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

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

**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
13:30:46 to 14:07:26

Proceedings recorded by machine shorthand
Transcript produced by computer-assisted transcription

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1 PROCEEDINGS

2 (Open court.)

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

6 THE COURT: So, ladies and gentlemen, good
7 afternoon. And before we are seated, I'm going to ask Post 27
8 to post the colors.

9 (Colors posted.)

10 THE COURT: Please be seated.

11 Good afternoon, everyone.

12 This is a very, very good day for all of you and for
13 all of us because you're joining us to be citizens of the
14 United States of America.

15 The procedure that we're gonna follow is: First,
16 there will be the motion by Mr. Haas on behalf of the
17 government to provide the names of everybody that is going to
18 become a new citizen, and then we'll go through the process of
19 granting the motion. And then there will be an oath that
20 Hailey will administer. And then we'll all say the *Pledge of*
21 *Allegiance*. And then there will be the presentation of your
22 citizenship papers as well as wonderful information provided
23 by the Daughters of the American Revolution.

24 And then I will make an effort to make some
25 comments, hopefully, that will be meaningful to you. They are

1 meaningful to me.

2 And this is a great day, actually, and you may know
3 that it's the very first day of spring. And this morning when
4 we admitted new citizens, it was snowing, so things have
5 brightened up.

6 What I'm going to do now is ask Mr. Haas if he would
7 please name the new citizens in his motion.

8 MR. HAAS: Thank you, Your Honor.

9 On behalf of the Department of Homeland Security and
10 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, I have the honor of
11 presenting to the Court 25 individuals from 13 countries.
12 There is one petition to request a name change before the
13 Court. All 25 individuals have been examined under the
14 relevant sections of the Immigration and Nationality Act, and
15 their applications for naturalization have been approved.
16 They have been found eligible and qualified to be administered
17 the Oath of Allegiance for admission to citizenship.

18 The applicants are:

19 Exxxx Rxxxxxxx Exxxx, Honduras;

20 Axxx Nxxxxxx, Vietnam;

21 Mxxxxxxx Bxxxxxxx, Germany;

22 Lxxxx Wxxx, Nicaragua;

23 Pxxxxxxx Hxxxxxx, Brazil;

24 Mxxxxxx Hxxxxxxx, Germany;

25 Ax Nxx, Vietnam;

1 Wxx Sxxx, Burma;
2 Sxxx Jxx, South Korea;
3 Dxxxxx Mxxxxx, Ireland;
4 Jxxxxxx Kxxxx, Germany;
5 Rxxxx Sxxxx Cxxxxx, Venezuela;
6 Rxxxxxx Sxxxxxxxxxxx, Philippines;
7 Bxxxx Wxxx, Canada;
8 Axxxx Txxxxxx, Germany;
9 Gxxxxx Wxxx, Canada;
10 Cxxxx Pxxxxx, Canada;
11 Axxxxx Mxxxx, Germany;
12 Ixxx Nxxxx, Colombia;
13 Sxxxx Pxxx, Germany;
14 Cxxxxxxxx Mxxxxx, Philippines;
15 Txxx Bxxxxxxxx, United Kingdom;
16 Kxxxxxxxx Dxxxx, Germany;
17 Lxxxxx Pxxxxxx, Philippines; and
18 Exxx Wxxx, Canada.

19 At this time, the government moves that the Oath of
20 Allegiance be administered to the prospective citizens of the
21 United States and that all petitions for a name change be
22 granted.

23 May I approach the bench, Your Honor?

24 THE COURT: You may.

25 MR. HAAS: (Handing.)

1 THE COURT: Thank you.

2 For those of you in the gallery, if you want to take
3 pictures, feel free to take pictures at any time. And when
4 we're complete with this process, then there will be a class
5 picture over on the far wall to my left, and at that time, if
6 you want to take pictures, you can come into the well of the
7 court and take as many pictures as you would like.

