Please be seated.

Good morning, everybody. It's the first day of spring and, in Montana it's snowing. Persephone has not gotten her message out yet.

The first matter of business this morning, if any people that are here in the audience, if you have cameras, you're welcome to use them at any time during the course of the proceedings. And after we have our new citizens, then, at the end of the proceedings this morning, we'll have a class picture. And then if any of the individual new citizens want to get their picture up on the bench, I will remain here. So feel free to use your cameras, your phone cameras, whatever, during the course of the proceeding.

So, Mr. Haas, from the Immigration Services out of Helena, I understand you have a motion to make.

MR. HAAS: Thank you, Your Honor.

On behalf of the Department of Homeland Security and

1 the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, I have the
2 honor of presenting to you 25 individuals from ten countries.
3 There are four petitions to request a name change before the
4 Court. All 25 individuals have been examined under the
5 relevant sections of the Immigration and Nationality Act, and
6 their applications for naturalization have been approved.
7 They have been found eligible and qualified to be administered
8 the Oath of Allegiance for admission to citizenship.

9 The applicants are:

10 Cxxxx Bxxxxxxx, Philippines;

11 Kxxxxxx Kxxx, Germany;

12 Txxxxxx Wxxx, Canada;

13 Dxxxxxx Exxxxxx Zxxxxxx, Mexico;

14 Wxxxx Mxxxxxxx, Germany;

15 Bxxxxx-Xx Sxxxxxxx, Canada;

16 Dxxxxxx Lxxxx, Brazil;

17 Ixxx Txxxxxxx, Ukraine;

18 Lxxxx MxXxxxxxx, Philippines;

19 Rxxx Hxxxx, Canada;

20 Yxxx Txxxxxxx, Canada;

21 Sxxxxx Dxx, New Zealand;

22 Gxxxxxxx Sxxxxxxx, Germany;

23 Lxxx Wxxx, Canada;

24 Jxxxxxxx Oxxxxx Cxxxxxxx, Colombia;

25 Exx Bxxxx, Bulgaria;

1 Dxxxxx Jxxxxxxxxx, Canada;
2 Hxxxxxx Kxxxxx, Iraq;
3 Oxxxxx Dxxxxx, Germany;
4 Axxxxxx Dxxxx, New Zealand;
5 Mxxxx Kxxxxx, Iraq;
6 Axx Kxxxxx, Iraq;
7 Sxxxx Mxxxxxx, Iraq;
8 Mxxxxxxx Cxxxxxx, Canada; and
9 Kxxxx Sxxxxxx, Canada.
10 At this time, the government moves that the Oath of
11 Allegiance be administered to the prospective citizens of the
12 United States and that all petitions for a name change be
13 granted.
14 May I approach the bench, Your Honor?
15 THE COURT: You may.
16 MR. HAAS: (Handing.)
17 (Pause.)
18 THE COURT: So the next matter -- I'm going to sign
19 the order that's been presented for the 25 new citizens, but
20 the next matter is taking of the Oath of Allegiance. And in
21 order to do that, I'm going to ask the deputy clerk, Hailey,
22 to administer the oath.
23 And I would ask that each of the new prospective
24 citizens stand and that you raise your right hand and orally
25 state the Oath of Allegiance as led by Hailey. So if all of

1 you would stand and raise your right hand? And it is very
2 important that you actually say the oath.

3 Hailey.

4 THE CLERK: Thank you.

5 "I do hereby declare, on oath, or hereby affirm that
6 I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance
7 and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or
8 sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject
9 or citizen;

10 "That I will support and defend the Constitution and
11 the laws of the United States of America against all enemies,
12 foreign and domestic;

13 "That I will bear true faith and allegiance to the
14 same;

15 "That I will bear arms on behalf of the United
16 States, when required by the law;

17 "That I will perform noncombatant service in the
18 armed forces of the United States, when required by the law;

19 "That I will perform work of national importance
20 under civilian direction, when required by the law;

21 "And that I take this obligation freely, without any
22 mental reservation or purpose of evasion:

23 "So help me God."

24 (New citizens complied with request.)

