



# WORLD AND PRESS

July 2023

Original Presstexte aus britischen und US-amerikanischen Medien



B2-C2

**IMMIGRATION**

- Naturalization: New U.S. citizens hit a 15-year high
- Migrants: People risk death crossing treacherous Rio Grande

PAGES 3-4

**SOCIETY**

- Wealth: The people giving away fortunes from slavery and fossil fuels
- Antisemitism: Some U.S. Jews wonder about their place in America
- Asian Americans: Asian immigrants seeking the American Dream
- African Americans: America's lone Black governor

PAGES 6-9

**ENTERTAINMENT**

- Film review: 'Nomadland'
- TV: How 'Mad Men' foresaw the death of the American Dream

PAGES 11-12

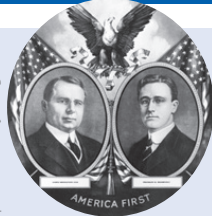


PHOTO: Getty Images

**“America First” is much older than “American Dream” and is a durable code in the nation’s politics that emphasizes the limits of unity and inclusion.**

READ MORE ON PAGE 5



PHOTO: Getty Images

**Serena Williams is held up as an example of the American Dream. Witnessing her ascension to GOAT status has been an extraordinary experience.**

READ MORE ON PAGE 10

## How a storied phrase became a partisan battleground

**AMERICAN DREAM** A touchstone of political and social discourse, the nearly 100-year-old phrase “the American Dream,” is being repurposed.

Video: [\(Re\)Defining the American Dream](#)



**A billboard in 1940s Oklahoma promotes the “American way” of life and an early version of the American Dream.**

PHOTO: Universal History Archive/Getty Images

By JAZMINE ULLOA

JUAN CISCOMANI, a Republican who washed cars to help his Mexican immigrant father pay the bills and is now running for Congress in Arizona, has been leaning on a simple three-word phrase throughout his campaign: “the American Dream.” To him, the American Dream, a nearly 100-year-old idea weighted with meaning and memory, has become something not so much to aspire to but to defend from attack. President Joe Biden and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi are, he says in one ad, “destroying the American Dream” with “a border crisis, soaring inflation, and schools that don’t teach the good things about America.”

these Republicans are people of color – including immigrants and the children of immigrants, for whom the phrase first popularized in 1931 has a deep resonance. To politicians of old, “the American Dream” was a supremely optimistic rhetorical device, albeit one that often obscured the economic and racial barriers that made achieving it impossible for many. To the Republican candidates embracing it today, the phrase has taken on an ominous and more pessimistic tone, echoing the party’s leader, former President Donald Trump, who said in 2015 that “the American Dream is dead.” In the same way that many Trump supporters have tried to turn the American flag into an emblem of the right, so too have these Republicans liberal social policies. Many of

these Republicans are people of color – including immigrants and the children of immigrants, for whom the phrase first popularized in 1931 has a deep resonance. To politicians of old, “the American Dream” was a supremely optimistic rhetorical device, albeit one that often obscured the economic and racial barriers that made achieving it impossible for many. To the Republican candidates embracing it today, the phrase has taken on an ominous and more pessimistic tone, echoing the party’s leader, former President Donald Trump, who said in 2015 that “the American Dream is dead.” In the same way that many Trump supporters have tried to turn the American flag into an emblem of the right, so too have these Republicans liberal social policies. Many of

their own, repurposing it as a spinoff of the “Make America Great Again” slogan. Politicians have long warned that the American Dream was slipping away, a note struck from time to time by former President Barack Obama, former President Bill Clinton, and other Democrats. What has changed is that some Republicans now cast the situation more starkly, using the dream-is-in-danger rhetoric as a widespread line of attack, arguing that Democrats have turned patriotism itself into something contentious. “Both parties used to celebrate the fact that America is an exceptional country. Now you only have one that celebrates that fact,” said Jason Miyares, a Republican and

**EXTRA**  
 The American Political System  
 B2 – C2  
 US-Politik im Englischunterricht  
 • Presstexte aus britischen und US-amerikanischen Medien  
 • Lehrplangetreues Skilltraining  
 Extra The American Political System  
 € 24,90 [D]  
 ISBN 978-3-7961-1063-4  
 sprachzeitungen.de

# This land becomes their land. New U.S. citizens hit a 15-year high

## NATURALIZATION

Nearly one million immigrants became Americans in 2022 after the pandemic delayed the process.

BY MIRIAM JORDAN

ON A WINDSWEPT morning last spring, Mom Leveille slipped into a flowing red dress and high-heeled sandals and headed to a ballpark in Brooklyn, her nerves jangled. A Cambodian refugee, Leveille had applied for U.S. citizenship nearly two years earlier, and, finally, the moment was nigh when she would take a permanent oath of allegiance to the country where her family had found safe haven.

