

Our American Liberty Stories



As part of Liberty Amendments Month, we are presenting stories of individuals and families who were ***native to this country*** or ***who journeyed here***, whether ***willingly or not***, and ***how they came to enjoy the rights as Americans guaranteed by the Liberty Amendments.***

These American Liberty Stories describe where people came from and how they got here, and/or how their American journey fits into the ***move from an imperfect republic towards our more perfect union.***

The Stories express triumphs, struggles, failures and successes. And how Vienna relates to the Stories.

The ***Stories*** can be viewed at the **Freeman Store and Museum**, the **Community Center**, and **various Vienna Businesses.**



Use the QR code above to view them online through Historic Vienna's website.

Use this QR code if you would like to submit a story for display next year.



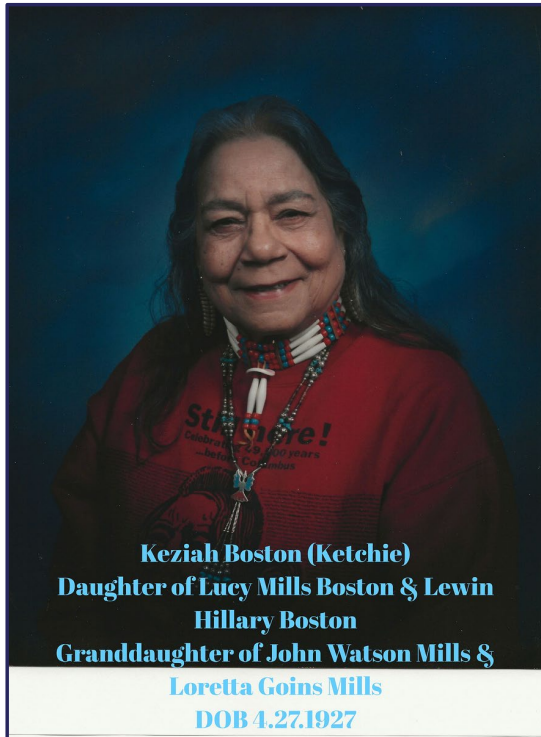
Our American Liberty Stories is sponsored by the *Town of Vienna, VA*, *Historic Vienna, Inc.*, *Belong!* and the *Vienna Business Association.*

My American Liberty Story

Rose A Powhatan

Descendent of local Indigenous Tribes

We Are Still Here! I'm a seventy-six year old Indigenous Virginia woman of ***Pamunkey and Tauxenent descent, whose ancestors met Europeans from both Spain and England in the 16th and 17th centuries.*** My maternal Pamunkey ancestors interacted with the Spanish in 1570. They established a mission near the James River that they called Ajacan. The English arrived in 1585, led by Sir Walter Raleigh. A very important member of his team was an artist named John White. He rendered visually accurate artwork of the "flora and fauna" of the land (which included people).

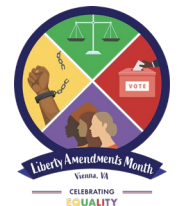


When Jamestowne was established in 1607, the Powhatan Paramountcy, headed by Paramount Chief Wahunsenacawh (the English called him "Powhatan") was composed of 32 Indian nations. ***My paternal ancestry is Tauxenent (also called "Doeg" or "Dogue") who continue to live in today's Fairfax County, Virginia, Washington, DC and Maryland.*** Vienna, Virginia is very important to both our history and contemporary presence. The Fairfax County band of the Tauxenents was once headed by our most revered family heroine, ***18th Century Chief Keziah Powhatan. She led her warriors in trying to reclaim ancestral land stolen from her people.*** A DAR plaque near Courthouse Road at Tyson's Corner, VA, stands as a testimony to the tenacity of the Tauxenent people of Fairfax County.

Additional reminders of the ***Tauxenent presence can be found at Freedom Hill Park, in Vienna.*** The Fairfax County Park Authority oversaw the installation of commemorative signs there, to honor the achievements of Chief Keziah Powhatan's descendants. Tauxenent Chief Keziah A. Boston (her father was Tauxenent, her mother was Pamunkey), was eulogized on June 3, 2023. She was survived by her 5 children, 26 grandchildren, 40 great-grandchildren, and 17 great-great-grandchildren. I dedicate this family tribute as a memorial to her.



Use the QR Code or visit the Freeman Store and Museum or the Community Center to view all of the stories.



My American Liberty Story

Reflections of the Monroe Family of Vienna, VA *From Slavery to Freedom*

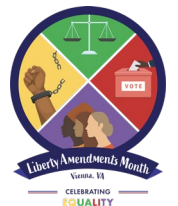


In the early 1800's, *a 14-year-old male child*, from the Gold Coast of Africa (Ghana), *was captured and sold into slavery*. It has been said that this young man was from a family of kings, and his parents must have planned that he too would become a king. However, at the hands of men of greed, he found himself on a strange ship, sailing a strange sea, on his way to a strange land.

This ship pulled into port in Charlottesville, VA. The young man was again sold to the Monroes of the Monroe Plantation of Fauquier County, Virginia. This became his enslavement home. As was true of all such human property, *the slave master chose a name for his slave*, thus, the alias Reuben. Reuben, *being from a good blood line, was chosen to "mate,"* and so, in 1844, to a slave woman Hannah, a son was born. *To this beautiful black son, the name John R. was given.* The surname, Monroe was also affixed, because he too was the property of the Monroe's of the Monroe Plantation.

For twenty-one years, John R. Monroe was enslaved. *In 1865, with the abolition of slavery, John found himself a free man, but, free in word only; for John remained a slave to the white man's will,* and therefore worked as an indentured servant, for small wages, in their fields and around their plantations.

John never learned to read or write. God, in His infinite wisdom, saw fit that John meet a young woman, who, like many young female slaves, served as a house slave nurturing their children, cooking meals, cleaning house, and in many cases, serving at the will of the slave master. We believe, however; because of God's loving favor, *this young woman was taught to read and write.* She was from the Snowden Plantation, in Fauquier County, Virginia, and was given the name, Sarah Jane Snowden.



My American Liberty Story

The Monroe Story continues...

On July 24, 1868, John 24, and Sarah, 18, were joined in holy matrimony in Fauquier County by the Rev. Henry H. Carroll, a Methodist pastor who was also Sarah's pastor. To this marriage **sixteen children were conceived** (one still birth). John Jr., Amanda, and Hannah died at an early age. They reared to adulthood, William, Winfield, Marshall, Rose, Elvoid, Morgan, Benjamin, George, Clory, Clara, Junius, and Sarah. William, Winfield, and Benjamin married and moved to New Jersey where they settled with their families and George, with his family, moved to Pennsylvania. The remainder of **the Monroe children married and remained in the Fairfax County, Vienna area.**

pg. 13

MARRIAGE LICENSE.

VIRGINIA, *Fauquier County* to wit:
To my Person Specially to Celebrate Matrimony:

You are hereby authorized to join together in the Holy State of Matrimony, according to the rites and ceremonies of your Church, or religious denomination, and the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, *John Monroe, cel.* and *Sarah Snowden, cel.*

Given under my hand, as Clerk of the County, Court of *Fauquier* this *24* day of *July* 186*8*
H. H. Carroll CLERK.

CERTIFICATE TO OBTAIN A MARRIAGE LICENSE.
To be annexed to the License, required by Act passed 15th March, 1861.

Time of Marriage *July 24th 1868.*
Place of Marriage *Fauquier County Va.*
Full names of Parties Married *John Monroe, cel. & Sarah Snowden, cel.*
Age of Husband *24 years*
Age of Wife *18 years*
Condition of Husband, (widowed or single) *single*
Condition of Wife, (widowed or single) *single*
Place of Husband's Birth *Fauquier Co. Va.*
Place of Wife's Birth *Fauquier Co. Va.*
Place of Husband's Residence *Fauquier Co. Va.*
Place of Wife's Residence *Fauquier Co. Va.*
Names of Husband's Parents
Names of Wife's Parents
Occupation of Husband *Antoin*
Given under my hand this *24* day of *July* 186*8*
H. H. Carroll CLERK.

MINISTER'S RETURN OF MARRIAGE.
I certify, that on the *24* day of *July* 186*8* at *Apprentice*
H. H. Carroll, I united in marriage the above named and described parties,
under authority of the annexed License. *Mr. Henry H. Carroll*

NOTE: The Minister celebrating a Marriage is required, within ten days thereafter to return the License to the Office of the Clerk who issued the same, with an endorsement thereon of the date of such marriage, and of the time and place of celebrating the same.

A Copy Teste: *H. H. Carroll* Clerk
by *Caroline A. Miller, Deputy Clerk*
Circuit Court Fauquier County, Virginia

John and Sarah purchased a parcel of land for the sum of five dollars and lived in Fauquier County for several years. John, an ambitious young man, was constantly in search of jobs and housing to better care for his family as it increased in size. He moved his family from Fauquier County to Fairfax County, Virginia. They moved several times after coming to Fairfax County, first to Chantilly; **then to Ordricks Corner (McLean); and then they purchased land and built a home (the big house on the hill), on Nutley Street in Vienna, Virginia. They settled in Vienna with their family and remained until their deaths.**

In 1880, John R. Monroe helped **found the Chantilly Baptist Church** and was one of the first Deacons. For many years, he traveled by horse and buggy from Vienna to Chantilly on Saturdays to his board meetings, and with his family each Sunday, to services. After much thought and prayer, he united with the First Baptist Church of Vienna.

John and Sarah, both slaves, were the second generation of African descent. They too knew the pains that suffering slavery brought. However, they survived this awful pain and worked hard to rear fifteen children, in whom they instilled pride, love, and Godly principles.



My American Liberty Story – The Monroe Story continues...

As we reflect upon the rich history of which we are a part, ***we stand proud in the knowledge that we are the lineage of a family of noble men and women.*** They survived when survival seemed impossible; smiled, when crying should have been the answer; stood tall, when a stupor should have been the order of the day; sang a hymn, when they should have screamed; prayed, because they knew God was their deliverer. Yes, we of the Monroe bloodline pay humble tribute to our ancestors who nurtured us and passed from generation to generation that noble pride which has led us through the years.

In reflection, we know that Reuben, given the surname Monroe, was “mated” with Hannah. We were unable to find the history of whether Hannah was allowed to nurture her son; however, John was given the surname Monroe, thus beginning the generations of Monroes. John, who was born into slavery, became the second generation and was later freed with the abolition of slavery. John married Sarah and reared their fifteen children (the third generation). Both John and Sarah died in the late 1930s. The third generation is also deceased. However, there remains a remnant of the fourth generation, Milton Monroe, the son of Junius and Deloris Taylor Washington, the daughter of Sarah.