25 THE CLERK: Thank you.

1 THE COURT: If you'll remain standing, then I'll ask
2 those in the audience to stand, and Hailey will lead us in the
3 *Pledge of Allegiance*.

4 (*Pledge of Allegiance* recited.)

5 THE COURT: All right. Be seated, please.

6 So the next thing, Mr. Haas, if you will call the
7 names, each of the individual new citizens will approach, and
8 there will be a presentation of certificates by Hailey, the
9 clerk of court; and, also, the Daughters of the American
10 Revolution will present flags and other citizenship materials
11 for each of the new citizens.

12 So, Mr. Haas, would you call the names of the
13 individuals?

14 And if you would, then, step forward, get your
15 certificate from Hailey, and then I believe we'll have
16 everybody line up over on this wall, the far wall, and then
17 we'll get a picture.

18 MR. HAAS: Okay.

19 Cxxxx Bxxxxxxxx;

20 Kxxxxxx Kxxx;

21 Txxxxxx Wxxx;

22 Dxxxxxx Exxxxxx Zxxxxx;

23 Wxxxx Mxxxxxxxx;

24 Bxxxxx-Xx Sxxxxxx;

25 Dxxxxxx Lxxxx;

1 Ixxx Txxxxxxxx;
2 Lxxxx MxXxxxxx;
3 Rxxx Hxxxx;
4 Yxxx Txxxxxxxx;
5 Sxxxxx Dxx;
6 Gxxxxxxxx Sxxxxxxxx;
7 Lxxx Wxxx;
8 Jxxxxxxxx Oxxxxx Cxxxxxxxx;
9 Exx Bxxxx;
10 Dxxxxx Jxxxxxxxx;
11 Hxxxxxx Kxxxxx;
12 Oxxxxx Dxxxxx;
13 Axxxxxx Dxxxx;
14 Mxxxx Kxxxxx;
15 Axx Kxxxxx;
16 Sxxxx Mxxxxxx;
17 Mxxxxxxxx Cxxxxxx; and
18 Kxxxx Sxxxxxx.
19 THE COURT: Thank you, Mr. Haas.
20 And why don't we give a round of applause to our new
21 citizens.
22 (Applause.)
23 THE COURT: Hailey, do you want to take a picture
24 now?
25 THE CLERK: Yes, we can take a photo. Do you want

1 to hop in there with them?

2 THE COURT: No. I'll stay here. We'll get that big
3 one afterwards.

4 If anybody out there wants to take a picture of the
5 class, you can get inside of the well if you would like.

6 (Discussion off the record.)

7 THE COURT: All right. The new citizens can have a
8 seat back where you were seated before.

9 (New citizens complied with request.)

10 THE COURT: It looks like a pretty good jury to me.

11 So I have signed the order granting the
12 naturalization order so that you are all now new citizens of
13 the United States of America.

14 (Applause.)

15 THE COURT: The first time I ever administered a
16 naturalization ceremony, I was a brand-new judge, and the
17 chief judge of the Ninth Circuit had sent me down to San Jose,
18 I guess, so that when you make mistakes, it's not in your home
19 district. And so I was down there to do some trials, and they
20 came in, the clerk came in and said, "Would you do a
21 naturalization?"

22 I didn't know what a naturalization was. I didn't
23 know anything about it. And I said, "Sure." And I said,
24 "Where is it gonna be?"

25 And they said it was gonna be in the, let's see, the

1 NHL stadium, the hockey stadium for the professional team.

2 I thought, "My goodness. That's a big place."

3 Well, there were 500 people that were admitted when I
4 administered that oath. And ever since, and it's been almost
5 30 years, whenever I hear the oath that all of you have taken,
6 particularly as we experience current events, I am always
7 amazed and impressed. And the other thing, when I
8 administered the oath to those 500 people in San Jose, there
9 were probably 50 of them that were in the military uniforms of
10 the United States.

11 I'll hand the official order to the clerk.

12 (Handing.)

13 And if you can bear with me, I have some remarks I'd
14 like to make that touch principally on the whole idea of
15 citizenship.

