



VILLANOVA
UNIVERSITY

Charles Widger School of Law

Dean Mark C. Alexander
Naturalization Ceremony Remarks
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I am honored to be among the first to address you as a fellow American citizen.

I have a profound love of our nation and was so moved when Judge Kearney invited me to be a part of this joyous occasion. Thank you, Judge Kearney.

For so many of you, this momentous day is the culmination of a years-long journey. You made the bold decision to leave the country of your birth to pursue a better life here in the United States of America.

Ours is a nation of immigrants, and our strength comes from people all over the world, coming together in one country under one flag. My own grandfather made the same decision as you have when he came from Jamaica almost 100 years ago—and it will shape your family for generations to come.

I am here to celebrate this day with you, your friends and families. To celebrate your first day as an American. For a few minutes, I would like to talk about one of my favorite subjects—the Constitution of the United States.

Each of you has had your own experience with our founding document—the charter of our national existence—as you worked toward citizenship.

For me, the Constitution is not only bedrock of American society, it has been the focus of my academic career.

I am not only Dean, but for 20+ years I have been a constitutional law professor. I have taught and debated with countless aspiring lawyers and other professors about the finer points of our nation's founding document.

As with most Con Law professors, I have a favorite part of the Constitution. Mine comes right in the Preamble—the introduction to the Constitution. It reads:

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union....

For me, that last phrase — **to form a more perfect union** — captures the essence of the American spirit.

It is a hopeful phrase, full of possibility for the nation we would become. Yet it is also one that challenges us, continually pushes us to strive for an even greater society.

It is so remarkable that our Founding Fathers embedded in our Constitution the importance of our people working together. It is a simple, yet profound concept.

In divisive times like these, we must not lose sight of this call to action. We the people—the average citizens—have an obligation to work together to better our nation. Yes, our nation. Mine, and now, **yours**.

We must engage in productive, substantive debates. We must acknowledge our differences, but also our common ground and common goals. We must face the imperfections of our nation and find ways to affect meaningful change together. It is the only way for our nation to move forward.

And from this day on, you have an obligation to join your fellow Americans as we work toward that more perfect union.

While that may sound daunting, know that there are many ways you can contribute.

You can engage with your local community government. Volunteer with civic organizations. Vote in elections. One day you may even decide to run for elected office.

And it is my commitment to contribute as a fellow citizen and as a law school dean.

As Dean of Villanova Law, I have the great responsibility of educating the next generation of lawyers.

Lawyers play an important role in our society, dedicating their careers to the service of others. They help individuals and organizations navigate the complexities of our legal system.

Yet I tell my students that it is not enough for them ***just*** to be exceptional lawyers. Now more than ever, they need to serve as examples for their fellow citizens.

They must be among the problem solvers who help bridge the gap in a divided nation. They must help lead constructive conversations about the laws of our nation. And they must continue to protect our liberties and fight injustice.

That is a place where lawyers can lead, and where all of us can grow and contribute.

Today we live in times of turmoil and disruption. It is the American struggle to **form a more perfect Union**. Yes, these are challenging times, but you are up to the challenge. You are American citizens, and you will contribute. I hope that you begin your new life as American citizens filled with hope and with the knowledge that your experience as an immigrant is essential to the fabric of our nation.

Individuals like you have enriched this country through hard work, perseverance and talent. There are no limits to what you can achieve.

Congratulations, and welcome to the United States!