We glory in the assurance that the memories of our loved ones are forever engraved in our hearts and minds and that the Monroe name will carry on through the grandsons, great grandsons, and great, great grandsons of those of the past generations. We, the remnant, challenge these, as well as all those who are of the Monroe bloodline to borrow from the strength and determination of our ancestors and in the words of the great poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar: ***“Go on and up! Be proud in mind and soul, for out the blood of conflict of slavery, out of the dust and dimness of death, burst into blossom of glory eternal, flowers that sweeten the world with their breath.”***

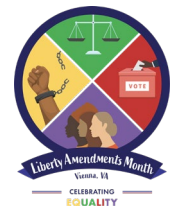
The Family, in honor and memory of those who survived the worst that we might enjoy the best in a time such as this.

Researched and compiled by: Rev. Deloris Taylor Washington, PhD

*Precious memory contributions by: The late Sarah Monroe Taylor
(daughter of John & Sarah Monroe) and the late Beatrice Carr
(daughter of Winfield, and granddaughter of John and Sarah Monroe)*



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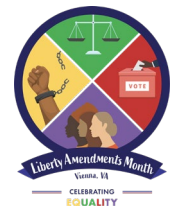
My American Liberty Story

**My name is Ali Suhel,
I come from Syria.
And this is my story.**



My name is Ali and I moved to the US in 2022, coming from Bulgaria, but originally I am from Syria. I was born and raised in Latakia, Syria. During the recent war, I had to leave the country because it was a very bad situation. I don't want to go into that side, I just want to describe how I came here. I went to Bulgaria, and when I was there, I was a refugee. I got humanitarian status and I tried to live my life peacefully. It was very hard to get a job, because the impression was that the Syrians are bad. I felt people were afraid of us. I mean, I saw so many people who are very good, who are very hospitable. I learned my current career there. But it was always missing fairness, I always felt that I am less of a man than the locals. Because basically, I'm not up to their standards, according to them. But it was nevertheless better than my own country. However, ***I won the green card lottery, and I moved to the US, October 15 2021.***

I came here alone, single, no family with me. And I wanted to pursue my career, my life. And I immediately when I arrived, got my Social Security and my green card, valid for 10 years. And I was able to find a job right away. I started working as a cashier at Panera just to get the hang of it, see how people work here to get insurance. And to get connected. And ***I worked in Vienna, Maple Avenue, I had the best experience living with people, I was connected with Vienna Presbyterian Church, who helped me and supported me during my transition to the US.*** Through these people, I found a job as a financial advisor in Merrill Lynch, and decided to do it independently. But the point is that, in the US, I am able to do that, because of the amount of freedom that I was given by the government, all of these rights that I didn't even know about before. Basically, ***I can do anything that any American citizen was able to do, maybe not voting. But I mean, I wasn't able to vote in my own country, so nothing has changed.***





My American Liberty Story

Ali's Story continues...



I am living the dream life because ***I found my wife here***. And even this I got married within six months from my arrival to the US. Even the fact that ***there is fairness and equality everywhere***. My wife was able to talk to me because I wasn't able to do so back in Bulgaria because people look down at us as refugees or as Syrian, who are not local. So ***when I came here, I'm not refugee anymore, because I already feel home***.

Everything has changed ever since I left my own country and Bulgaria and I don't feel that I need anything anymore because I feel home. I have my family. We were living in Maryland and recently moved to Florida. We hope to be able to buy a house. This has all happened in a very, very short time. Imagine, I lived for 29 years out of the US and I wasn't able to achieve half of what I achieved so far. In 1.5 years, I have gotten married and gotten a dog (I wasn't able to have a dog back there). It is much more difficult to have a job there. There is no insurance. There are no such things as this kind of tools that we use. Let me put it this way, insurance and life standards. Even a car I was not able to get in the same way that I have it here. It's just different because the US is the best country in the world, and people here don't recognize or appreciate that. ***I feel like this is the only place that a person can live a decent life, and is able to follow his/her dreams and pursue any career that they would love to do***.

I would like to thank Vienna Presbyterian Church for helping me arrive here, arranging for housing and even the work that I managed to get was because of this connection. And I'm thankful for everything that I have so far. ***I hope that I can be able to help others the way that Americans helped me get my feet on the ground***.



Use the QR Code or visit the Freeman Store and Museum or the Community Center to view all of the stories.

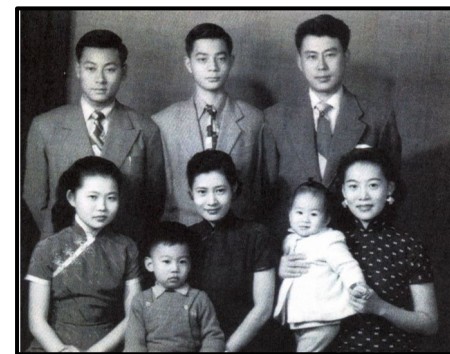




My American Liberty Story

Jackie Herde

College Scholarship led to Citizenship



Born a Buddhist in Shanghai, China, during WWII, Jacqueline Yung Tao attended third grade in a private Catholic school run by Franciscan nuns in a French section of the city. Shanghai was under Japanese occupation, where sirens and possible air attacks kept everyone on alert. Three years after the war ended in 1945, there was a period of peace before the eventual takeover by the communists. This was the deciding factor for **her father to send his family of six to safety in Taiwan**. They left him and their possessions behind, **taking only two suitcases filled with photographs and pictures**. December 1948 was the last time Jacqueline saw her father. She was eleven years old.

Her education and religion would be the guiding factors for her future. Her high school in Taiwan was near a Catholic church, where she spent a lot of time and met several Sisters from Kentucky. She converted to Catholicism and was baptized. **Jacqueline was chosen by the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville to receive a full four-year scholarship to attend Ursuline College in Louisville, Kentucky**, where several Asian students were enrolled or had graduated.

Jacqueline said, **“It was extremely hard for a high schooler to get a Taiwan passport, much less a visa to the United States**. Sister Raymond Carter, academic dean of Ursuline College at that time, intervened and wrote many letters on my behalf so I could attend the college, beginning in 1957. Plans materialized to get me to Louisville, but with limited English and traveling alone, it wasn't an easy journey. I purchased a big leather suitcase to pack for America. My first stop was Hong Kong.

“While there, I was able to contact my father for the first time since fleeing China eight years earlier. It was the last time I ever spoke with him.

“With my one large suitcase and a big itinerary, it took me multiple days to reach my destination in Kentucky. From Tokyo, I zigzagged to Fairbanks, Alaska; then to Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; to Seattle; to Los Angeles; to Chicago; and finally to Louisville, where I met Sister Raymond for the first time.



My American Liberty Story

Jackie's Story continues...

"Initially, I came to the United States to attend Ursuline College as a special trainee in religion, under the sponsorship of Archbishop A. Riberi, Internuncio of Free China, who worked with converts in his religious program in Taiwan. Plans changed course during my four years of studies. ***I majored in liberal arts and home economics.***



"After graduation, ***I went to New York City, and eventually became a junior accountant.*** In New York, I met my husband, John Herde. We were married in 1965 and will celebrate our 57th anniversary this fall. We have two wonderful daughters, Jennifer and Juliana, and four grandchildren. ***We have traveled worldwide and are now retired in Virginia to be with our family.***"

Jacqueline stayed in contact with several Asian classmates after she graduated from Ursuline College in 1961, but ***most important was her connection to Sister Raymond Carter, who championed her journey to Louisville from Taiwan and her college enrollment in Kentucky, and who gave her guidance and advice over the years.*** "Sister kept me up to date with everything going on at Ursuline College. ***She helped me stay in America.***"

Recently, her daughter, Juliana, sent a donation that was originally intended to be her mother's planned gift in memory of Sister Raymond and for the Chapel Preservation Fund. Sending it now, rather than later, assured the family that her gift would be used as intended, and more importantly, while her mother was still alive. Jacqueline added, "It is rewarding to do so, and makes me feel good to be able to give back to the school that did so much for me.



Because of the Ursuline community, I was able to come and stay in the U.S. and live a wonderful 60-plus years as a citizen.



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My American Liberty Story



Bracha Laster

Appreciates Vienna's support for religious freedom

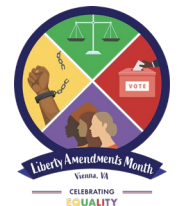


Our house in Vienna Woods blends in. And so do we. In the winter, our front window has bright decorations like others on our block, even though we are not Christian. People on the street can see our menorah's colorful electric lights. In the fall, for eight days we invite friends for meals in our backyard sukkah. For most of the year (before the pandemic) we have had a monthly Shabbat minyan/prayer gathering in our living room.

In 1986 when we purchased and first moved into our rambler, ***I was wondering if we would fit in.*** I read about the nativity scene in front of the Vienna Community Center. Someone brought a First Amendment lawsuit, and the crèche had to move; it was more appropriately set up in front of a church. That incident seems a long time ago, and ***I am hopeful that Vienna has made great strides to be welcoming to a range of folks.***

There were a few bumps along the way, but mostly we have blended in. The sixth grade trip at Louise Archer was planned during Yom Kippur; my child had to miss most of it. The daughter who was on Madison's Color Guard team was almost kicked off of it because she couldn't attend a mandatory practice that was held during Rosh Hashanah. In these cases, I had to be an outspoken parent, advocating for religious pluralism in the face of ignorance, or narrowness (or anti-semitism).

I was a teacher at Thoreau Middle School from 1986 until 1992, and before that three other Fairfax County schools. My kids came through Louise Archer, Thoreau, and Madison High School. They were ***involved in a variety of clubs and activities (e.g., marching band, theatre), and they certainly took advantage of all of the academic prowess FCPS has to offer.***





My American Liberty Story

Bracha's Story continues...

Probably as surprising to Town of Vienna friends as it is to me: Two of my children ended up becoming ordained rabbis, and the third one married a rabbi. Being Jewish is central to our family in the past as well as in the present.

I am the ***daughter of a Holocaust survivor***. All four of ***my grandparents left their familial homes during the 20th century to escape religious persecution***. I hope that the trials that they went through will never re-surface; part of my professional work has concerned cross-cultural understanding.

For almost 40 years our home has been here in Vienna, and I think we fit in well. This is my Town. ***May the town and the country continue to be a good place to live for all of us no matter what race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, ability, or belief.***



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My American Liberty Story

Loving Stories of a trip lead to prosperous lives as Americans

My great grandfather immigrated to the United States and loved America.

When he went back to his home country to marry his sweetheart, she did not want to leave her familiar surroundings and refused to marry him if he wanted to return to the US.
So, he chose not to return.

Instead, while raising his large family of 14, ***he told them stories about his time in the US.***

This encouraged four of his sons, including my grandfather, to immigrate to the US; my grandfather and his new wife, my grandmother, emigrated in 1904 on a ship of the Red Star Line, passing through Ellis Island, and settling in central Wisconsin.

