

The following remarks were made by Judge Stephen L. Crocker at the US District Court, Western District of Wisconsin, during a naturalization ceremony in Madison, Wisconsin, on October 9, 2008. Judge Crocker graciously agreed to the publication of his comments on this website.

We are posting the remarks because they so aptly capture the dynamics of an open society of immigrants and emphasize the contributions made by each new citizen to the greater good and well-being of this country. Naturalization shifts what used to be international to the multi-cultural and demonstrates the very fine line between international and multi-cultural education.

Fifty-nine applicants for naturalization from twenty-nine countries were sworn in by Judge Crocker during the ceremony on October 9.

Naturalization Ceremony: Judge's Remarks.

I am honored to be the first to welcome you as the newest citizens of the United States. Your naturalization ceremony during these turbulent times is a welcome affirmation of what is right, good and true about America: nowhere else on earth is there greater opportunity for political and religious freedom, for individual expression, and for economic and personal growth and achievement than in the United States. Your act of joining us as fellow citizens proves this more clearly than the words of the politicians or the press.

But as you certainly understand, becoming an American citizen does not require you to surrender your affection or concern for your native land or your friends and family there. On the contrary, these bonds of affection and concern must be encouraged and strengthened because they bind you, and us, to the rest of the world and remind us that the human family reaches to all corners of the earth.

This is important to remember, because many Americans do not appreciate how interconnected this country is to the rest of the world. As new citizens who have come from all over the world you must help us understand this, and help America find just and honorable solutions to the national and the international challenges that we face.

For we are all in this together, as one nation of many different people with many different backgrounds. By working together, by drawing upon each citizen's skills, background and perspective, we can, and will, honorably resolve our domestic and foreign problems while maintaining and promoting the traditions of justice, freedom, and decency that make the United States a great nation.

So, although there certainly are benefits bestowed upon you by becoming citizens of this country, just as certainly you bestow benefits upon those of us who are citizens already. You bring us your energy, knowledge and experience, which are gifts to the United States and resources to be tapped in meeting the challenges that face us all, both domestically and abroad.

Sometimes, those of us who were born in this country forget or take for granted how lucky we are to be citizens of this country. A ceremony like this one serves as a timely reminder that citizenship in this country is a wonderful privilege. Accordingly, we thank you for the tribute you pay us in joining your lives with ours, and for the contribution your presence makes to our society.

Once again, thank you, and congratulations.