



Each Independence Day, I like to reflect on one of the best days of my life: the day I became an American. Growing up in a developing country, the liberties afforded to people in the United States were a distant dream to me. Thanks to the immense sacrifices my parents made to provide a better life for our family, I stood among hundreds of other hopeful hearts at the long-awaited naturalization ceremony in March 2015. Although each person in attendance at the convention center that day had his or her own unique journey to citizenship up until then, on that most special day we all shared one thing—American freedoms came within reach and became a part of our stories, redefining our lives. I will never forget that day.

On this Fourth of July, amidst the barbecues, fireworks, family time, and other ways we celebrate, I invite you to reflect upon what all new citizens are reminded of while taking their oath—that being an American is a blessing not to be taken for granted. When we do this collectively, our country is revitalized and invigorated. After a difficult year of solitude and division, let us unite to fully celebrate this great nation.

*“Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.” (1 Peter 2:16)*

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