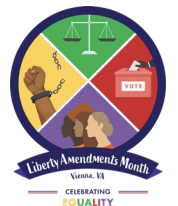
They became prosperous farmers.

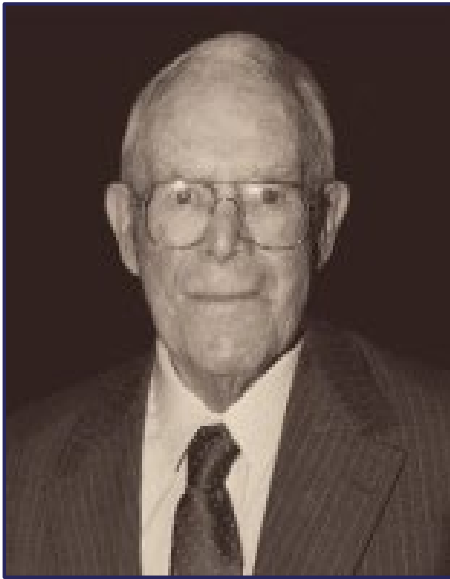
Of the other brothers who came to the US, two settled in Michigan and one lived in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Neither my grandfather nor my grandmother ever returned to their home country to visit; they learned English, worked hard, raised a family of six and successfully farmed until their early 70s when they moved into town (Wisconsin Rapids, WI).



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My American Liberty Story

Honorable Steve Shannon

Discusses his Grandfather:

Peter Michael Shannon

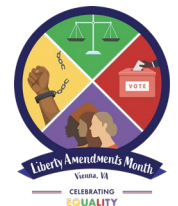
My paternal grandfather, Peter Michael Shannon, was born in Ireland in 1899 and died in LaGrange, Illinois in 1993. He and his wife (Marian Burke Shannon) had seven children and, at the time of his passing, 36 grandchildren and 36 great-grandchildren.

In 1920, ***my grandfather left Ireland at age 20 due to economic conditions.*** He had two relatives in the United States at the time who encouraged him to move to the United States. He arrived at Ellis Island on a boat named the Baltic.

In Ireland, ***my grandfather's formal education stopped at age 12.*** He worked as a shoemaker's assistant for most of his teenage years before leaving for the United States.

After Ellis Island, my grandfather briefly stayed in Binghamton, New York with a family member. He moved to Detroit looking for work and was hired at a Ford Motor Company plant. In a 1984 interview, my grandfather ***recalled waiting in an employment line outside of the plant with about two thousand other applicants and the variety of languages spoken within the crowd.***

A consistent theme in my grandfather's life was acquiring an education. While at Ford Motor Company, he took an apprentice class at night. After the plant shut down, he moved back to Binghamton, New York, obtained employment with a shoe company, and ***enrolled in a business college—where he took classes in arithmetic, penmanship and bookkeeping.*** (A high school education was not a pre-requisite for attending this type of business school.) After Binghamton, he moved to Chicago, where he met his wife. He worked as a bookkeeper for a canned goods company (the Steele-Wedeles Company) for the next 20 years.



My American Liberty Story

Honorable Steve Shannon

Discusses his Grandfather:

Peter Michael Shannon continues...

Used Education to improve his life and that of others

At night, he studied at the former Watson Business College and also took correspondence courses at night. The correspondence courses included studying under the tutelage of a certified public accountant. ***My grandfather received his CPA certification in 1936.***

Upon leaving the Steele-Wedeles Company, ***he founded the accounting firm of Peter Shannon & Co.*** He started the accounting firm with one client and worked out of his basement. The firm eventually moved to a one-story office building, and my grandfather added a second-floor addition to house the ***Shannon School of Commerce, which he founded to teach accounting, typing and stenography.*** Among the firm's clients was the City of Chicago, and the firm conducted the annual audit of city funds. My grandfather retired in 1969. Peter Shannon & Co. exists to this day.

When interviewed in 1984 about his business accomplishments, my grandfather stated:

***“There’s nothing like hard work and industry and doing your best.
Because good is bound to come of it.”***

This is a nice description of the opportunities that can arise in the United States ***due to the freedoms afforded to its citizens.***



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My American Liberty Story

Sharon Gower Miller

Ciao...

My Italian Great Grandparents Raffaele and Lucia (Barone) Ucciferri represents ***one family in the wave of millions of Southern Italians who traveled to America for a better life and raised children who considered themselves Americans... enduring hardship, maintaining love of family, and practicing a strong Catholic Faith.***

Immigrating in the early 1880's they arrived separately by ship from Naples Italy to New York and then settled in Wilmington Delaware. Working as a greengrocer and seamstress they resettled in Southern Philadelphia where they lived out their lives in a small row house that still stands today in "Little Italy". Raffaele worked on the docks of the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard, the oldest naval base in the U.S. laboring as a stevedore.

This family would go on to have nine children; seven living into adulthood. I am blessed to be a descendant of their fifth child Peter James, whose love of family and enduring faith bless my life every day. My grandfather said ***"the day he lost his mother is the day he lost his best friend."***

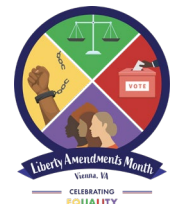


The ***entire Italian community endured discrimination*** but Raffaele and Lucia ***lived quiet unassuming lives***, and their prodigy contributed to the great American Melting Pot as laborers, professionals, and artists.

Saluti!!!



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My American Liberty Story

Thomas Zataweski – A Miner's Story

Sveiki!!!

In the late 1800's, throughout Eastern Europe, ***agents from the Pennsylvania mines and railroads were recruiting laborers.*** My great grandfather Thomas Zataweckas/Zatawesky along with his brothers Michael, John and Adam would eventually leave their homeland of Lithuania to ***live, work and die in those coal regions.*** No firsthand accounts are available to tell us of their journey west. Yet history tells us that ***30,000 men from those areas would travel from the ports of Bremen and Hamburg, Germany via ship to the United States of America.***



Photo: L to R Anna (Petokas), Peter, Bernetta and John Zataweski (1907)



My American Liberty Story

Thomas Zataweski – A Miner’s Story continues...

It is well documented that the ***conditions in the mines were perilous***. Prior to electrification of mines the only light down in the “dark pit” was from a flame on the miner’s helmet. Known as the “miner’s friend” the ***flame could alert the miners of dangerous gases*** as the tip of the flame would turn blue in the presence of methane. Nevertheless, oxygen deprivation due to the depths of the shafts along with the breathing of methane, carbon dioxide and coal dust resulted in respiratory difficulties and ongoing poor health. ***It was common for a miner to have black lung from breathing coal dust by the age of forty***. Miners worked in wet and cold conditions as water dripped from the walls underground and accumulated to depths that it was constantly walked through, temperatures 60 degrees Fahrenheit or lower year-round. ***With hundreds of men and mules working in the mines, human and animal waste and rats were everywhere***. In anthracite mines the veins of coal lie at a 90-degree angle where men were forced to stoop and crawl to extract the coal from the coal face. ***Men would often leave their workday barely ever having stood up straight the entire shift***. Men had to walk miles into the tunnels of the mines carrying caps, powder, picks, shovels, axes, and lumber. As miners drilled holes and handled explosives to blow the coal from the rock, accidents resulted in loss of limbs and life. Drilling, blasting, and loading was the routine of the miners and laborers. And of course, there were mine collapses as tons of coal and earth entombed the miners. ***Three men died every two days in the anthracite mines of Pennsylvania***.

My great grandfather Thomas would die by an explosion in the Pancoast Mine in March of 1912. His brother John would live until 1949 but not without serious health consequences. Both Thomas’s and John’s great granddaughters became interested in genealogy and found themselves sharing family history online. Becoming friends, ***these third cousins discovered they both lived in Vienna Virginia***.



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My American Liberty Story

Values Being an American Citizen

I came to this country at the age of 23 years old. I was born and raised in Mexico.

After completing my bachelor degree, I had an opportunity to work at a US based company here in Northern Virginia. After a few years of working here and getting to know the culture, ***I decided to apply to become a resident.*** Although I had a work visa, ***obtaining the residency gave me peace and a certainty that I couldn't be deported.*** It may sound irrational, but there was this feeling that even with a legal visa you don't belong and therefore easily you could be cast out.

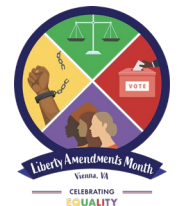
I obtained my permanent residency status after 2 years and the next step in the journey was to apply for citizenship. ***As I reflected on what it meant to become a citizen, I knew that along with the rights it confers it also means more responsibilities.*** It meant to take on the history of this country with the good and not so good aspects. ***It meant to uphold the constitution and the rights that were won with so much effort.***

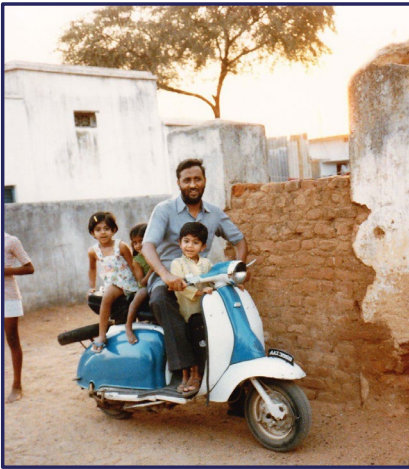
After much consideration I applied for citizenship and had my naturalization ceremony a few months before the 2008 presidential election. It was going to be ***my first time voting!*** I became more involved in ***learning about the issues and positions of the candidates as it is important to cast an informed vote.*** It was exhilarating to vote for the first time. I felt proud of being able to participate in the building of this country and shaping the future. In addition, finally I felt like I belonged and a certainty that this country was now my home.

Since then, I got married and formed a family here in the town of Vienna. At home we speak Spanish and make sure our daughters know Mexican culture too as that is part of what makes this country special – the diversity and blending of cultures. The fact that they are ***learning from the history of 2 countries gives them an understanding on how precious the rights we enjoy are.***



Use the QR Code or visit the Freeman Store and Museum or the Community Center to view all of the stories.





My American Liberty Story

Honorable Dipti Pidikiti-Smith

*Nannu aswera dinchadanaki, vachina
athiduluki, swagatam, suswagatam.*

*(Welcome. Thank you for coming to
celebrate with us).*



On December 7, 2022, these Telugu words were said in a Fairfax County courtroom at a celebration to honor the ***appointment of the first Asian American to the Fairfax General District Court.*** What are the chances that an Indian immigrant, a woman, born approximately 8347 miles away, who grew up in India and Nigeria and who was diagnosed with epilepsy would become a Judge on the General District Court of Fairfax County? It seems lucky and improbable.

My father came to America in search of better career opportunities which meant providing for his family, having a good job, and helping people along the way. This is what I understood as his American dream. I believe it was difficult for him to reconcile these perceptions that everyone had the opportunity for success if they work hard, and with the realities of a place that judged his intelligence based on his thick accent. Despite many setbacks, he kept pushing forward.

