

# New U.S. citizens take oath in Stony Brook

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Rahul Tripathi came to the United States from India when he was about 11 months old.

America was his home, the place where the Port Jefferson resident came of age and eventually became an internal medicine physician at Stony Brook University Hospital. Yet, he wasn't a citizen.

On Wednesday, Tripathi, 31, took the oath, along with about 45 other people, in a naturalization ceremony at The Long Island Museum in Stony Brook.

"This country has given me opportunities, education and tools to serve . . . others, and today it gives me something I've long hoped for: citizenship," he told other new Americans in the audience. "In return, I promise to continue showing up for my patients, advocating for those who feel voiceless, and helping to shape a nation where everyone has a chance to be seen, heard and cared for."

The museum hosted the naturalization ceremony for the first time against the backdrop of President Donald Trump's mass deportation push, which has left some immigrant communities concerned.

Participants at the ceremony waved American flags,



**Leonila Alonzo, 69, of the Philippines, Jennifer Vincent, 53, of Scotland, and Muhammed Zeshan, 33, of Pakistan, say the Pledge of Allegiance for first time as U.S. citizens in Stony Brook. ■ Video: newsday.tv**

ELIZABETH SAGARIN

recited the Pledge of Allegiance and heard from several judges. In all, they came from a total of 29 countries, including Bangladesh, Russia, Jamaica and Sweden.

"And my message to you today is this: The greatness of our nation and its unprecedented opportunities for freedom, for prosperity and happiness for every single citizen,

from sea to shining sea, is available to you," U.S. Circuit Judge Joseph Bianco told the audience.

In retaking office, Trump has continued to make immi-

gration a focal point of his agenda with efforts that include limiting birthright citizenship, a constitutional provision being challenged by the administration and now before the Supreme Court.

His administration is pursuing a plan in which immigrants residing in the country illegally could be paid \$1,000 to deport themselves. It has also used or sought to use a wartime act that dates back to the 18th century to accelerate the removal of certain migrants — a move that a federal judge ruled is "unlawful."

But on Wednesday, the mood at the museum appeared hopeful as the new Americans received certificates from judges and some took pictures with the U.S. flag after the ceremony.

Joshua Ruff, co-executive director of the museum, said immigration has always been controversial in American history.

With the naturalization ceremony and an exhibition looking at democracy on Long Island, the museum hopes to be continuing part of the immigration discussion.

"So, you know, I think, 'Yeah, it's an important time, but we've always been living through an important discussion, and it never gets totally settled. It's always something that we're still having conversations about,'" he said.