



New Americans in a New America

Remarks By Albert S. Dandridge III

Former Chancellor welcomes people from 23 countries at a Naturalization Ceremony sponsored by the Philadelphia Bar Association at Temple University on Feb. 1, 2017.

Judge Sanchez, members of the Bar, officers of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, new citizens, family members and guests. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you and congratulate you on this very beautiful and happy occasion on behalf of the 12,000 members of the Philadelphia Bar Association.

The opportunity to share in and be part of these naturalization ceremonies is one of the proudest and most pleasant duties that any Bar leader can have. This is, I believe, the fourth ceremony where I have spoken.

However, I feel compelled to say something today that I have not done before at these ceremonies. I AM SORRY. I am sorry for the confusion, fear and absurdities that have taken place over the past several days.

We are all immigrants to this nation. Some of us came in the dark galley of slave ships, some on the crowded decks of steamboats and some by Boeing 747s, but we all came from somewhere. Even the Native Americans more than likely trekked across the ice of the Northern Pacific to get here many thousands of years ago.

As you know, as much as I do, America is both a land and an idea. While there are those who wish to deface the Southwestern border of our land, we cannot allow anyone to deface the idea of what America stands for.

Our Declaration of Independence, which was written here in Philadelphia, and captures the idea, states: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." That is America.

I recall what Dr. King said in his famous speech quoting the

words of that beautiful song "my country tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing."

As you also know, our country is ruled by laws, not any one man. Here recently some residents of our country have been marginalized. However, the purpose of the rule of law is to protect those of us who are being marginalized. It is the job of our judiciary, like Judge Sanchez, to enforce the rule of law to protect the vulnerable. This was so wonderfully demonstrated in New York, Boston, here in Philadelphia and elsewhere all over our country this past weekend.

We as attorneys, and as officers of the court, also have an obligation to uphold the rule of law. I cannot be more proud of my brothers and sisters at the Bar who have taken up the mantra to protect our laws.

Even though I am saddened, I am also very hopeful. I am confident that our judiciary and our attorneys will do all that they can to uphold the rule of law.

So, my fellow citizens, welcome. Please do not be fearful. Our democracy has many components. Please be confident that some of them still function. ■

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