16 There's a book written by Akhil Amar, a pretty thick
17 book, but recently I've begun rereading that book, and what it
18 is is a biography of the Constitution of the United States. I
19 don't think a lot of people take the time to read that
20 document in its entirety, but that is important.

21 So if you'll bear with me, it's always a pleasure
22 for me to participate in these naturalization ceremonies, not
23 only because it's a special occasion for each of you and your
24 family and your friends but also because it is an opportunity
25 for each of us here to reflect on citizenship and what

1 citizenship means.

2 That reflection should become a daily part of our
3 lives, because citizenship in the United States is not a
4 spectator sport. You don't get to sit by and watch. And for
5 one thing, as that oath indicates, citizenship is apt to be
6 more appreciated by those of you who have earned it than by
7 those who of us who are born to it.

8 So what is citizenship? In my view, it is the
9 condition of owing allegiance to the Constitution, not to a
10 person, not to a party. And it is being a participant in a
11 democracy that requires involvement in local, state, and the
12 national communities.

13 Former President Theodore Roosevelt noted, and I
14 quote: The first requisite of a good citizen in this republic
15 of ours is that he shall be able and willing to pull his
16 weight.

17 The question then becomes: How does a citizen pull
18 his or her weight in a nation of over 330 million citizens?

19 All of you have either studied or read parts or all
20 of the U.S. Constitution. The popular press frequently pushes
21 one view or another of important social and political issues
22 and solutions, but rarely does the press invoke the idea of
23 good citizenship outside of contemporary political hot
24 potatoes.

25 Each of us, all of us are inundated with slogans and

1 internet attacks that are oftentimes painful to the listener
2 as well as to the bystander. Some in our democracy seem
3 willing to cast aside the norms and values that have made our
4 nation great and have made it a magnet for those seeking
5 freedom wrapped in liberty's protections.

6 However, whatever the political noise might be on
7 the airwaves, today is a day for all of you who have chosen
8 citizenship to assume the cloak, the obligations, and the
9 responsibilities of being willing and able to pull your
10 weight, because for democracy to work, it requires
11 participation and an educated as well as informed citizenship.

12 As I mentioned earlier, today, March 20, 2025, is
13 the first day of spring. It's also the first day of your
14 citizenship as members of "We the People," the first words of
15 the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States. It is
16 not only a historic day for you and your families, but it's a
17 day to remember for other reasons.

18 In March of 1965, the Reverend Martin Luther King,
19 Jr. led a civil rights march out of Selma, Alabama. There was
20 discord in our country. But at that time, that event fostered
21 a note of hope by recalling that out of bad situations in our
22 history, the United States has always seemed to find leaders
23 who are willing to confront adversity and inspire action and
24 hope.

25 That leadership is reflected in the words of our

1 first President, George Washington, when he gave his second
2 inaugural address, which was a call to those assembled to
3 recognize the obligation of criticism and dissent that is so
4 critical to democratic citizenship. The reality is that a
5 good citizen is one who doesn't always keep his or her mouth
6 shut.

7 Washington delivered his second inaugural address in
8 the Senate Chamber of Congress Hall in Philadelphia on March 4
9 of 1792. That speech is the shortest inaugural speech given
10 by any United States President. It is only 135 words, and it
11 lasted less than ten minutes. But his address focused on his
12 duties as the President of the United States of America, and
13 he argued that there should be consequences if a President
14 should violate his obligations to the Constitution and to
15 "We the People." In essence, he acknowledged that informed
16 criticism and informed dissent are critical components of
17 democracy.

18 The most recent State of the Union address is the
19 longest in the history of the nation, and, unlike Washington's
20 address, seemed principally to focus on perceived wrongs or
21 failures in our nation coupled with apparent notions of
22 comeuppance for those who might disagree. These two bookends
23 of the presidency are not from the same constitutional
24 library.

25 Now as I've indicated, the United States has always

1 been an aspirational democracy, and though our nation has had
2 some grave mistakes throughout its history, until recent
3 history it has always aspired to some foundational moral
4 commitments: the rule of law, the power of truth, the right
5 of equal opportunity and respect not only for individuals but
6 also for the community and the common good.