Since my appointment to the bench, ***I've had many immigrants, including strangers tell me they were proud of me and that seeing me as a judge fulfilled their dreams of knowing that someone like them could become a judge.*** When henna was being applied on my hands before the investiture, the formal ceremony where the Constitutional Oath is administered to me, the manager spoke to me about struggles she faced as a woman in her native country and as a woman and an immigrant in America. She said seeing me as a judge was a proud moment for her because it meant despite the difficulties she faced, the next generation of children would have a chance to be successful in America.

These stories describe a part of ***my American dream – hope – hope that children have opportunities to succeed, be their authentic self, and become part of the American community.***



My American Liberty Story

Honorable Dipti Pidikiti-Smith continues...

I was nine years old when I immigrated to the United States. The move was a big change ranging from the people, the food, to the roads. In school, I was described as quiet. ***I was quiet because I was learning about my new home and reconciling my identity with a new culture.*** There were comments by classmates and strangers – ***“go back to your country”, “you smell like curry”*** – reminders that I did not belong and that my characteristics were not welcome. At the same time, I had friends, neighbors, and teachers who enjoyed listening to me talk about my childhood growing up on a farm in India, who enjoyed eating the curries made by my mom, and who recognized creativity in my thinking. ***That support of the whole me – Indian, woman, immigrant, a person living with epilepsy - was important to the development of my American identity.*** I believe that ***our differences are strengths that can unite us to make a better community for all.***

I recognize that our world is constantly changing and that ***the rights I enjoy today, such as my right to become a citizen or my right to marry the person I love are a result of generations of people who fought to be recognized as human and to be treated as equals for all generations.***

While becoming a judge seems lucky and improbable, equally unlikely, and unexpected is my meeting and marrying my husband, Amos. Almost twenty-five years ago, I encountered a superhero who ***had extraordinary abilities to bring to light the best in people.*** It should come as no surprise that Amos spent his career as a teacher and now as an assistant principal in Fairfax County, including a few years at Westbriar Elementary School in Vienna. As college students, Amos and I tutored children at an afterschool homework club in Philadelphia. Our dedication for service allowed us to connect as people and allowed us to connect with our community. During every phase of my life, Amos has been present to encourage me, share experiences with me such as volunteering, and starting a family. He is key to why I became a judge, why I am a better person every day, and why I am fulfilling my American dream. My nine-year old self could never have imagined being married to a Pittsburgh-raised marathon runner who knows I prefer nachos over flowers on our anniversary and can always make me laugh. ***Our differences made us better, stronger, and we created two incredible humans who inspire us to continue to serve the community to make it a place where people’s dreams can become a reality.***



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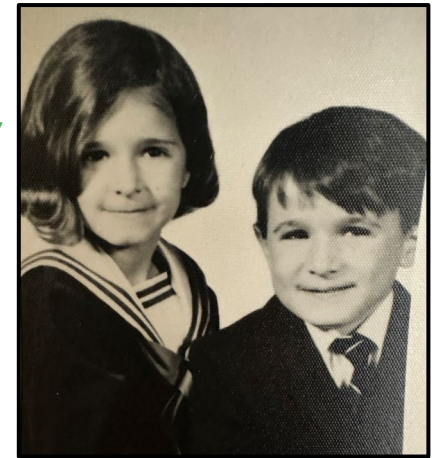




My American Liberty Story

Cathy Hardman

From the Mayflower to Ellis Island

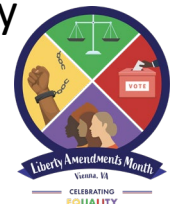


Since I was very young, my family told me and my brother (Adam Eleazar) ***how lucky we were to be in this country and never take our rights and our freedom for granted.***

As we grew up, the stories became more detailed and the reasons for the statement started to take shape. ***In current America, blended families and mixed-race families are the majority over the percentage of nuclear families. When my father met my mother in 1956, that was not true at all – not only for race, but also for religion.***

My mother, Phoebe Alice Lloyd, was ***an Episcopalian Protestant whose roots can be documented back to the Mayflower.*** Her ancestors are well known figures in American history: *Anne Hutchinson, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Ulysses S. Grant.* My grandfather, Allen Huber Lloyd, was Scottish, English, Irish, French, German and Iroquois (unverified), reflecting a ***restlessness for opportunity and adventure.*** His family (***men and women***) were ***painters, engineers and inventors,*** building dams like the Hoover Dam and creating Ball canning jars, milk and egg cartons ***to improve people's way of life.***

My great-grandfather, one of the first lawyers in the family, ***didn't believe women were equal and refused to teach my grandmother to drive.*** However, he was proud of his daughter ***graduating Phi Beta Kappa from Smith College*** during the early years of the Great Depression. My mother earned her PhD in Art History in 1978, and became a renowned researcher and writer.



My American Liberty Story – Cathy’s Story continues...

My Jewish grandfather came to America through Ellis Island from Budapest, Hungary. My Jewish grandmother arrived at Ellis Island around 1911 when she was 11, leaving her home of Ottynia Austria (now Ukraine) fleeing the constant threat of pogroms. In America, she learned to read and write. My grandparents ***divorced (a right hard won by women’s rights advocates)*** soon after my father, William Jay Jacobs, was born having satisfied the Jewish family’s desire for a male heir who could become a lawyer or doctor. Instead, my father became a history professor and author.

My parents moved to New York City to ***share ideas and principles and make the most of the freedoms they enjoyed in America.*** They constantly ***dealt with antisemitism and were shunned by their own families because of their choice to marry outside of their religions.*** Their backgrounds couldn’t be more different, but their passions were so similar, and the shared determination was passed down to me and my brother.

My brother Adam and I learned to deeply respect democracy, but never be afraid to ***improve it when needed and always, always vote!*** He is a judge in New Jersey, and I am an Information Specialist making sure people always can get the information resources they need. ***Because of our ancestors beliefs in inclusion and democracy,*** we added to the “melted pot” of America through marriages and children, ***proudly representing Argentina, Cuba, India, Greece, and Tulsa, OK where we adopted our African American daughter, Ella.***

My father wrote a book about the immigrants who passed through Ellis Island. His dedication, “To my mother and father, a land of hope and freedom...” with a note for me under, “and this book for Cathy, inheritor of the dream.” I have every intention of ***making the most of that dream every day and helping others achieve the American Dream to come to America.***



Use the QR Code or visit the Freeman Store and Museum or the Community Center to view all of the stories.



My American Liberty Story – Mary Dolson

Valuing Citizenship

We are a nation of immigrants, is what I always believed. I was lucky enough to arrive in New York City, **at age four, with my parents on the USS Taylor, leaving from Bremerhaven Harbor, Germany, escaping Communist Czechoslovakia in 1952.** I remember the Green Alien Cards my parents had, and we were known as displaced persons, pejoratively called DPs. My friends were Czech or Polish, and we eventually **all became United States citizens.**

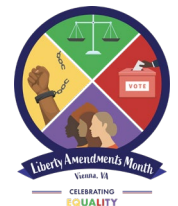
I remember that the road to citizenship in my family took interesting twists and turns. My parents adopted their New World with fervor. In New York City, my parents were immediately employed: Daddy, worked at the commercial Fink Baking, and he also worked as janitor in an apartment building, which gave us free rent. My mother worked in a Czech restaurant, which was advertised “Let’s Eat Out,” in Gourmet magazine. I sometimes had to wait for her there after school.

So, in two years, my parents with their relatives **bought a corner delicatessen in Chicago, and later started a very prosperous bakery business that grew into another store** with bread and bakery deliveries to restaurants, stores, and Czech events. Their decorated cakes, especially wedding cakes, were spectacular. While my parents worked so hard on their business, and of course, the whole family was involved, they still made time to study **How to Become an American Citizen**, a green 64-page handbook, Seventh Edition, 1955. “It is based upon the new Immigration and Nationality Act designated Public Law No. 414, known as the McCarran Act of 1952.

As expressed in the green handbook: *The applicant must be of at least age 18, a lawfully admitted permanent resident, able to understand English enough to read, write and speak words in ordinary use, have lived in the United States for 5 years in the state where the applicant Petitions for Naturalization. The applicant must be a person of good moral character. The applicant “must be attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States and well-disposed to the good order and happiness of the United States. Each applicant will be required to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the principles and form of government of this country.”*

This is what I remember about those years of preparation for citizenship: Mother would reach for that green handbook, and everyone would suddenly disappear. They knew **she would keep them hostage for unending quizzing.** That was sad, but it made her more determined to study the handbook and quiz whoever was in earshot. On vacation at Sokol Camp on Lake Michigan (a Czech establishment), she took the handbook with her, and there she was surrounded by a throng of dedicated citizens, relentlessly going over the “Questions Asked on National Matters” and “Questions Asked on State Matters,” to “Questions Asked on City Matters.” She was like a dog with its bone, determined to get answers to her quizzing.

And she and Dad answered questions correctly for the examiner and became American citizens.



My American Liberty Story – Mary Dolson continues...

Valuing Citizenship

I was too young to witness their attendance at the Bureau of Naturalization ceremony, but I do remember it as ***a day of celebratory joy for them to be welcomed into the American family.*** New citizens must take and sign the oath of allegiance:

*“I entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen;
that I will support and defend the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic;
that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same: that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law;
and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion.
SO HELP ME GOD.”*

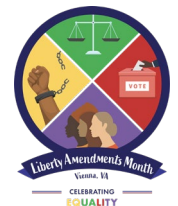
They became citizens on November 28, 1961, and ***I became a derivative citizen: One who derives citizenship through the naturalization of a parent when under age 18.*** My naturalization ceremony was perfunctory in comparison, just a signed document with my photo in 1967 at age 19.

My parents continued to assimilate by enrolling in English classes; however, they spoke in broken English. I still have the English workbooks that they worked on in retirement. Mother, boss sales lady in their Czech bakery store, honored the rule that her employees spoke English while serving customers. She was an active member in a businesswomen’s organization. She favored and stayed loyal to the Republican Party because that was the party that gave her and our family admission to America, (thank you President Eisenhower). Daddy hired the president of the Baker’s Union as the bakery shop’s specialized cake decorator, and Daddy upheld the rules as a bakery union shop. The Chicago Tribune was delivered daily, and we all discussed world events, opining on stories read. Of course, the Chicago- Czech language newspaper the Denni Hlasatel was delivered and read, as well. My parents owned another bakery on Cermak Road, 22nd Street- with significant Czech populations- eponymously named after Mayor Anton Cermak (mayor of Chicago) who was killed by an assassin, whose likely target was President Franklin Roosevelt.

