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July 4th at Monticello: “OUT OF MANY, ONE”

At one of the most heavily attended celebrations at Monticello in decades, 79 people from 38 countries became United States citizens atop the steps of Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello on Independence Day.

Since 1963, more than 3,000 individuals have been sworn in as American citizens on Independence Day at Monticello, making the ceremony the oldest continuous naturalization ceremony taking place outside of a courthouse.

Dave Matthews, the lead vocalist and guitarist for the Dave Matthews

Band and this year’s featured speaker, shared his experience as a naturalized citizen. He said that every citizen is part of a long and complicated history that continues to shape our country.

“You are the newest citizens. Our history belongs to you as much as to anyone,” Matthews said. “You chose this country, you left your home, your people, maybe happily, but maybe with a broken heart, maybe both. And today, this country acknowledges that you are American now as much as anyone.”

Born in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1967, Dave Matthews became a naturalized American citizen in 1980. He formed the Dave Matthews Band in 1991 in Charlottesville, Virginia, and is known around the globe as a musician, philanthropist, and entrepreneur.

Judge William F. Stone swore in our nation’s newest citizens as thousands watched on the West Lawn, and viewers erupted in cheers and celebration as they waved American flags high above their heads as the citizens finished reciting the oath. After receiving their citizenship certificates, several new citizens shared their personal experiences with the audience.

“There are so many people fighting for the right to stand where I was

today. And many millions around the world for whom citizenship of this kind is totally out of reach,” said Iranian naturalized citizen Jasmin Darznik, an English professor at Washington and Lee University. “I feel a great gratitude, but also mindfulness for how incredibly lucky I am.”

The new citizens’ remarks reflected Matthews’ closing reference to the motto of the United States Seal: *E pluribus unum*, Latin for “out of many, one.”

Watch a video of the naturalization ceremony or a special interview with Dave Matthews after the ceremony at www.youtube.com/MonticelloVisit.