7 To me, it now seems that some of these principles
8 are under assault. Michael Sandel, a Harvard professor and
9 philosopher, suggests in some of his writing that a culture of
10 fear and greed has taken hold, potentially leading to the
11 unraveling of our common civic and constitutional project and
12 obligations. To stem that consequence requires active
13 participation in our community affairs: voting, serving on
14 juries when you're summoned, and exercising an informed voice
15 in our communities.

16 A question: Has something changed in our democratic
17 ability for us to react reasonably with ourselves and our
18 nations? Perhaps that question is a prelude to the idea of
19 citizenship in the United States and the tests that have
20 challenged us in our democracy, notably on January 6 of 2021.

21 That day questioned the peaceful constitutional
22 transfer of power in the United States. The last time that
23 happened was in 1860 when Abraham Lincoln was elected
24 President and the Confederate slave states seceded from the
25 Union which led to the War of Rebellion. Even today, some of

1 the vestiges of that conflict invade our existence as a
2 nation, as a nation of laws and equal rights for all citizens
3 regardless of individual ideological perspectives.

4 In my view, if our nation is to continue its
5 constitutional course, we must understand that the rule of law
6 and the norms of social and political conduct have to leave
7 room for reasoned differences based on a fundamental principle
8 that in a pluralistic society such as ours, democracy will not
9 function and we cannot be governed if we are unable to agree
10 to disagree with respect for the views of others.

11 Leadership in our communities, in our state, in our
12 nation, like citizenship, requires something greater than
13 self-promotion and anger about the beliefs or ideas of our
14 neighbors. Leadership and citizenship both require something
15 greater than categorical rejection of our differences. The
16 common good means, as a democracy, we acknowledge the idea
17 that each of us has the right to our own comprehensive
18 political, moral, and religious beliefs, but, in holding those
19 beliefs, we must agree that we can reasonably disagree with
20 those who do not share our individual beliefs.

21 There is an obligation of citizenship, and I believe
22 it is to put our country first over the interests of person or
23 party. And this obligation can be perplexing, but if you
24 think of why you have chosen to become a citizen of the United
25 States of America, I'm sure that this country, with its

1 blessings and obligations, its accomplishments and its
2 problems, is still what President Reagan referred to as the
3 "city upon a hill."

4 There is a simple aphorism, I think, that captures
5 all of the obligations of citizenship that are set forth in
6 becoming and living citizenship in a constitutional democracy,
7 and it is this: We need to place service before self.

8 So on behalf of all of us here, we welcome you as
9 new citizens of the United States of America. And on behalf
10 of the United States of America, please be active and
11 participate in your communities, because the license of
12 citizenship that you have earned is a part of "We the People."
13 So thank you.

14 And I believe, at this point, we are concluded; is
15 that right?

16 THE CLERK: Yes.

17 THE COURT: All right. So let's give another round
18 of applause.

19 (Applause.)

20 THE COURT: And then, Hailey, I think we're gonna
21 get everybody up on the bench and we'll do the class picture.

22 THE CLERK: We can have some behind you and next to
23 you and then right here.

24 THE COURT: So you'll get them lined up and
25 organized?

1 THE CLERK: Yes.

2 THE COURT: All right.

3 And, again, anybody that wants to take pictures is

4 free to come in once we get everybody here.

5 Thank you, again, for becoming citizens, and

6 congratulations.

7 And we will be in recess.

8 (Proceedings were concluded at 11:29:55.)

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, JoAnn Jett Corson, a Registered Diplomat
Reporter and Certified Realtime Reporter, certify that the
foregoing transcript is a true and correct record of the
proceedings given at the time and place hereinbefore
mentioned; that the proceedings were reported by me in machine
shorthand and thereafter reduced to typewriting using
computer-assisted transcription; that after being reduced to
typewriting, a certified copy of this transcript will be filed
electronically with the court.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have set my hand at Missoula,
Montana this 20th day of March, 2025.

/s/ JoAnn Jett Corson

JoAnn Jett Corson
United States Court Reporter