As new citizens, my parents had taken an oath renouncing all allegiances to foreign powers, and they promised to support and defend the Constitution against all enemies. ***They took their citizenship journey very seriously and supported the fundamental right of voting as United States citizens. I adopted their ideals and values of citizenship, and I am honored to be included in the American family.***



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My American Liberty Story

Anne Stuntz

Why my family came to Vienna

My granddad, Stephen Conrad Stuntz (1875-1918) moved to Vienna by 1905 because ***he loved it here – an easy commute to his job in DC thanks to the streetcar line, great people, beautiful countryside.***

His own great granddad, Konrad Stuntz, had come to this country from Germany in 1776 as a Hessian soldier brought over by the British. Konrad and his brother, ***inspired by the freedoms the colonists were fighting for***, soon escaped from the British to join General Washington's army. After the war they were rewarded for their service with land and ***become voting citizens of their new country.***

My granddad grew up in Madison, Wisconsin, graduating in 1899 from the University there. He moved to Washington DC in 1902, and soon discovered the delights of Northern Virginia. He settled in Vienna and married a young lady from Culpeper, Lena Fitzhugh and they built a house for their hoped-for dozen children just outside of town on what's now Chain Bridge Road. Sadly he died in 1918, and he and Lena only had five kids, but those children, including my dad Mayo, all grew up in that house.



My husband and I live there now and I still love Vienna as much as everyone else in my family who came before me!



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My American Liberty Story

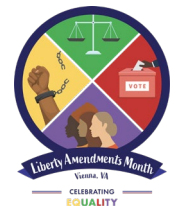
Dr. Karolyn Kabir

Someone I love once told me, “Virginia will always be your home.” I was in Denver at the time but those 6 words, sending a jolt of electricity through me, deeply resonated. Now 2 years since returning to my hometown, I couldn’t agree more.

I grew up in Vienna, Virginia, raised by my Persian father, a physician, who was born in Tehran and my Dutch-Irish mother, a nurse, who grew up a farmer’s daughter in a small town called Strawberry Point, Iowa. He was an only child dreaming of crossing the ocean one day. She, the youngest of six, wanted to experience more than her small town life. They met at the University of Chicago in 1964 and were married there a year later. They then relocated to Maryland, where my father resumed employment at Howard University (where he had trained for two years previously) and where soon thereafter, I was born at Prince George’s County Hospital.

When I was 5 months old, they moved to Northern Virginia, where my two sisters and I grew up. First attending Mantua Elementary when we lived in Fairfax, just off Prosperity Avenue, then for the remainder of my childhood, in Vienna, where we attended Wolftrap Elementary, Kilmer Middle School, and Marshall High School. My father passed away 24 years ago and is buried at National Memorial Park. I visit him often and when I do, ***I reflect on his big dreams, the reason we are all here.***

My father was open-minded, wise, and discerning. He had a natural talent for music, playing the violin, piano, organ, and accordion, all by ear. When he was 14, he was featured on Radio Tehran as a child musician, a special memory he was fond of sharing with us. He loved history and politics, spoke three languages, and his keen perception, visual and otherwise, aided him as both physician and father. He also possessed strong problem-solving skills, which in concert with his open mind and curious nature, helped him navigate sensitive situations in a diplomatic manner. These skills perhaps inherited from our ancestor and his great-great-great-grandfather, Mirza Abul Hassan Khan Shirazi Ilchi-Kabir, appointed by the Shah in the early 1800’s, as Persian ambassador to both England & Russia.



My American Liberty Story

Dr. Karolyn Kabir continues (p2 of 3)

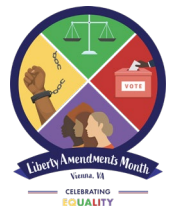


Ilchi-Kabir, a name bestowed by the Shah, means “Great Ambassador.” I’ve also seen it translated as “messenger of peace.” Our great grandfather’s black and white picture hung above our piano, in the living room where my father taught us both French and piano each morning before we scooted off to school.

But before he’d let us leave, he would often point to this framed print and test our memorization of our ancestor’s full name, ceremoniously adding, “don’t forget, you are the great grandchildren of an ambassador!”

My father had a global mindset. He spoke Farsi, French and English fluently and knew American history at a depth greater than many natural born citizens—this piece of information shared with him by an impressed Immigration Officer who’d administered his oral test for US citizenship, a story my father proudly recounted often.

He wanted to be a musician and could have been a professional one. Instead he chose to serve as physician, a sign on his office door in Annandale, in the 1970’s, offering his care at no charge should a patient have no means to pay. My father always said, “I believe in Moses, Jesus & Mohammed.” He welcomed my mother into his family without asking her to change her religion. “Why would I ask her to change something that makes her so happy?” he told his family at the time.



My American Liberty Story

Dr. Karolyn Kabir continues (p3 of 3)

He also valued hard work and education, insisting his three daughters pursue their studies seriously to become independent and self-sufficient. He did not want us to depend on someone else for our financial stability. He wanted us to create our own destinies.



My father, far right, in 1958, celebrating on the ship SS America, on the last night of his journey from Tehran to France (by train) then by ship to Baltimore.

He immigrated to complete his residency training in the US at a time when our country needed physicians and was actively recruiting them from other countries.

When I visit my father's gravesite, I am filled with gratitude for his courage. It was his bravery that led him, at 23 years of age, to board a ship in 1958 and head across a large body of water toward a land that called to him, but that he'd never seen. A man who had the courage to follow his heart and hold open his hands, his dreams in one, his hopes in the other. I am proud to be the now grown child of an immigrant and I am so proud of my father.

His upbringing, his voyage, and his dreams, like the colorful Persian carpets he grew up with, inextricably weaved into the rich beautiful tapestry that is our Country's heritage.

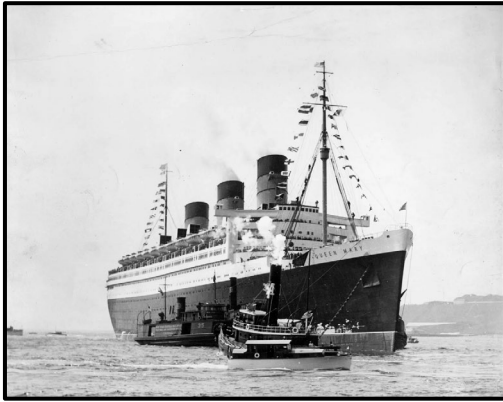


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My American Liberty Story

Lily Dunning Widman



RMS Queen Mary

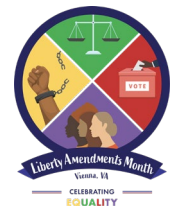
On March 18, 1939, Beryl Smith boarded the RMS Queen Mary in Southampton England. The British passenger ship was headed for New York City; the voyage would make one stop in Cherbourg France, and take about 5 days to complete. The ship was large, holding more than 2,000 passengers, and was only about three years old at the time of my grandmother's journey. At 18 years old, she travelled alone, with her Uncle Cecil and Aunt Tino waiting for her in New York City.

Grannie's story of her maiden voyage to America was a fanciful one. Her parents, Horace and Mabel Smith, sent her to New York City to live with her Aunt and Uncle because they did not approve her boyfriend at the time. Things were getting too serious between the two of them. The boyfriend (who's name is not recalled in family retellings of this story) was utterly devastated and broken hearted when she left her childhood home in Surrey, on the South Coast of England. On the journey to New York Beryl met and was courted by an English Duke. The Duke faded into the background of the story as my grandmother learned the culture of a new country and got accustomed to the fast pace of life in New York City.



Beryl Smith, 1939

The realities of my grandmother's journey to America and eventually American citizenship were a bit different. While it is likely true that there was a suitor who my great grandparents did not approve of, it's less likely this was the motivating factor for her journey to the United States. In March of 1939 Britain was 6 months away from declaring war on Nazi Germany. The possibility of a World War and the question of safety for the citizens of England was constant. When Grannie stepped aboard the RMS Queen Mary, her brother, my great-uncle Pete, had already



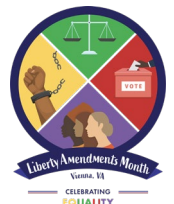
My American Liberty Story

Lily Dunning Widman continues (p2 of 3)

The realities of my grandmother's journey to America and eventually American citizenship were a bit different. While it is likely true that there was a suitor who my great grandparents did not approve of, it's less likely this was the motivating factor for her journey to the United States. In March of 1939 Britain was 6 months away from declaring war on Nazi Germany. The possibility of a World War and the question of safety for the citizens of England was constant. **When Grannie stepped aboard the RMS Queen Mary, her brother, my great-uncle Pete, had already joined the British Royal Air Force and was in training camp to become a pilot in Ontario, Canada.** Those with means (and my grandmother's family certain had means) were actively sending their loved ones to places across the globe where they thought they would be safe and well cared for. In 1939, many people still thought that the United States would (and some felt should) stay out of the way in Europe.

The United States was viewed by many as a safe place to escape the War. Many of my grandmother's cousins were also sent to America around this time to be in the care of Uncle Cecil, Aunt Tino or other expatriated members of the Smith Family living in New England. Beryl's cousins Barbara and Rosemary were a few years younger than she; they stayed in the U.S. until the war was over and then returned to their homes in England.

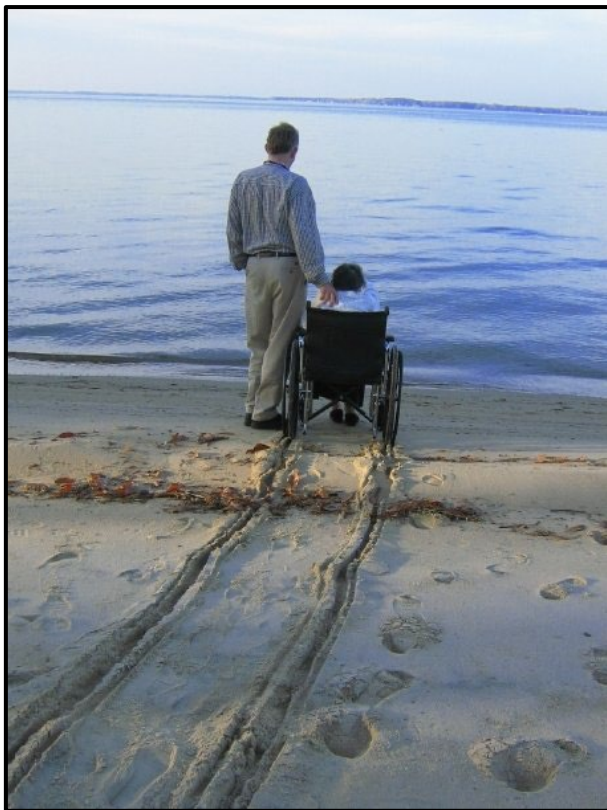
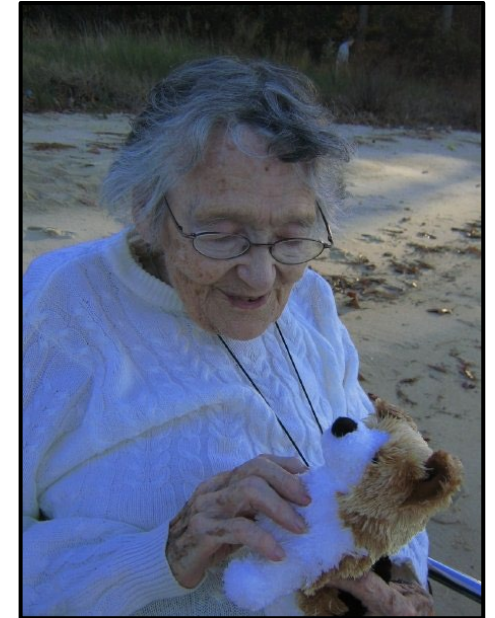
Beryl (my grandmother) and Lloyd (my grandfather) met at a weekend gathering at Tino and Cecil Smith's house in Greenwich, Connecticut. At that time, Grandpa was working for J Walter Thompson Advertising and sharing an apartment in Manhattan with John Smith (Grannie's cousin, Cecil and Tino's son) and two other boys. Family and friends would gather at Cecil and Tino's Connecticut home on the weekends and give concerts (the Smith family was very musical and could form a string quartet at the drop of the hat, and then spend the next hour or so playing music for whoever was around), play tennis and spend time together. Beryl and Lloyd were married less than a year after they met.