8 So I'm going to ask Hailey, the deputy clerk, to
9 please administer the Oath of Allegiance.

10 And all of you who are going to be new citizens,
11 I'll ask you to stand and raise your right hand. And, please,
12 you must say the oath out loud.

13 Hailey.

14 THE CLERK: Thank you.

15 "I do hereby declare, on oath, or hereby affirm that
16 I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance
17 and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or
18 sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject
19 or citizen;

20 "That I will support and defend the Constitution and
21 the laws of the United States of America against all enemies,
22 foreign and domestic;

23 "That I will bear true faith and allegiance to the
24 same;

25 "That I will bear arms on behalf of the United

1 States, when required by the law;

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

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

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

8 "So help me God."

9 (New citizens complied with request.)

10 THE CLERK: Thank you.

11 THE COURT: If you would remain standing, I'll ask
12 those of you in the gallery if you would stand, and we'll have
13 Hailey lead us in the *Pledge of Allegiance*.

14 (*Pledge of Allegiance* recited.)

15 THE COURT: All right. You can be seated.

16 And would you please make the presentation of the
17 certificates of citizenship? Mr. Haas, if you would read the
18 names of those who will become new citizens shortly.

19 MR. HAAS: As I call your name, come across the
20 stage to get your certificate and stand over here to my right.
21 Okay?

22 Exxxx Rxxxxxxx Exxxx;

23 Axxx Nxxxxx.

24 (Pause.)

25 THE COURT: Looks like you're gonna have to come

1 back, Exxxx.

2 THE CLERK: I'm sorry; usually the certificates are

3 in order.

4 (Pause.)

5 THE CLERK: What was your name?

6 MR. NXXXXX: Axxx. That was my name you just

7 passed.

8 (Discussion off the record.)

9 THE COURT: Exxxx, we'll get you one of those. Go

10 ahead and stand over against the wall.

11 MS. EXXXX: (Complied with request.)

12 MR. HAAS: Mxxxxxxx Bxxxxxxx;

13 Lxxxx Wxxx;

14 Pxxxxxxx Hxxxxx;

15 Mxxxxx Hxxxxxxx;

16 Ax Nxx;

17 Wxx Sxxx;

18 Sxxx Jxx;

19 Dxxxxx Mxxxxx;

20 Jxxxxxxx Kxxxx;

21 Rxxxx Sxxxx Cxxxxx;

22 Rxxxxxx Sxxxxxxxxxxx;

23 Bxxxx Wxxx;

24 Axxxx Txxxxxxx;

25 Gxxxxx Wxxx;

1 Cxxxx Pxxxx;
2 Axxxx Mxxxx;
3 Ixxx Nxxxx;
4 Sxxxx Pxxx;
5 Cxxxxxxx Mxxxxx;
6 Txxx Bxxxxxxxx;
7 Kxxxxxxxx Dxxxx;
8 Lxxxxx Pxxxxxx; and
9 Exxx Wxxx.
10 THE COURT: Did we find Exxxx's certificate?
11 MR. HAAS: Let me take a look.
12 THE CLERK: I'm going to get a picture of you guys.
13 THE COURT: So, Exxxx, I've signed the order, so you
14 are a citizen, and we'll get you that certificate.
15 (Applause.)
16 THE COURT: If anybody wants to take pictures of the
17 class, feel free to come into the well of the court and take
18 as many pictures as you would like.
19 (Discussion off the record.)
20 THE COURT: So if we're all done taking pictures of
21 this class, at the conclusion of the proceedings we'll have
22 all of the new citizens come up on the bench, and there will
23 be another picture and an opportunity to take pictures. And
24 then I'll stick around if anybody wants to get a picture with
25 me.

1 So if all of you would have a seat back where you
2 were seated?

3 (New citizens complied with request.)

4 (Sound of baby crying.)

5 THE COURT: This is like being in church.

6 So it's my opportunity now to make a few remarks,
7 and I promise they won't be longer than ten minutes, I think.

8 But what you've undertaken today is really
9 important. It's important to you and to your families, but
10 it's also important to the rest of us that live in this
11 country, and so my remarks are intended to reflect a bit on
12 what it means to be a citizen in the United States of America.

