



December 10, 2003

Naturalized Soldiers Looking Forward to New Opportunities in U.S.

The Chicago office of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) held a special naturalization ceremony on Tuesday, December 9, 2003, in the beautiful Crystal Ballroom of the Hyatt Regency Hotel, nestled in the heart of Chicago's hotel and shopping district. Ninety-one new citizens representing 38 countries from around the world celebrated this joyous event. The evening was sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the United Neighborhood Organization (UNO) - two community organizations that, for many years, have been assisting immigrants in adjusting to the American way of life.

Among the new citizens who took part in this ceremony were six individuals who are currently enlisted in the U.S. military. All six arrived at the Hyatt Regency for the naturalization ceremony proudly dressed in uniform, two of them representing the U.S. Marines, and the rest the U.S. Navy. The Honorable Ruben Castillo, U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois, who presided over the ceremony, recognized the service members during his address and spoke of how proud he was of their service to this country.

Petty Officer Kingsley Amazu of the U.S. Navy graciously accepted the request to lead his new fellow citizens in the Pledge of Allegiance. "Please put your right hand on your chest," Amazu asked the audience as he stood on stage before a crowd of approximately 430 people. The crowd followed Amazu as he recited the Pledge of Allegiance to his newly adopted country.

Amazu, a native of Ghana, arrived in the U.S. in 1998. "I want to be an officer in the military - I want to vote," he explained. "There are so many opportunities - it's been great...I can't wait to have my passport in hand and pursue my goals in the military." Amazu joined the Navy in April of 1999 and is stationed at the Great Lakes Naval Base as a dental technician. His brother is in the army, who, according to Amazu, was one of the main motivators for him becoming a citizen. "I arrived before him to this country and he became a citizen first."

The other new citizens who attended this ceremony, who are also stationed at the Great Lakes Naval Base, included Hernando Alipio Hernandez Alvarez from Colombia; Erik Jay Salazar de Leon, from the Philippines; and Maria Elliza Acena Howard - the only woman in the group - also from the Philippines. Howard has been in the Navy for a little over two years, and, with a smile from ear to ear, claimed that she was "proud to be an American citizen."

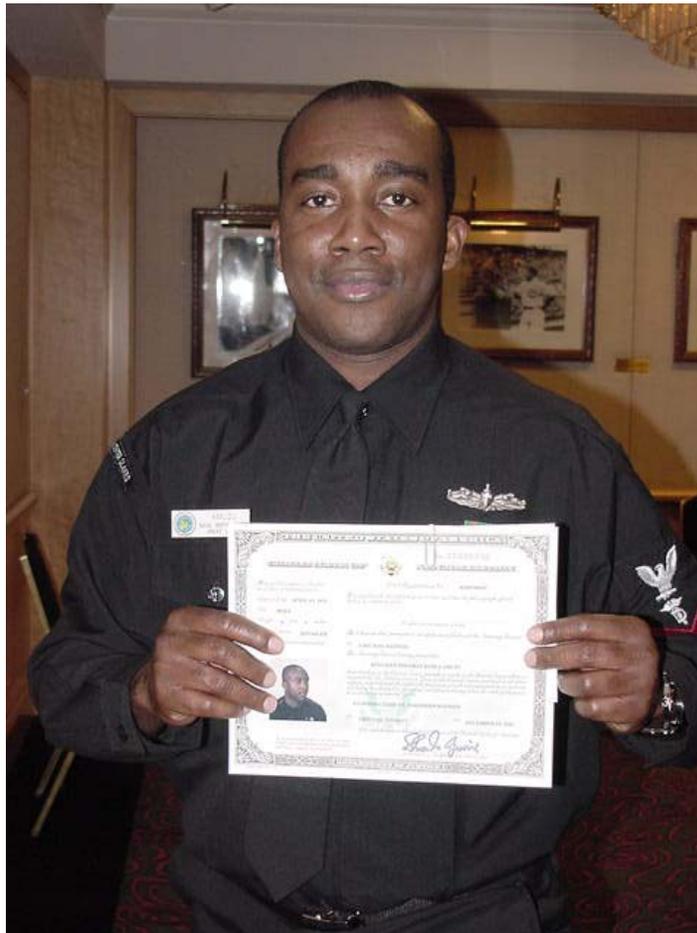
Also clad in full uniform was Peter Jurczyk, who was accompanied by his parents to the evening's celebration. Jurczyk has been a U.S. Marine for approximately five years, and arrived from Poland with his family at a young age. Now 23, Jurczyk exclaimed, "I'm happy that I can now vote and take part in the country that I've been serving and living in for so many years."

The largest representation of new citizens for this ceremony came from Mexico with 14 people, followed by Guatemala with 10, China had eight new citizens, and Poland seven. Many family and

friends joined the new citizens in celebrating this wonderful occasion, and many smiling faces left the Crystal Ballroom that evening, Naturalization certificates in hand.



Among those soldiers naturalized, from left to right, are Hernando Alipio Hernandez Alvarez, Maria Elliza Acena Howard, Erik Jay Salazar de Leon, and Kingsley Amazu.



Newly naturalized citizen, Kingsley Amazu with his certificate.