My American Liberty Story

Lily Dunning Widman continues (p3 of 3)

Early in my grandparents' courtship my Grannie mentioned to my Grandpa that she wanted to go to Ontario to visit her brother Pete. Lloyd didn't have a car at the time, so he went to a used car lot and bought one immediately, took some time off work and they were on their way. In 2024 it would take almost 9 hours to drive from Lexington Avenue in New York City to the Royal Air Force Base where by my great Uncle Pete was stationed. In 1939, I imagine it must have taken my grandparents at least two days. They loved going on this adventure together and my grandmother treasured the time that she spent with her brother on this trip. It was the last time she saw him alive. He was killed in the War in 1941.

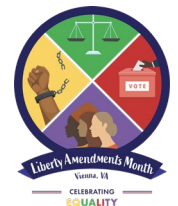


Peter Hayward Dunning and Beryl Smith Dunning

My grandparents married in New York City in 1940; my grandmother was 19. In November of 1943, my father was born. Beryl and Lloyd named him Peter Hayward Dunning after my great Uncle Pete.



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My American Liberty Story

Roxanne Nersesian Paul family story

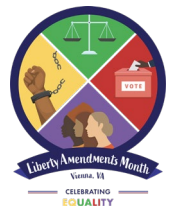


The Armenians were persecuted during the Ottoman Empire, but never as badly as the first genocide of the 20th century, which started in 2015. Armenian intellectuals, leaders and clergy were rounded up in Istanbul and executed. My grandfather, General Arshag Nersesian, was an Armenian freedom fighter, who defended the local civilian populations. His nickname was Sebouh, which means noble. During World War I, Armenia was known as “the little ally” and my grandfather fought in some of those battles on the side of the allies.

With the fall of the brief Armenian Republic, the family fled to America. My dad, Mourad Sebouh Nersesian was 2 years old when they arrived in Ellis Island in 1922. The family lived in Detroit, Boston and Providence but eventually settled in New York City. My grandfather became a shopkeeper. My dad earned a scholarship from City College, but was only able to accept it, because his two older brothers supported the family after my grandfather died.

My parents met in the NYC chapter of the Armenian Youth Federation and married in 1943. Shortly thereafter, my dad was shipped overseas to fight in the Pacific Theater for 3 ½ years in World War II.

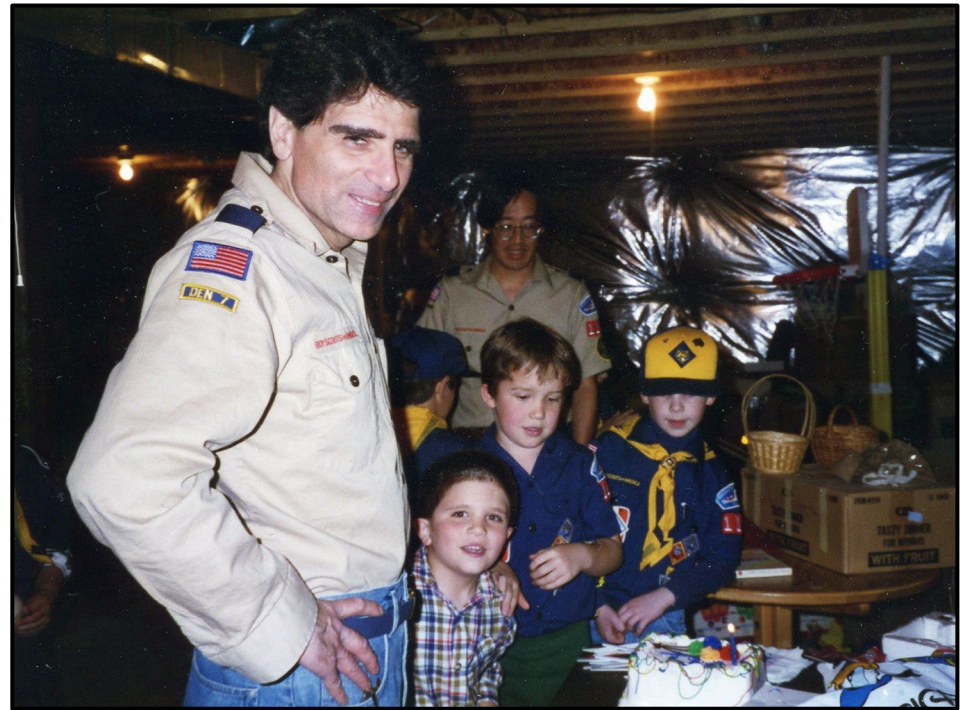
After he returned, my parents moved to Long Island, but were only able to afford their \$18,000 house because my maternal grandfather lent them the \$1000 down payment. I grew up on Long Island and was also active in the Armenian Youth Federation.



My American Liberty Story

Roxanne Nersesian Paul family story continues...

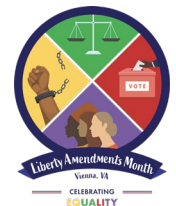
I met my husband, Aram Paul (also the child of Armenian immigrants) at a conference, where he represented the Washington, DC chapter. We married in 1982 and moved to Vienna in 1984. We raised three sons who all went to the Vienna schools and all earned Eagle Scout in Troop 152. But, sadly, Aram did not live to see this. He died from cancer in 2002, when the boys were 11, 14 and 16. The “boys” are all now in the 30’s, with graduate degrees and working in their respective fields. I have two precious granddaughters now.



Life is good for us, but I never take for granted that my family was able to flee Armenia before it became carved up between Turkey and the Soviet Union. We were able to come to the United States and achieve the American Dream. I know that there are other people fleeing dire circumstances and dangers now, who also dream of a better, safer life, and I wish them the same good fortune that my family has had.



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My American Liberty Story

Miguel Ordóñez

To Serve is to Succeed

Roots: I was born American and international. I was raised “American” in both senses of the word: loyal citizen of the USA and Pan-American, with strong Guatemalan Central American roots. North, Central, and South Americans comprise the Pan American peoples.

Though not an immigrant, **my American Story is replete with immigration tales through five generations.** One great-grandfather immigrated from Hamburg, Germany to Coban, Guatemala in the late 1800s. After World War I he returned to Europe.

Both my mother’s parents were born in Acquaviva delle Fonti in South Italy’s Puglia region. Grandfather arrived June 25, 1913 aboard the SS Chicago. Grandmother arrived April 23, 1921 aboard the SS Dante Alighieri. Both were processed through New York Harbor’s Ellis Island.

My father, Carlos Rafael Ordóñez was born in Guatemala City. He arrived in New Orleans by air on May 8, 1945 to visit his father who was there in temporary political exile. At age 16 he began studying at UM Ann Arbor. He was elected president of Phi Iota Alpha fraternity at UM which to this day promotes Latin American unity and develops Latino leaders. He instilled Pan-American and leadership values into his seven children.

Our Guatemalan grandparents never immigrated to the USA. One aunt later worked in D.C., as a trilingual translator at the Pan American Health Organization as an expatriate. Another aunt married an American and lived in the New York City area. I never met another Guatemalan-American until I was 17. We visited “La Familia” several times in my childhood. Both Italian grandparents and my father became U.S. citizens before my birth.



Wanpen Naturalization Ceremony

I met my wife while a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand. Wanpen Boonma was home birthed in Mae Soon Noi village of Chiang Mai province near the Burmese border. She flew with me to Seattle on December 15, 1985 on an immigrant visa and naturalized as a U.S. citizen on July 5, 2001.



My American Liberty Story

Miguel Ordóñez continues (p2 of 3)

To Serve is to Succeed

My oldest sister married an immigrant from Malaysia. My older brother married an immigrant from Trinidad. My nephew married an immigrant from Croatia. My oldest child married an “immigrant” of a different sort. And so, our two grandsons are registered Tlingit Native Alaskans with roots in southeast Alaska dating at least 120 centuries from their “immigration” to North America!

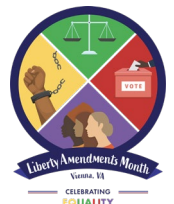


Miguel Ordóñez swearing in

Service: President Kennedy in his 1961 Inaugural Address inspired a generation with these words, **“Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.”** My adult life has been mainly one of federal service, spanning 31 of the 35 years prior to retirement. All this work was related to promoting international understanding, development, peace building, and shared prosperity.

I served 11 years with the Peace Corps. After leaving Peace Corps/South Pacific staff in 1996, I worked briefly as Deputy Director of the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office for Catholic Relief Services. Then I began 20 years as a Department of State Foreign Service Officer (Diplomat).

International nomadic life took me to 44 countries. I lived as an expatriate for over 22 years, first with extended family (“La Familia”) in Guatemala, then in Thailand, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, India, Morocco, and the Federated States of Micronesia. We purchased our first home in Vienna, Virginia in 2010. Along life’s trail I studied 12 languages, including all six official UN languages. I have developed expertise in cross-cultural communication and adaptation.



My American Liberty Story

Miguel Ordóñez continues (p2 of 3)

To Serve is to Succeed

Integrity, Prudence, Ability: I commenced each Federal job by swearing an oath to “*support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies...*” Foreign Service Officer commissions are signed by the President and Secretary of State after our Senate confirmation. All commissions begin with the words, “**Reposing special trust and confidence in your Integrity, Prudence, and Ability...**” These three qualities, a positive attitude of gratitude for the blessings of liberty we share, along with a view that it is a privilege to serve, are keys to success.

Integrity means to always behave ethically.

