



We love this photo. This Fourth of July picture taken a few years ago encapsulates so many messages. The extreme diversity of the people is mind-boggling: young and old, black and white, employed and unemployed, citizens and non-citizens, literate and illiterate, married and single, sole survivor and member of large household, discriminated against and accepted.

If this picture were taken today would we experience the same messages, the same feelings? Are we the same? What has changed? Children have grown and graduated from grade—and high-schools. Some are in college. Children have become servers; adults have become Eucharistic Ministers and Lectors. Some are now leaders; both Burundians and Guatemalans are members on Parish Council. Others have taken on various leadership roles. Some have died and more “Little Leo’s” have been born. Some have moved out of the area; others have joined our community. Father Dan is now in Virginia Beach. All have risen above whatever adversity they may have had in their life. Time has transcended their situations as it has in every single one of our own individual lives.

While none had yet received their citizenship at the time of this picture, a good percentage have stepped up to the bar, taking the Oath of Allegiance to the United States of America,\* making Independence Day celebrations speak volumes in their hearts. The in-between journey to citizenship has light at the end of the tunnel for many who continue studying ESL and are acclimating into our society, customs, and culture. They are our fellow citizens; they are each a unique thread woven into our society’s tapestry of immigrants and refugees—a place from where we all originated at some point in United States history.

These are the beautiful Colors of St. Leo’s Church. These are the beautiful colors of our Nation.

- *Stephanie Sepate*

