

NEW CITIZENS DAY EXERCISES, DIVISION OF ADULT EDUCATION  
SCHOOL NO. 46

Baltimore, May 20, 1942

**T**IMES like these stress the fact which oftentimes is overlooked in any consideration of American citizenship—namely, that citizenship very definitely brings responsibilities as well as privileges. This is a thought which every newly-naturalized American, every young man and woman who has come to maturity during the past twelve months, must bear in mind in these critical days.

In a land so favored as ours with opportunity for material and cultural progress, one is apt to overlook certain fundamental considerations regarding citizenship. With our Country threatened, however, as perhaps never before in its long history, and with many millions of once-free people throughout the world now in virtual bondage, all American citizens, new citizens and those who have enjoyed its privileges for years, must be prepared to give vastly more attention to the duties and responsibilities of citizenship than to the privileges thereof. For, unless we can successfully protect America against the Axis threat, there no longer will be any privileges of citizenship as we have known it.

It is entirely appropriate and timely, therefore, that meetings like this be held, to re-awaken in all our people true appreciation of what American citizenship means.

Never in our entire history has there been a greater need for patriotic re-dedication than faces us today. Literally, at least for the time being, we and our Allies are fighting against staggering odds. On all the continents and each of the seven seas, the mightiest military aggregation the world has ever known has put to challenge, under threat of destruction, every right, privilege, and liberty we have heretofore known and enjoyed. This threat covers our way of life in all its phases—economic, political, social and religious.

Under such a threat to the security of our Nation, we must lay aside every other consideration than that which will make for a stronger National Unity. Questions of racial origin, of religion, and of class have no place in America, where every citizen is guaranteed to be equal before the law.

The newly naturalized citizen has acquired an equal share in the great reservoir of rights and privileges which accrue to American citizenship. Consequently there must be unified effort and steadfast adherence to American principles by everyone if we are to present a solid front in defense of this greatest of all assaults.

Just to look about us this evening, and to realize what America has given American citizenship, under our present form of Government, is the most valuable civic possession obtainable in the world today.