Prudence means to act carefully, weighing pros and cons before speaking, writing, or acting.

Ability means to use one’s innate and developed gifts and skills to render service unto others.

No one can do EVERYTHING, but everyone can do SOMETHING. Excel in your special “something,” find a way to earn a living doing what you love, and watch the magic of life unfold. Doors will open as your vistas expand!

Our great nation GIVES us all great liberty as our birthright. These rights give us, in turn, a responsibility to give back, by rendering service to others, the greater Self.

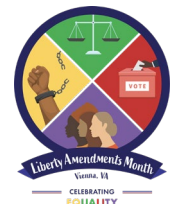
In the USA we all have the potential to succeed by combining the spirit of service with integrity, prudence, and ability. Wisdom is not GIVEN. It has to be earned. Freedom without wisdom is not true freedom. Wisdom without freedom is not true wisdom. Both free and wise, you become liberated to build your own version of the American Dream!



Miguel Ordóñez retirement



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My American Liberty Story

The Traveling Sea Chest



In Antwerp Belgium, on the 8th of May, 1848, after having sold much of his property and belongings, my maternal

Great-great-grandfather, Gregorious Franciscus Maeyens and his four children – one of which would be my Great-grandfather Jacobus Bernardus Maeyens- boarded the English ship Sarah which would sail across the Atlantic to their new home in America.

Before the family set sail, Gregorious Franciscus was supplied with reference documents by the “Mayor and councilmen of the city of Yzendkye, province of Zeeland” and declared “Gregorious Franciscus, born in 1791, have lived with this county and, as far as known, of good and peaceful character”.

Sailing with them in steerage was a wooden chest. Measuring 46 inches by 22 inches by 18 inches and carrying the family’s necessities, the chest served as 14-year-old Jacobus Maeyens’ bed during the long voyage. That chest would eventually reside with multiple generations and cross the North American continent twice!

The family (along with their chest!) landed in New York. From there, they traveled to the Kansas City, Missouri area. Family legend has it that they purchased property where the present-day Kansas City Railroad Station is located. Unfortunately, violence from the pre-Civil War “Border War” between Kansas and Missouri made the region too dangerous as the residents fought over whether Kansas would be a slave state or a free state once it entered the Union. The family (along with their chest!) chose to move further east, settling in Osage County, Missouri.

Just west of Osage County lay Cole County Missouri. It was here that **a Koehler family settled having emigrated from Bavaria.** Their importance to my family is that my Great-Grandfather, now calling himself “Jacob Mayens” married one of the Koehler daughters, a widow whose first



husband left her a grocery store – a trade that would influence future generations. From this union, Peter Charles Mayens, my grandfather, was born. The young family (and the chest!) later chose to settle in Jefferson City, MO.



My American Liberty Story

The Traveling Sea Chest continues...

Peter Charles Mayens, or “Grandpa Pete” as I know him, married twice. His first marriage was to Mary Margaret Beck, daughter of N.C. Beck. In 1906, he married a second time to my grandmother, Mary Margaret Beck, daughter of Augusta and Conrad Beck (and a distant relative to Grandpa Pete’s first wife). **The Becks were some of the earliest settlers in the Jefferson City, MO area. Streets “Conrad” and “Beck” can still be found.**

Having grown up learning the grocery store trade, Grandpa Pete eventually built a large 3 level building at the corner of High and Ash streets in Jefferson City. The building had a full grocery store on the first level with full living quarters above plus an attic. It was in this attic that the sea chest was placed and, with time, fell into disrepair.

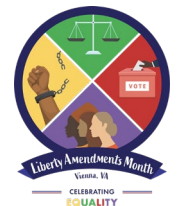
It was in the apartment living section above the grocery store, that I, June Mueller Lassman, was born. Due to the 1930’s dust storms, my parents were advised that my pregnant mother return to Missouri from western Kansas. Often, newborn babies died of “dust pneumonia”. I refer to myself as a “dust storm refugee”.

Eventually, the grocery store which Grandpa Pete, then my Aunt Celeste ran closed, and the property sold. My parents, Janet Mayens Mueller and Oscar Mueller were able to rescue the sea chest from the attic. So, after a “layover” of around 80 years, the sea chest resumed its travels across the continent. My parents took it to their home in Myrtle Point, Oregon where my father was able to restore it. After many years in Oregon, my parents’ home was sold, and the sea chest made a return trip across the continent to Vienna, Virginia. **The sea chest, which is now a family treasure, stores more family treasures such as pieced quilts made by my Grandmother Beck Mayens and Great-grandmother Augusta Beck.** The sea chest also holds a box of family papers and records including a letter from my Grandma Mayens “to my dear children, I have copied these family notes so you may not forget your honorable ancestry.... It is my earnest prayer that you live to the best that is within you. That you keep your record pure, that your descendants may have nothing to be ashamed of.”

The 10,000-mile journey of our sea chest, which started 176 years ago in Europe, is not over yet. In the not so far future, the chest is expected to travel another 41 miles to a new home in Maryland with my son, a historian.



Use the QR Code or visit the Freeman Store and Museum or the Community Center to view all of the stories.



My American Liberty Story Anonymous Story

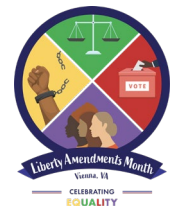


I am a second generation American: my parents and grandparents were “Naturalized” citizens. I was born in America. But for a few weeks of foreign travel I lived in America for all my 80 plus years. **I am first and foremost an American who never entertained the idea of calling another country my home.**

I am a Jew of German extraction; my parents and grandparents left Nazi Germany for America in the mid to late 1930's. My father arrived in January 1938 as one of the last Jews allowed to “willingly” leave the country. My uncle (my mother’s brother) arrived here in 1935, my mother in 1936 and my mother’s parents in 1937 (note -- families were not allowed to leave Hitler’s Germany as a unit). Other than my father’s brother, who fled Germany for Argentina in the early 1930s,

never to be heard from again, no other family members from my father’s side made it out. My paternal grandfather committed suicide as the Gestapo came to arrest him for being a Jew. My paternal grandmother died before all hell broke out for Jews and other “undesirables.” In short, I only had five relatives that made it to America. Our holiday dinners and get-togethers were small quiet affairs where talk was about something they that talked about all week (they spoke to each other daily) or, “do you remember how aunt so-and-so spilled the coffee on uncle so-and-so’s lap at the wedding of so-and-so some 30 years ago”).

For those unfamiliar with Jewish history in Germany in the 1930s, everyday life became more difficult as the years passed. Before the mass deportations and killings began Jews were no longer permitted to congregate, they were ousted from schools, dismissed from their professions and prohibited from working with or trading with non-Jews, etc. A person with 1/32 Jewish blood (one great grandparent) was defined as being Jewish. My mother’s father, a tailor and a decorated WWI veteran, was stripped of his medals and honors -- Jews were no longer permitted to hold them even though awarded by the previous German Reich – and were no longer permitted to work with non-Jewish patrons. My maternal grandmother, a seamstress, was similarly restricted in who she could serve. My



My American Liberty Story Anonymous Story continues (p2 of 4)

paternal grandfather, a dentist, was no longer permitted to practice, and my father, a fully trained and licensed medical doctor was at first no longer allowed to treat non-Jewish patients and subsequently no longer permitted to practice medicine in any person-to-person manner. He was relegated to work as a lab technician.

This brings me to the Levys (and the Hirschs, - my mother's family name) as Americans. My mother's side of my family **left Germany because of persecution - the denial of the rights and protections of German citizenship and their physical safety**. Their entry into this country was conditioned on America's restrictive immigration policies: immigration quotas, the immigrant's medical condition (my mother was on the brink of being sent back to Germany because of poor eyesight) and a guarantee not to be on the public dole (prospective immigrants were required to obtain an affidavit from a citizen guaranteeing financial support, if necessary, and a job). My father's entry was a little more iffy. Other than the restrictive immigration laws, he was allowed to leave Germany with only one suitcase and \$10 in his pocket.

Between his arrival in NY in January 1938 and late 1939, my father learned English (then still required for American citizenship), became a male-nurse (almost unheard of in 1938-9), studied for his medical state-boards, passed the New York State medical licensing exams and married my mother on Christmas Eve 1939. As a nurse my father earned \$12 a week. My mother earned \$13 a week as an X-ray technician. Together they rented a \$100 a month apartment in upper Manhattan. They were subsidized by my maternal grandparents who had a small tailor/cleaning shop opened shortly after they immigrated.

I was born in 1943 and lived for 18 years in the apartment my parents first rented. The apartment was small, albeit it had two bedrooms and two baths. It served not only as the family's living quarters but as my father's medical office, waiting room, and recuperation facility for my maternal grandparents and fellow immigrants my parents had befriended. To make the apartment even smaller, the shower stall in the second bathroom became my father's dark room for developing X-rays. By 1949 it was financially possible for my folks to rent the one bedroom apartment next door for my father's office. The original apartment became private but remained the recuperation facility for my now one living grandparent and those fellow immigrants who either had no money or no one to look after them.

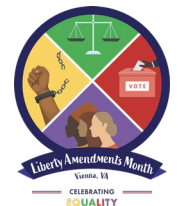


My American Liberty Story Anonymous Story continues (p3 of 4)

The transition from having one apartment to having two was not an easy one: World War II got in the way. The United States was at war with the country that rejected my family. With a young boy at home (me) Dad volunteered for service, was inducted as a 1st Lieutenant into the Army of the United States in 1944 and was shipped to Germany. He served with distinction and returned to America shortly after the European War ended in May 1945. Before his discharge in 1946, he was issued a side-arm in contemplation of his being shipped off to the still raging war in the Pacific. When Japan fell in August, 1945 the transfer was unnecessary. Instead he served at an army medical facility on Roosevelt Island, NY.

The transition to civilian life between 1946 and 1949 also was not an easy one. Dad went into the Army at age 36 and was discharged at age 38. He then had to restart his medical practice in this country a second time. This time he was in “competition” with those doctors who didn’t go overseas (had home-front duty but could maintain a civilian practice) and those who stayed home and didn’t serve at all. By the time of his death in 1991, Dad had become a well-respected and beloved General Practitioner (now Internist) in his Washington Heights neighborhood (upper Manhattan) and the go-to Cardiologist and Diagnostician at the primary hospital in the Washington Heights/Inwood sections of Manhattan.

So why this story? My parents and grandparents came to this country because it was the “shining light on the hill.” ***They did not come to America because it was perfect, but because it held the promise of a better life.*** While they probably could have emigrated to several other countries, America was, and is, a country that still actively pursues the promises it made in its 250 year old Declaration of Independence, and the rights our forebears set forth in our almost 250 year old Constitution. Among those rights -- “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness...” America is still not perfect, and probably will never be. But, and that's a big “but,” we among all the nations of the world, are one of the few, if any, that tries to live up to its centuries-old ideals. It is a country that millions still flock to when given a choice. Where else can a 30-year old immigrant, like my father start his adult life completely anew and start it again as a 38-year old with a family? Few in this world of some 12 billion souls enjoy the right to ***Life, Liberty and the PURSUIT of Happiness.***



My American Liberty Story Anonymous Story continues (p4 of 4)

The bottom line is that the freedoms and opportunities America offers its citizens make all things possible.

