On Citizenship: Immigration, Art, and the American Dream

VIRTUAL TOWN HALL
Tuesday, OCT 13 at 7:00 pm ET

ABOUT THE MODERATOR

Kathleen Matthews has worked in the nation's capital for 40 years as a journalist, corporate communications and public affairs executive, and political activist. In 2016 she ran as a Democrat for Congress in Maryland's 8th District and was elected interim chair of the Maryland Democratic Party in 2017. She serves on the boards of the National Capital Area Council of the Girl Scouts of America and Emerge Maryland, which trains women to run for elected office. For 9 years, Matthews was the chief communications and public affairs officer for Marriott International, the world's largest hotel company. Prior to her career at Marriott, she was an award-winning news anchor and reporter at the ABC-TV affiliate in Washington, DC for 25 years, and hosted the nationally syndicated “Working Woman” television show. Matthews has been awarded multiple journalism awards, including nine local Emmys, the Human Rights Campaign's Straight Ally Award, Washington Business Journal's “Woman Who Means Business” award, and Washingtonian of the Year. She is a 1975 graduate of Stanford University, and a 2004 Fellow at the Institute of Politics at the Kennedy School at Harvard University. She and her husband Chris Matthews have three grown children.
Leila Buck is a Lebanese American playwright, actor, facilitator and educator who has performed and developed her work and others at/with the Public, New York Theatre Workshop, Culture Project, BRIC Arts, Brooklyn Museum, En Garde Arts, Cleveland Public, Cal Shakes, Mosaic Theater at Arena Stage, and the Wilma (Barrymore Award). She has performed and taught theatrical tools for literacy, conflict resolution, and intercultural engagement to youth, educators, aid workers, UN delegates and others across the U.S., Europe, China, Australia and 11 Arab countries. Her play 1001 Nights (A Retelling), commissioned by Cal Shakes and co-written with director Evren Odcikin, was selected for the 2020 Kilroys List. She is a TCG/Fox Fellow, a member of the Public’s inaugural Emerging Writers Group and the Lark’s Middle Eastern American writers group, a Usual Suspect with NYTW, and teaches Creation and Representation in U.S. Theater at NYU.

Mary Kathryn Nagle is an enrolled citizen of the Cherokee Nation and playwright. Her play Silver of a Full Moon has been performed at law schools across the United States, and she has received commissions from Arena Stage, the Rose Theater, Portland Center Stage, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, and Yale Repertory Theatre. She currently serves as the Executive Director of the Yale Indigenous Performing Arts Program. Nagle is also a partner at Pipestem Law, P.C., where she works to protect tribal sovereignty and the inherent right of Indian Nations to protect their women and children from domestic violence and sexual assault. She has authored numerous briefs in federal appellate courts, including the United States Supreme Court. Nagle studied theater and social justice at Georgetown University as an undergraduate student and received her J.D. from Tulane Law School where she graduated summa cum laude and received the John Minor Wisdom Award. She is a frequent speaker at law schools and symposia across the country. Her articles have been published in law review journals including the Harvard Journal of Law and Gender, Yale Law Journal, Tulsa Law Review, and Tulane Law Review, among others.
Krish O'Mara Vignarajah is the President and CEO of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services. She previously served in the Obama White House as Policy Director for First Lady Michelle Obama and at the State Department as Senior Advisor under Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Secretary of State John Kerry. Krish has committed her career to public service because she knows how differently life could have turned out. Krish was 9-months old when she and her family escaped a country on the brink of civil war and built a life in Maryland. Her parents came to this country with no jobs and $200 in their pockets. Krish is a graduate from Woodlawn High School in Baltimore County and then attended Yale College, where she earned a Master’s degree in Political Science and a B.S. in Molecular, Cellular & Developmental Biology, graduating magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa. She was a Marshall Scholar at Oxford University, where she received an M.Phil. in International Relations, before returning to Yale Law School, where she served on the Yale Law Journal.

Elizabeth Schmelzel grew up in southern Illinois and attended George Washington University, where she earned her undergraduate degree in 2007. She later received her Master’s Degree in Human Rights from the London School of Economics. Elizabeth is a graduate of the University of Texas School of Law, where she focused largely on immigration law and criminal defense. She has worked in detention centers throughout Texas and the United Kingdom and before joining CAIR Coalition, was a legal fellow at Ayuda. Elizabeth has had the opportunity to live in Senegal, China, and the United Kingdom and is honored to have found a career allowing her to walk alongside people from all over the world.
Sarah Wolek is the founding Director of the Intentional Life Lab at the University of Maryland (UMD). Sarah passionately believes in educating the whole person and empowering young people to shape their lives, communities, and organizations with purpose. Driven to solve meaningful problems, she joined UMD after working on policy and reform issues at the White House Office of Budget and Management, the United States Mission to the United Nations, US Treasury, and US Housing and Urban Development’s civil rights group. Sarah serves on the boards of Bethesda Urban Partnership, Bethesda Art and Entertainment District, and Bethesda Green. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she earned an MBA from Columbia University and a MA in Public Policy from the University of Chicago. She lives in Bethesda, Maryland with her family.

Kevin grew up in Honduras and was very involved in human rights work, which made him a target of violent groups. He came to the United States and was detained by ICE in Virginia, where he worked with fellow panelist Elizabeth Schmelzel to gain asylum. Now, he is resident of Fairfax County, Virginia.