

CARLOS M. GUTIERREZ

October 9, 2009

Alysa Ullman
Executive Director
Citizenship Counts
7575 E. Indian Bend Road
Suite 1028
Scottsdale, AZ 85250

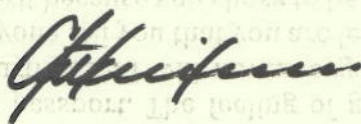
Dear Ms. Ullman:

I became a US citizen in a Brooklyn, New York courthouse in 1965, five years after fleeing Communism in Cuba, my country of birth. At that time, political refugees lost their Cuban citizenship upon departure, so from 1960-1965 my parents, my brother and I didn't have a country we could legally call home. When we received US citizenship, we were so thankful. We felt truly privileged. To this day, my US passport is one of my most valued possessions. In fact, throughout my life, I have been known to lose wallets and other personal belongings, but I have never lost my US passport. The feeling of gratitude is as present today as it was when we left that Brooklyn courthouse. I will never forget what the Judge told us during the ceremony. He said, "Never let anyone tell you that you are less of a citizen than others who were born here. In fact, you have more merit because you chose to be a citizen of this country. They had no choice."

Whether by birth or by choice, no one should take their citizenship for granted. All US citizens have rights, and they have obligations; not just to obey the law, but to do what they can to make their country better. To know history, and learn from it; to serve as a volunteer in a cause in which one believes; to serve in government; to serve in the military; to serve their country. There is no greater privilege.

Through Citizenship Counts I will have the opportunity to share my experience with other fellow citizens and strengthen even more their commitment to American ideals. Not just to those who came in search of freedom, but also to those who can call the United States of America their country of birth.

Best regards,



Carlos M. Gutierrez