



Photos by Layla Garms
Right: New citizens take the Oath of Allegiance.
Below: Sons of the American Revolution retire the colors during last week's ceremony.

Dozens take citizenship oath on Independence Day

BY LAYLA GARMS
 THE CHRONICLE

On the most patriotic holiday of them all, 59 area residents became U.S. citizens.

For the second-straight year, Old Salem Museum and Gardens hosted a naturalization ceremony during its festive slate of Fourth of July events.

The new American citizens hail from all over the globe - from El Salvador to Israel, Jamaica to Jordan. They were cheered on during the outdoor ceremony by family members and friends as they recited the Oath of Allegiance and accepted the certificates that declared them U.S. citizens.

For Affiwa Sedjro, a native of Togo, Africa, becoming an American means one thing: "Freedom."

The mother of four's excitement was obvious as she crossed the stage, waving her certificate in the air for the world to see. Her citizenship signifies the end of an era for Sedjro and Koffi Lougou, her husband of more than three decades. The two spent years apart when Lougou first immigrated to America to work to secure a home for his family. Sedjro, who works at an African hair braiding shop in High Point, and the couple's children arrived in 2000. Her husband became a citizen in March. She followed suit last week, pledging her allegiance to the country that has been her solace from the unrest of her homeland.

"We are very, very happy," she declared with a wide grin. "I don't know what I can say."

Among her first acts of a citizen will be helping to reelect President Barack Obama when she votes in her first U.S. election in November, Sedjro said.

Sharon Lewis-Craig, Old Salem's new president and CEO, encouraged all those present to make good use of their newfound citizenship.

"Congratulations on this great deed," she declared. "...As our newest citizens,



New citizen Vera Hough with her husband Jibril and their eight year-old daughter, Hannah.

you now have the opportunity to voice your opinion and contribute to the well being of our country."

Vera Hough, a native of Indonesia, said she came to America in search of better opportunities. Though Hough, whose husband Jibril Hough and eight year-old daughter accompanied her to the ceremony, said she has found happiness in this country, becoming an official citizen was not a choice she made lightly.

"It's not an easy decision to become a citizen because I had to let my Indonesian citizenship go," remarked Hough, a teller at State Employees Credit Union in Charlotte.

Though she still loves her homeland, Hough believes that home is where the heart is, and for the last 14 years, her heart has been in the United States.

"It's kind of exciting," she said of becoming a citizen. "This is my home - even before becoming a citizen, this was my home already. So now, it's official."

In his keynote address, Vice Admiral Harry Harris Jr., assistant to U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Martin Dempsey, spoke about his own experience in becoming an American citizen and the significant role immigrants play in the history and the future of the nation.



Vice Admiral Harry Harris Jr. addresses the audience.

"I believe the richness of our diversity is exactly what makes our country the greatest in the world," declared Harris, who was born on a U.S. military base in Japan, where he was naturalized along with his mother, who became a citizen in 1974.

"...We are the very foundation of America's strength, and a strong America matters on a fundamental level to global peace and security."

Independence Day is a big to-do at the museum; Salem, the historic town that the museum celebrates, hosted the nation's very first Fourth of July celebration in the 18th Century.

The celebration there continued throughout the day with puppet shows, historic games, a jazz concert at the St. Philips African American Complex and a reenactment of the procession around Salem Square that marked the first Independence Day celebration on July 4, 1783.

Tour

from page A1

influence over politicians. Politicians, campaign watchdog groups and President Barack Obama have spoken out against the ruling.

Tour participants caught the attention of pedestrians with homemade protest signs featuring catchy slogans like "Rescue a Politician they are Drowning in Corporate Cash." Fake money bags were used as props, and one tour participant even dressed as Uncle Sam. The groups' set-up became an outdoor theater as passers-by stopped to watch short videos about campaign finance reform. A petition that Occupy Winston-Salem and Democracy N.C. have been circulating that calls for the Winston-Salem City Council to pass a resolution supporting a national constitutional amendment to undo the High Court ruling was made available for anyone who wished to sign it. Voter registration forms were also available.



Gray

"We (are trying) to take back our democracy," said Democracy N.C. intern Keren Salim, a Salem College student who organized the event with fellow intern Tyshia Gray.

Gray, a Winston-Salem State University student, said the petition drive is getting good local support. At last month's Juneteenth celebration, nearly 200 signatures were collected.

"There are more people out there that really care ... than what I thought and what I anticipated," she said.