13 So as I think about this, it is always a pleasure
14 and an opportunity to participate in the naturalization
15 ceremonies. I've been on the bench now 29 years, and it is
16 remarkable. Every time I listen to the oath that each of you
17 has taken, I think to myself: How many people, if I went out
18 on the street and asked them to take that oath, would do so?
19 It is a solemn obligation, and I think it really reflects our
20 obligation to the Constitution that all of us live under.

21 And so I want to reflect on citizenship, and that
22 reflection should become part of our daily lives, because
23 citizenship is not a spectator sport. For one thing,
24 citizenship is apt to be more appreciated by those of you who
25 earn it than by those of us who were born to it.

1 So the question is: What is citizenship? And in my
2 mind, it is a condition of owing allegiance to the
3 Constitution of the United States, allegiance not to a person
4 and not to a party, and it is also involved in being a
5 participant in democracy, and that requires involvement in
6 local, state, and national communities.

7 One of our early Presidents, Teddy Roosevelt, was
8 once asked about citizenship, and his observation was: The
9 first requisite of a good citizen in this republic of ours is
10 that he or she shall be able and willing to pull his or her
11 weight.

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

14 All of you have either studied or read parts or all
15 of our Constitution, and one need only to turn on the
16 television, get on a computer, or pick up a newspaper or
17 magazine and realize that the popular press frequently pushes
18 one view or another of important social and political issues
19 and solutions. But rarely does the press invoke the idea of
20 good citizenship outside of contemporary political hot
21 potatoes.

22 So all of us are inundated with slogans and internet
23 attacks. They're oftentimes painful to the listener as well
24 as the bystander. There are some in our democracy who seem
25 willing to cast aside the norms and values that have made our

1 nation great and have made it a magnet for those seeking
2 freedom wrapped in liberty's protections.

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

10 Today, as I mentioned earlier, is the first day of
11 spring, the first day of your citizenship, and the first day
12 of your participation in "We the People," the first words of
13 the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States. It is
14 not only a historic day for you and your families but it is a
15 day to remember for many other reasons.

16 In March of 1965, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther
17 King led a civil rights march out of Selma, Alabama. At the
18 time, that event fostered a note of hope by recalling that out
19 of bad situations in our history, the United States has always
20 seemed to find leaders who are willing to confront adversity
21 and inspire action and hope. That kind of leadership is
22 reflected in President George Washington's second inaugural
23 address, which was a call to all of those assembled to
24 recognize the obligation of citizens to participate and to
25 acknowledge that criticism and dissent are critical to

1 democratic citizenship. The reality is that a good citizen is
2 one that does not keep his or her mouth shut.

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

14 Now the most recent State of the Union address is
15 the longest in the history of the nation. And unlike
16 Washington's address, it seemed principally to focus on
17 perceived wrongs or failures in our nation, coupled with
18 apparent notions of comeuppance for those who might disagree.
19 These two bookends of the presidency are not from the same
20 constitutional library.

21 The United States has always been an aspirational
22 democracy, and though our nation has made some grave mistakes
23 throughout its history, until recent history it has always
24 aspired to some foundational moral commitments: the rule of
25 law, the power of truth, the right of equal opportunity, and

1 respect for not only individuals but also for our communities
2 and the common good.

3 It now seems that there are some of these principles
4 that are under assault. In reflecting on the talk that I
5 intended to give, it came to my attention, because of some of
6 the reading that I do, Madison's Federalist No. 10, which was
7 written before the Constitution was actually adopted. And in
8 Federalist No. 10, it's almost as if Madison had a crystal
9 ball, because it constructs the problem of factions and how a
10 large republic framed by the Constitution can better give a
11 cure for these factions. And for Madison, the factions meant
12 groups of people who are united in the same beliefs,
13 interests, and passions, but, to pursue these common goals,
14 they disregard the rights of other citizens, especially
15 minorities. Madison affirmed that factions, particularly when
16 assembled together in a majority, have been a continuous
17 problem for popular government. And by "popular government,"
18 he was referencing the Preamble to the Constitution of the
19 United States, "We the People."