The boys in the Vienna, VA boy scout troop I was associated with for 15+ years gave me the moniker “*Merit Badge Dude.*” I coordinated their merit badge achievements and awards with the troop and counseled boys on their merit badges both within the troop and for the district. Among the merit badges I counseled were the three citizenship badges required for scout rank advancement to Eagle. As a requirement for the Citizenship in the Nation merit badge, the Scout had to petition the President, a Senator or a Congressman to do something, ask for something or just plain complain. Many of the letters were not in the purview of the addressee and some were subject-wise clearly off the charts. When I asked what the purpose of the letter requirement was, the answers ranged from a shrug to serious. Regardless, a discussion followed. In the end we concluded that the purpose was to show that **it was the scout's right to petition his nation's leadership; that he could do so without fear of retribution, and expect a response.** Nine times out of 10, the scout received a response. If a scout's letter was not in the recipient's purview, a more appropriate contact, along with a name, address and telephone number was most often offered. What better proof is there that we have the right to petition our representatives and have our representatives listen to us. As a side-bar, and apropos of nothing, I recall the joke about a political conversation/argument between an American and Russian citizen during the cold war (just as applicable today.) The American said, without fear of retribution, that his President was an idiot and should be imprisoned. The Russian countered that he too, without fear of retribution, could say the American President was an idiot and should be imprisoned.

For giving safe harbor to my parents and grandparents I owe this country much. America's promise has always been to try to do better by its citizens and to always offer its citizens the opportunity to do better for themselves. Whatever the country's shortcomings, America's promise is what drives millions to seek it out. *An individual's ability to succeed is limited only by*

ambition and a willingness to work. Our rights and freedoms are limited only to the extent they impinge on the rights and freedoms of others
- your fist ends where another's nose begins.



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My American Liberty Story



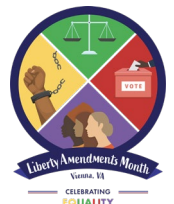
Mary Smith Carson

Descendent of Augustine Herman who arrived in Virginia in 1629 and mapped Virginia's waterways

Who would be related to Mary Smith? Common name but uncommon ancestors! I'm lucky to be able to share my ancestor, Augustine Herman. He was a pirate who sailed the ocean over to our continent in the early 1600's with *no maritime maps*.

His pirate ship sailed down the water ways which were the Potomac, Rappahanock and James rivers as we know them today! **As he sailed he drew inlets and availability of being able to sail large vessels with deep enough water.**

Augustine Herman was born in Prague, Bohemia in the 1600s and educated in Ireland. He spoke his own language, German, Dutch, French, Spanish, English and Latin. **He left Bohemia as a result of religious persecution and went to work for the Dutch East Indian Company.** He arrived in Virginia as early as 1629 and became an owner of *pirate frigates which preyed on many Spanish Ships*. He settled on the southern tip of New York Island called New Amsterdam in 1643. He was a surveyor by profession but became an artist, merchant and diplomat.

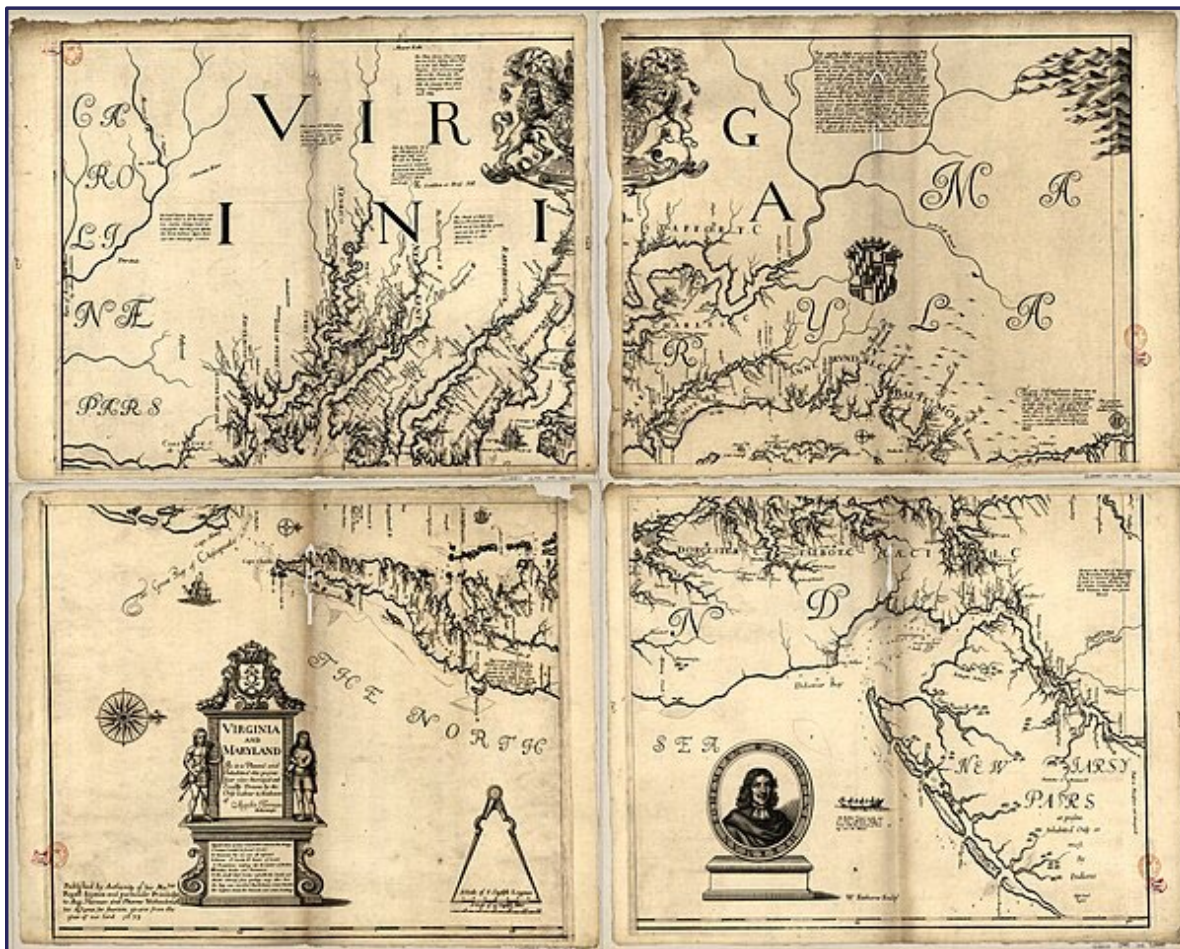


My American Liberty Story

Mary Smith Carson continues...

Descendent of Augustine Herman who arrived in Virginia in 1629 and mapped Virginia's waterways

In 1656 he painted the first sketch of New Amsterdam which is the oldest surviving print of this area! He surveyed and mapped Maryland and surrounding territory! A copperplate was made of it and sent to London, where it was published in 1671. This map is still in existence in the files of the Maryland Historic Society!



For his work on this map he received 4000 acres called “Bohemian Manor.”

He died in 1686 and is buried on that land (7 miles from Elkton, MD). A stone monument is on the grounds that reads:

“Augustine Herman, first founder of Bohemia Manor.”

We have visited the site but no one knows where the grave is located!



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My American Liberty Story

Hanan Daqqa

'Girl, You Will Be A Woman Soon'

I don't remember why I was so upset, but I remember my voice getting louder and louder in the plain bedroom his friends gave us to spend the first night we visited them.

We were standing face to face, my arms were shaking, and my facial expressions were volatile.

I remember feeling my blood pressure hitting hard to the top of my head, changing my hormones until I started to feel foggy and tired.

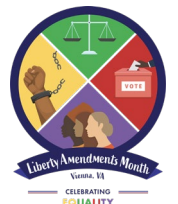
I also remember how beneath that anger, I desperately wanted him to comfort me and help me understand why I was angry, but he did not. His silence aggravated me. Is it scary to deal with a woman who does not know herself? I felt disappointed and helpless and started to question: is this love? Is this the love he talked about in the first week we met—when we got engaged so fast?

It was my first month of marriage, and the first month in America far away from the roots I built in the Middle East as a television host and as a sheltered daughter in a conservative country. I had never been that angry in the 28 years before getting married. That night I felt alone with a man I barely knew.

The feeling of helplessness deepened. I felt ashamed of my anger and for being in a relationship with a man who did not even try to comfort me. I was sure his friends heard every word I said. I wanted to hide.

I remember waking up to the call for breakfast and putting on the fancy navy sandals that keep me tall enough. I had no option but to meet their eyes. In the kitchen, first came the Iranian religious wife followed by her 4-year-old son in his red shirt, blond hair, and a sunny smile that forced me to smile and forget about last night. The conversation centered on him until his mother asked him to leave. I remember him giving me two tiny plastic red roses that I held on to passionately.

Then the conversation became between me and the wife. Somehow I reminded her of herself when she first got married: "Oh, not another one of me...I used to argue with him and ask him to look me in the eye, but then I created my own community of



My American Liberty Story

Hanan Daqqa continues...

'Girl, You Will Be A Woman Soon'



women and I started to feel better...just get out of it...it is nonsense, believe me." She looked at that part of herself in me with resentment, grudge, pain, and rejection...at the end of our conversation, she asked me to take off the fancy navy sandals when indoors. She wanted her carpet clean for her son. I took them off and still remember how innocently they stood there at the entrance floor. I bought them before moving to the US. It was a love at first sight.

After that trip, I still did not know why I was angry, but I realized I needed help, which scared me. I remember telling him, "I do not want a therapist to tell me what to do before I understand what is going on and have some sense of control over my feelings." Somehow I found the strength and courage to take full responsibility for healing myself.

A week later, we were with his other friends at IHOP. The wife, a Canadian Muslim, asked me the usual question: how have you been? And I was excited to share that I feel much better after spending a week journaling my feelings every two hours. Feelings! Feelings were never allowed in the Middle East. Growing up in our household, my loving and empowering father repeated, "I don't like it when women start crying." So, I forced myself many times to avoid crying in public. School taught us: feelings lead to sins, follow your mind instead. So, I used to block them.

It was the free access to books everywhere in America that helped me connect to my feelings and finally sign peace treaties with them. "They are here to help you," I learned from the many self-help books I browsed in bookstores or borrowed from public libraries. I learned how to listen to my feelings and respond to them, embrace them. This is how I hopped into womanhood and Americanhood!



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