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Ceremony adds 147 proud Americans

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Posted: Monday, February 18, 2013 11:45 am | Updated: 3:28 pm, Mon Feb 18, 2013.

By TINA GAMEZ, DAILY NEWS-SUN |

They came from 51 countries, 147 people prepared to swear allegiance to the United States.

A naturalization ceremony took place at Estrella Mountain Community College Saturday and two Glendale residents — Beatriz Anguiano and Hussein Mohamed — were among those who became Americans.

Anguiano, who was born in Mexico and has been here 20 years, said the process to become a citizen was easy. She had been waiting five months after submitting her application.

“Very happy,” she said. “I am the only one who wasn’t a citizen. My husband, my siblings, are all citizens, and my children were born here.”

Hussein and his brother, Ahmed, were born in Somalia and fled to Kenya as children when war broke out in Somalia.

Hussein, 18, a senior at Independence High School and in the Navy JROTC program, wore his uniform and shared his story with the audience. “In this uniform, I represent the United States Navy in JROTC.”

He plans to attend Arizona State University then join the Army. He wants to become a helicopter pilot.

“My goal is to become an Army officer.”

“I came to America about 16 years ago and left Kenya when I was two and a half years old. And I love being an adult, but I especially love more being an American. I can now finally apply for that scholarship I always wanted to apply for at Arizona State University.”

After the ceremony, he said: “I feel great. I’m an American now, and I’ve always been feeling I’ve been an American for the longest time and now I make it official, on paper. I’m really happy.”

Also a student at WESTMEC in the aviation program, he has four months before he graduates with his Airframe and Power Plant certification. “I can work on any type of aircraft.”

Ahmed became a citizen in 2010 and their father, Abdulkadir Mohamed, is planning to get his citizenship in 2014.

John Ramirez, the field director for the United States Citizenship Immigration Services also spoke at the ceremony. "I am in a very fortunate position because I am the first to honor you as my fellow Americans."

Keynote speaker Rodrigo Villanueva, 49, and a student at Estrella and ASU, came to the U.S. as an infant from Mexico and became a citizen in 2011. He attended Arizona Western College in 1981.

"One of the great things with the United States of American is that I actually have had opportunities to find a different way and a new way to continue to start over. And it is one of the great characteristics of being an American. We get to try again, over and over. We get to start and restart and if it doesn't work, we always have an opportunity to try something else," he said.

Villanueva, who has a Class A heavy engineer's license is now an honors student at the college and wants to eventually earn a doctorate and contribute more to the community.

"The Last nine years, I've been a volunteer at the Maricopa County Jails, and I've been working with inmates who have a lot of challenges and (I) look at things from a different perspective," he said.

During his speech, Villanueva said, "It has been for many a dream to come to this country and be treated with respect and dignity, to have a chance for a better way, a better life.

"Many have come before us and have paved the way so we can have this day. We come from near and some from far, all for the same reason, and that is to be counted, to be part of something special," he said. "One people, one nation, one belief ... that all are created equal, no matter where we come from."

Villanueva added, "We are a land of immigrants; we are the United States."

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