20 Michael Sandel is a Harvard philosopher and
21 professor, and, in his writing, he suggests that a culture of
22 fear and greed has taken hold, potentially leading to the
23 unraveling of our common civic and constitutional project. To
24 stem that consequence requires active participation in our
25 community affairs. It means voting, it means serving on

1 juries when you are summoned, and it means exercising an
2 informed voice.

3 I've asked myself: Has something changed in our
4 democratic ability to interact reasonably among ourselves and
5 with other nations? Perhaps that question is a prelude to the
6 idea of citizenship in the United States and the tests that
7 have challenged us and our democracy, particularly the events
8 of January 6 of 2021.

9 That day questioned the peaceful constitutional
10 transfer of power in the United States. The last time that
11 happened was in 1860 when Abraham Lincoln was elected
12 President and the Confederate slave states seceded from the
13 Union, which led to the War of Rebellion. Even today, some of
14 the vestiges of that conflict invade our existence as a nation
15 of laws and equal rights for all citizens regardless of
16 individual ideological perspectives.

17 If our nation is to continue its constitutional
18 course, we must understand that the rule of law and the norms
19 of social and political conduct have to leave room for
20 reasoned differences based on the fundamental principle that
21 in a pluralistic society such as ours, democracy will not
22 function and we cannot be governed if we are unable to agree
23 to disagree with respect for the views of others.

24 Leadership in our communities, our state, our
25 nation, like citizenship, requires something greater than

1 self-promotion and anger about the beliefs or ideas of our
2 neighbors. Leadership and citizenship both require something
3 greater than the categorical rejection of our differences.
4 The common good means, as a democracy, we acknowledge the idea
5 that each of us has the right to our own comprehensive
6 political, moral, and religious beliefs, but in holding those
7 beliefs, we must agree that we can reasonably disagree about
8 those who do not share our individual beliefs.

9 There is an obligation of citizenship to put our
10 country first over the interests of any person or party. The
11 obligation can be perplexing, but if you think about why you
12 have chosen to become a citizen of the United States of
13 America, I am sure that this country, and its blessings and
14 obligations, its accomplishments and its problems, is still
15 what President Ronald Reagan referred to as the "city upon a
16 hill."

17 There is a simple aphorism that captures the
18 obligations of citizenship that are set forth both in becoming
19 and in living citizenship in a constitutional democracy, and
20 that aphorism is this: We all need to place service before
21 self.

22 So on behalf of those of us here, we welcome you as
23 citizens. And on behalf of the United States of America,
24 please be active and participate in the license of citizenship
25 that you have earned as part of "We the People."

1 So thank you, again, for choosing to become
2 citizens.

3 And I think we should give the citizens, the new
4 citizens, one more round of applause, and then we will retire
5 the colors.

6 (Applause.)

7 THE COURT: So if we would all stand, I'm going to
8 ask the color guard to retire the colors.

9 (Colors retired.)

10 THE COURT: I'd like to personally thank the
11 Daughters of the American Revolution who are always
12 significant contributors to the naturalization ceremonies.

13 Mr. Haas, I want to thank you. You didn't mess up
14 anybody's name. Fifty names that you read. So thank you very
15 much.

16 And I thank the color guard.

17 And with that, what we'll do is all of the new
18 citizens are gonna come up on the bench and in front here, and
19 we'll get a class picture.

20 Those of you who want to come into the well to take
21 pictures, you're welcome to do that. And when we're done with
22 the class picture, then I will remain up here if anybody wants
23 to get a picture with an old balding judge.

24 Thank you, all. Let's give one more round of
25 applause, and then we'll be in recess.

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(Applause.)

THE COURT: We'll be in recess.

(Proceedings were concluded at 14:07:26.)

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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