Keren Salim (right) talks with Myca Scaife and Phillip Stafford as Valeria Cobos looks on.

Occupy Winston-Salem's Debra Demske said the issue is tied to the many concerns that her group has. Occupy Winston-Salem grew from New York City's Occupy Wall Street movement, which protests wealth inequality and the influence of the wealthy.

"It's corrupting our political system," said Demske. "It's making it impossible to have any real and meaningful discussions about any issues at all."

The Occupy movement doesn't draw the headlines that it used to, but local members insist the movement is still going strong.

Valeria Cobos, an Occupy Winston-Salem member, took part to encourage Americans to take back their democracy by exercising their right to vote. Ironically, Cobos, who has lived in the United States most of her life but was born in Mexico, is not a citizen and does not have the right to vote. She said Americans should realize what a luxury and privilege voting is.

"To me, being able to vote would be such a great privilege and honor, so I would like to see other people exercise

their privilege," said Cobos, who is also part of the grassroots immigrants' rights group El Cambio.

Myca Scaife, a onetime Democracy N.C. volunteer, heard about the event and stopped by with her friend Phillip Stafford. They both added their names to the petition.

"I'm not normally one to sign petitions, but it's something that needs to be changed," Stafford said about campaign finance. "Having corporations treated as people is bad for the simple fact that it allows them to back their favorite politicians so other people can't compete."

The Truth Tour will continue on July 18 at 6 p.m. at the Central Library with "Knowledge is Power," a presentation that will feature speakers, a petition drive and voter registration. Salim and Gray said other events after that are still in the works.

For more information about Occupy Winston, visit occupywinstonsalem.org. For information on Democracy NC, visit democracy-nc.org.

Need a car?
 Good credit or not so good credit!
 I can help, call me today.
TERRY HOWELL
 722-4191 ext. 1326
MODERN CHEVROLET

BANKRUPTCY
 Legal Help For Your Debt Problems
DONALD R. BUIE, Attorney At Law
 Donald R. Buie www.donaldrbuie.com
 ★ Free Initial Consultation
 ★ Stop Repossession & Foreclosure
 The Law Office of Donald R. Buie is a Federally designated Debt Relief Agency under Title 11 United States Code Section 528(a). We help people file for bankruptcy relief under the bankruptcy code.
773-1398
 8 W. 3rd St., Ste. 100

FOR SALE
Office Building
 3100 Square feet
 1334 Patterson Avenue
 Winston-Salem, NC 27105
 Call Richard Davis 760-4709

Our Transportation Planners are Updating their P.P.P!*
 *That's DOT-speak for "Public Participation Policy."
 The Winston-Salem Department of Transportation is updating its policy for soliciting public participation for projects in Winston-Salem and the surrounding area. A public hearing on the updated PPP will be held at 4:15 p.m. July 19 in Room 530 of the Stuart Municipal Building, 100 E. First St., Winston-Salem.
 A draft of the updated PPP can be read online at DOT.CityofWS.org or at public libraries in Forsyth County and King, each municipal town hall, the N.C. Dept. of Transportation Division 9 office at 375 Silas Creek Parkway, and the Winston-Salem Dept. of Transportation at 100 E. First St., Room 307.
 Questions? Call 747-6881
 Requests for auxiliary aids and services to participate, including translation for non-English speakers and services for the deaf and hard of hearing, should be made by July 17 to Kevin Edwards by e-mail (kevine@cityofws.org), fax (748-3370), or telephone (747-6881).

 The Winston-Salem Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) does not exclude participation or discriminate in any program or activity receiving Federal assistance on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.
 Any person who believes they have been aggrieved by an unlawful discriminatory practice regarding the Winston-Salem Urban Area MPO programs has a right to file a formal complaint with the Phillip Vereen, Transit Planner, City of Winston-Salem, P.O. Box 2511, 27102, within one hundred and eighty (180) days following the date of the alleged discrimination occurrence.

DRIVE OUT TERRORISM
 And get money for college. Be a truck driver in the Army National Guard.

NATIONALGUARD.com • 1-800-GO-GUARD
 The Chronicle (USPS 067-910) was established by Ernest H. Pitt and Ndubisi Egemonye in 1974 and is published every Thursday by Winston-Salem Chronicle Publishing Co. Inc., 617 N. Liberty Street, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27101. Periodicals postage paid at Winston-Salem, N.C. Annual subscription price is \$30.72.
 POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: The Chronicle, P.O. Box 1636, Winston-Salem, NC 27102-1636