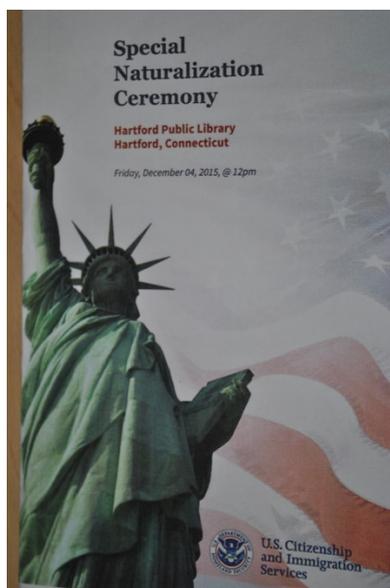


## Hartford Public Library hosts Special Naturalization Ceremony!

**Judy Wyman Kelly**

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Thirty-four immigrants from 18 countries - Brazil, Burma, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ghana, Haiti, India, Jamaica, Liberia, Nepal, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Somalia, and United Kingdom - became U.S. citizens on Friday, December 4 during a special citizenship ceremony held at Hartford Public Library. With Federal Judge Donna F. Martinez presiding, these new citizens took the Oath of Allegiance, recited the Pledge, and received naturalization certificates in the library's inviting and expansive Center for Contemporary Culture, to the cheers and applause of family and friends.



Event program

While most Connecticut citizenship ceremonies are held in federal courtrooms in Hartford, New Haven, or Bridgeport, occasionally a naturalization ceremony is held in a non-courtroom venue to highlight a significant Connecticut landmark or special connection new citizens hold to a particular place. In this case, HPL is distinctive for its role as a virtual second

home to 16 of these new citizens, all of whom benefitted from library services of English language and citizenship classes, application support, or intensive tutoring in preparation for the citizenship interview.



New U.S. citizens and HPL American Place staff celebrate citizenship!



USCIS officer Camille Fisher, Judge Donna Martinez, new citizen Dahabo Osman, Hartford Mayor Pedro Segarra, and HPL CEO Matt Poland

The event was opened by Master of Ceremonies and USCIS Section Chief, Ethan Enzer, who took the opportunity to thank HPL retiring Chief Executive Officer, Matthew Poland, for his unflagging support of immigrant programming at the library. Praising the long partnership

between USCIS and the library, Enzer presented Poland with a commemorative plaque and referred to HPL's The American Place as a "shining example of a resource center that merged education with legal resources," while noting that the ceremony felt comfortably like a "family event."



Left to right, Lieutenant Governor of Connecticut, Nancy Wyman; Connecticut Secretary of State, Denise Merrill; Hartford Mayor Pedro Segarra; HPL CEO Matt Poland; USCIS officer Camille Fisher; US Deputy Clerk Robert Wood; and USCIS Section Chief Ethan Enzer

In welcoming the new citizens, Poland urged them to enjoy their rights while at the same time taking responsibility to protect their freedoms. Poland also emphasized his "deep belief in the important work libraries do to help people become citizens" and described the ceremony as a "giant and solemn act."

After recently naturalized citizen Janay Hassan led the Pledge of Allegiance, the invited speakers spoke of their shared history as immigrants. Martinez, Secretary of State Denise Merrill, and Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman told of grandparents who came to the U.S. from Europe with no money and little education. Martinez applauded and American educational system which afforded her 22 years in public schools and Merrill noted that her

grandmother was able to become a very successful entrepreneur, despite starting out with only 17 cents in her pocket.



Judge Donna Martinez (center) and recent U.S. citizen Janay Hassan (right) after leading the Pledge of Allegiance



New citizens taking the Oath of Allegiance

The citizenship ceremony was also enriched by the participation of local Hartford youth.

The Presentation of Colors was conducted by the Jumoke Academy of Boy Scouts—CURET

Troop 1443 and the Batchelder Elementary School choir sang My Country Tis of Thee, with young soloists Carrion and Rivera performing the National Anthem.



CURET Troop 1443



Batchelder Elementary School

There was no shortage of both praise and advice for the new citizens. Wyman thanked them for picking this state, calling it a “wonderful day for you and even better day for Connecticut and our country.” Merrill mentioned the “most treasured” right to vote, urging them to register right away, and adding that “we hope you will consider us your family and the State Capital your building.” “You enrich our country,” Martinez told them, “your presence here today is an honor to the U.S. and to all Americans. And Hartford Mayor Pedro Segarra exclaimed, “The moment you have all been waiting for has arrived! After so many years of effort, devotion, and struggle, you have now achieved citizenship!”

After the ceremony concluded, participants enjoyed a warm reception and live music by Eduardo Rocha, Mariachi band leader and former HPL Citizenship student!

