

Fellow Americans:

I feel very fortunate that I was given this chance of speaking to you today, as it is the first celebration in which I am taking part as an American citizen.

The U.S. was made by people like you and me and for people like you and me. People come now and have come to the U.S. for many reasons and from many countries. Something unique in the history of the world is happening to all these people with their different backgrounds; they are molded into a unit – a nation. A nation stronger than any other in the world in every respect. America is comparable to a “going concern,” that has brought into reality the idea of the League of Nations. The dynamic force which underlies this country’s greatness is the result of the contributions made constantly by its people. There is no stand still here. The U.S. is a nation in its youth, striving to ameliorate and solve domestic problems that other older nations have given up as hopeless to cope with. This constant striving for betterment has kept the U.S. from shrinking culturally and politically. The people who have brought along with them the riches of the civilizations from their former countries have become active partners in American civilization. This fact has kept the U.S. alive, strong and alert.

Democracy in the U.S. is more than a political conception, it is a way of life. Each new member of this country is not only permitted to contribute to its development, but welcome and urged to do so; and this is what gives Americans their feeling of security. As psychologists have proven to us only a feeling of being wanted and of being useful can produce a feeling of security in us. The U.S. derives its strength from the accomplishment of this basic psychological concept.

In the U.S. the new-comer does not feel like a guest, but like someone who is preparing himself for the ultimate step – that of becoming an integral part of the nation – a citizen.

I am sure I am speaking for everyone of the “new Americans” if I say that celebrating “I Am an American Day” means more to us than it can ever mean to so any American citizen who has had the great good fortune of having been born in this country.

By becoming citizens of our own free will and choice, we pledge ourselves to fulfill to the utmost the duties of a citizen with a fuller knowledge of the implication of what being a citizen means. We also know that the citizenship we share – now is more demanding than ever.

This day has a specific significance for us, the new citizens. We are elated and grateful because today we have achieved a oneness with the rest of the American people. Not because we have become American citizens, but because we are American citizens, we celebrate with the entire nation – “I am an American Day.”

Presented by Hilda Rothschild
“I Am an American Day” 1949
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