



**Naturalization Ceremony
National Monument, Fruita CO
October 2015**

Thank you, Judge Gallagher.

I am so happy to celebrate with you all here today on behalf of Welcoming Colorado. We are an integration initiative that has been in the Grand Valley for over a decade now. We partner with other groups to work on creating more welcoming communities. We are proud of the strides we have made in working with law enforcement, the school district, health clinics, and other institutions.

This week, all around the country, groups like ours are celebrating National Welcoming Week. There are over 200 events in 33 states to honor immigrant contributions, build bridges among diverse local residents, and spur local policy on inclusion. This is a crucial moment to honor the rich contributions of immigrants to this country, as the US and Europe debate migration.

The White House's Office for New Americans says this about integration work:

“The Obama Administration is guided by the core principle that being American is about more than what we look like or where we come from. What makes us Americans is our shared commitment to an ideal — that all of us are created equal, and all of us have the chance to make of our lives what we will. By bringing immigrants, refugees, and receiving communities together around integration strategies, we create communities with a welcoming culture and strengthen our ability to ensure that all community members have the tools and opportunities to succeed and fully contribute to our nation.”

I attended a ceremony like this 4 years ago when my husband Carlos became a U.S. citizen. It was a day filled with mixed emotions for him; he had only planned to stay in the U.S. for two years, and before he knew it, 10 had gone by. He still cheers for Mexico in the World Cup, and we keep plenty of salsa on hand at home.

But my tears that day were of joy, because I could finally rest assured that our family could be together in this community, in this great nation as long as we want. I have watched him grow and pursue new opportunities since becoming a citizen, completing an Associate's Degree at CMU, improving his English, and building his business.

For us, the road toward integration has been long, and has brought with it many challenges and blessings. Those of you who are married to someone with a different background or culture understand what I mean....

This country of immigrants was founded on the idea that newcomers bring new ideas, new energy and new commitment to success. We want to thank you all for your willingness to become American, to work hard, to vote, and to fully belong to this country. We invite you to register to vote right after this ceremony, so that you, too, can help choose the people who shape the future of this country.

Because it is Hispanic Heritage Month, I would like to close with a quote from Cesar Chavez, the great leader of the Farmworker movement in this country.

"We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community...Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own."

Congratulations on this amazing achievement on your path of integration into the idea that is the United States of America.

Nicole Bernal Ruiz
Immigration Legal Assistance Program Director
Hispanic Affairs Project, HAP.

Speech during the Naturalization ceremony in National Monument 2015

“The dynamism of any diverse community depends not only on the diversity itself but on promoting a sense of belonging among those who formerly would have been considered and felt themselves outsiders.”

– **Sonia Sotomayor**

