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Celebrating Citizenship!

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September 17 is **Citizenship Day in the United States. Citizens are official members of a nation. Citizens enjoy special rights, and they have special duties, too. See why citizenship is special every day*.***

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The Co**nstitution** of the United States protects everyone A constitution is a set of

in America. It allows freedom of speech and freedom of **rules and laws that tell**

religion. It protects people from unlawful actions. The **how a government is organized and run.**

Constitution safeguards other rights, too.

Yet only citizens enjoy certain rights. Citizens of age 18 and older can vote. Voting lets citizens decide who will run the government. In some states, citizens can vote to make or change laws, too. Only citizens can hold political office.

"United States citizens have so much power," says 22-year-old Yelena Havryliuk. Before coming to *A*merica, she lived in Russia and the Ukraine. When Americans speak out and vote, says Yelena, "it feels like the govern

ment cares and your voice is heard."

Citizenship lets adults sit on juries. Juries decide issues of fact in court cases. Citizens also can get a United States passport. They get protection and any necessary help while traveling to other

countries. *THE*SE ARE YOUR RIGHTS

. Certain jobs go only to citizens. Born. .:: guaranteed by the Con*st*itution of the United States

in Great Britain, Sophie Cayless became a

A*mend*ment 1.

U.S. citizen at age 23. Only then was she able to join the U.S. National Park Service. "I felt proud to be a park ranger in some of the most beautiful areas on Earth!"

says Sophie. “My citizenship gave me the **t*tttt\****

opportunity to have that connection with America's founders signed the

the land and to inspire others to love and Constitution on September 17, 1787. care for it, too."

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Dana Schuerholz

*Con*gress s*h****all* make no law respect*ing* an e*s*t*ablishm*ent** of re*ligion, o****r prohibi*ting th*e tree cxerci*se *thercol;* or** Shrid*g*i*ng the free****dom of sp*eech, or *of the p*ress**; or the righi

eople p***e*aceab*ly* lo assemble, and *t*o** petiti*on* the So*ycr*ime*nt f*o*r a* **redress o*f griev*ances**

*of the people pea*ce*abl*y l*o*

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Along with rights, citizenship also brings responsibilities. Citizens owe allegiance, or loyalty, to the United States. That's a promise you make whenever you say the Pledge of Allegiance.

Citizens must support and defend the Constitution of the United States and obey laws. They must respect other people's rights. Citizens must defend America, too. Sometimes this means that they must serve in the military.

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Most Americans become citizens

automatically. They are born in the United States*. Jus soli,* or right-of birthplace citizenship, also goes to people who are born in Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Certain people born abroad enjoy *jus sanguinis,* or right-of-blood citizenship. Generally, at least one parent must be a

citizen who has lived in America.

Other people come to America as

**Coming to America immigrants**. Many become naturalized

more than 100 years ago citizens. "America has many good things to offer," notes Nelly Vileikis. Nelly came from Columbia in South America. Abbas Lamouri, her husband, came here from Algeria in Africa.

Yelena Havryliuk explains why she became a citizen. “This country gave me so many opportunities," says Yelena. “I want to give something back. I would be proud to be a United States citizen."

Applicants for citizenship must live in the United States for a set time-usually five years. Applicants must read,

**abroad:** write, and speak basic English. They must also understand

**in a foreign country** U.S. history and government.

**immigrant:** Applicants must show "good moral character."

**a person who settles** Fingerprinting and an FBI background check are part of

**somewhere after coming** the process. The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization

from another country Service (INS) interviews people, too.

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**ARASWASAMICO**

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Most important, applicants must accept the Constitution. Plus, notes Yelena, “You have to like this country and like living and serving people here."

New naturalized citizens take an oath of allegiance. Sophie, Abbas, and Nelly all felt “very proud" at that moment.

Be Proud No matter how anyone becomes a citizen, all citizens are equal. All are important. "With the rainbow of nationalities in the United States, *w*e can appreciate everyone's culture," explains Ernestine Fobbs at the INS. "That's what we are about."

"Always take advan tage of opportunities that we have as United

**Hundreds of** States citizens," urges

**thousands** Ernestine. "Never take

**of people** it for granted.”

**become**

**naturalized** “Love your country,”

**citizens** adds Nelly. “Be proud to

**each year.** be an American."

Jim West

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Applying for citizenship

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Jim West

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**\* *\** \* *\** \* *\* \**** Taking the oath of citizenship

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