

A great way to celebrate Flag Day

Today I watched 40 people from 31 countries become citizens of the United States. The 45-minute event was held at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore, a fitting site for such a historic moment. Among the state's newest citizens was Nicolas Lombo – you can read more about his story [here](#).

Of the several moving moments during the ceremony, the one that caught my eye was when the candidates – not yet citizens because they had yet to take the Oath of Allegiance – unfurled a replica of a flag that hung at Fort McHenry from the War of 1812. They covered their hearts with their right hand, and held out the flag with their left, as the soprano soloist sang the national anthem. They weren't just looking at the flag, they were displaying it, and for the duration of the song, it was literally the fabric that connected them.

There is something singularly fantastic about our country – that after the Oath, no one in that room, born here or not, was “more” or “less” American than anyone else. Ours is a country that welcomes the immigrant and cherishes the culture they bring with them. We're among the heartiest celebrators of St. Patrick's Day and Cinco de Mayo. My husband's family has proud Danish roots, and our wedding cake was the traditional kransekage.

My grandmother immigrated to the United States from the Netherlands when she was 16, after World War II ended, and I imagined what the Oath of Allegiance I heard recited today must have sounded as she said it, her words heavy with a Dutch accent.

It was a privilege to be there today, witnessing an important event I'm guessing very few American-born citizens ever make a point to see. My colleague Tom McCarthy took some great photos. Check them out [here](#).