

Moving Forward in Difficult Times

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We hope that the New Year is off to a great start for you. Our country continues to go through a period of political upheaval with the transition to a new president. Donald Trump has been sworn in as president. We continue to monitor news about possible changes in immigration law and policies. Stay tuned for further information.

This is a very challenging time for our country. We have seen a lot of rhetoric and acts of hatred, anger and discrimination leading up to and following the election. At times like these, it is important to remember the qualities and ideals that bring us together. In this spirit, we are we'd like to share excerpts from an address that Judge Sarah Barker of Indiana gave at a swearing-in ceremony for new citizens after the election in November 2016. We hope you'll take a moment to read it.



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Note that this address is directed toward new citizens; however, we think the ideas and ideals it expresses are important for everyone in the U.S. – citizens and immigrants with and without legal status

Speech by Judge Sarah Barker

The first thing I want to say is this: despite the recent barbed remarks, ours is still a country that values diversity. We still hold dear the values of tolerance, brotherhood, equality, goodwill, fairness and the rule of law. Most Americans are people of decency and respect; most are people who hold fast to our best traditions while looking forward with hope to a better future for ourselves and our children. Don't be distracted by the noise and clamor of the few who would cause you to think otherwise. There are far more Americans who will welcome you into our communities and homes and lives than seek to exclude you. Most Americans empathize with their fellow citizens, especially those who have been

subjected to hardship and cruelty and undeserved deprivations and stand willing to join the struggle for justice for all, especially those who have long had it denied.

Secondly, your best road — every person's best road — to a good life in this country is the one that allows you to focus on opportunities to establish meaningful, kind, generous personal relationships with the people you meet and come to know, whether in your workplace, neighborhood, religious community, civic organization, service clubs and through political affiliations. One-on-one always works best. The friendships you create will create feelings of mutual respect and support for one another. So make friends every chance you get. And you know the old adage: to have a friend you must be a friend. Be a friend.

Thirdly, try as best you can to give others the benefit of the doubt. Assume each person you meet is a person of goodwill, who possesses many of the same hopes and fears you do. Try to leave room for their differences in the same way you want others to honor your uniqueness.

Fourthly, remember that we Americans are a resilient people, and this includes you, now, too. Our institutions of government are strong and our society is much bigger and greater than any small group of people who have chosen to test our stamina. Each of us has to resolve to join the effort, doing our part to speak up as policy is being formulated and ideas are being aired. On the nettlesome issues surrounding immigration policy in the United States, no group of American citizens is better qualified to contribute to this debate than you are. Help our elected leaders figure out workable, humane, fair and just solutions. Help our policymakers shape a fair and just narrative that works for all our people.

This is how democracy works — and sometimes it works really well, sometimes not so well, depending on each individual's point of view. I know that some of you are coming from countries where there are no elections, where leaders are put in office without regard to the wishes of the citizenry or where elections do not occur without violence and upheaval. That's not our way — for better or for worse. We have choices and we make choices and we accept the results of the majority as to their choices. Our country has faced many challenges and withstood many forms of dissent and disagreement in our past and we are still here, no doubt stronger than ever because of our compromises and accommodations of conflict. We all have a responsibility every day to help build the America we want to live in together.

Lastly, don't give up, don't give in, don't be overwhelmed or down-hearted, don't give up on your dreams or lose sight of all the good and important things that brought you to these shores and to this day. After all you have been through, for God's sake, don't lose heart now. Keep your optimism and your joy and your sense of gratitude. We need those things now more than ever. I heard on the radio this morning as I drove to the courthouse a line that is worth sharing with you here: Joy, it was said, is an act of resistance. So, be joyful!

Source: <http://www.theindianlawyer.com/barker-new-citizens-encouraged-to-shape-future-of-us/PARAMS/article/42138>

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