In the stands of Maimonides Park, she joined 250 people from 65 countries who were sworn in by judges wearing their formal black robes. Like Leveille, 39, many of the new Americans had waited more than a year to be invited for the naturalization ceremony since first submitting their applications.

She wiped away tears that day as she rose to deliver a speech about the security, the electoral voice, and the responsibility that came with becoming a citizen. "It was a very, very long process, and it was very emotional," she said.

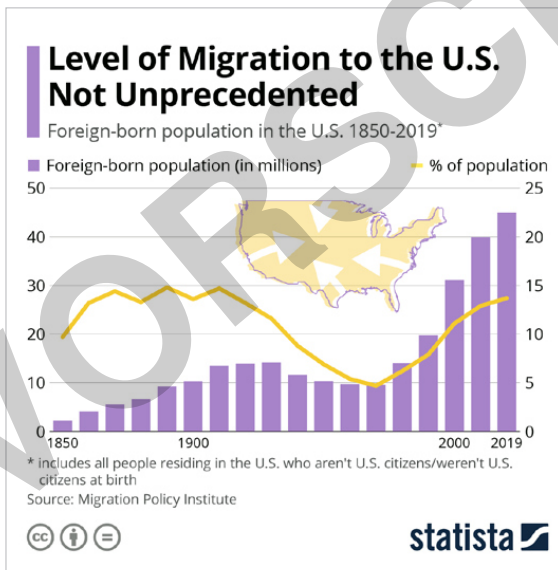
Across the country, naturalization ceremonies are making a comeback, in parks, sports arenas, and courthouses, after a long hiatus caused by COVID-19 lockdowns that suspended public gatherings, shuttered immigration offices, and put thousands of citizenship applications on hold.

Nearly one million immigrants became citizens in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, the most in almost 15 years and the third-highest number ever, according to a recent Pew Research analysis, demonstrating the increasing impact of immigration on who lives and works in the United States – and who votes.

"People have incentives to become citizens," said Jeffrey S. Passel, a senior demographer at Pew Research who co-wrote the study based on government data. "The numbers have not only rebounded. They are reaching levels we have rarely seen in our history."



Over 2,000 soon-to-be U.S. citizens attend a naturalization ceremony at Los Angeles's Dodger Stadium in 2022. | PHOTO: Gary Coronado/Getty Images



INFOGRAPHIC: Statista

ing to become citizens is not reflected in the year-end data and is actually much higher because of the pileup of applications. Some 670,000 naturalizations are still pending.

The Biden administration has taken several steps to streamline the process, such as simplifying forms and redirecting interviewees from cities whose immigration offices are stretched to those that have capacity. That has helped reduce the backlog of pending applications from more than one million in December

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the agency that handles the applications, also announced recently that it would soon conduct a trial of a redesigned naturalization test intended to be more fair and consistent. For the oral assessment, candidates will be asked to describe three photographs of everyday activities, the weather, or food. The goal is to test ordinary use of English, rather than to rely on complex questions whose answers may differ considerably based on immigrants' personal histories and countries of origin. (Applicants

will still be asked separately to respond in English to security questions as part of the review.)

"It is good for the nation for people to join it in the fullest way that they can," said Ur M. Jaddou, the director of USCIS. "That has been a priority since the beginning of this administration."

The Biden administration initiatives are a reversal from those of the Trump administration, which increased scrutiny of applications and made the citizenship test more cumbersome and challenging as part of its agenda to curb legal immigration. But that administration's immigration posture backfired, awakening many longtime legal residents to the fact that a green card does not shield them from deportation. And many felt compelled to seek citizenship in order to cast a ballot.

"Deliberately depressing naturalization rates was one of the most shortsighted strategies pursued by the Trump administration," said Wayne A. Cornelius, the founding director of the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies at the University of California San Diego. "The uptick under Biden mainly reflects the insecurity caused by incessant demonization of immigrants by Republican politicians, as well as greater confidence that they can pass the revised test," he said. (President Joe Biden reinstated the previous test after he took office in preparation for examining

Immigrants who demonstrate continuous permanent lawful residence in the United States for at least five years, or three years if married to a U.S. citizen, are eligible to apply for citizenship. They must pass background checks, submit a bevy of supporting documents, and pass civics and English tests during an interview.

The 970,000 naturalizations in the 2022 fiscal year were the most since the 2008 fiscal year, when 1.05 million immigrants became citizens, an all-time high. (Numbers have been tallied since 1907.) A spike in naturalization applications occurred in 1997, after 2.7 million immigrants living in the county illegally obtained legal status under a 1986 amnesty program, which made them eligible for citizenship years later. The number of applications also soared in the 2005 fiscal year, before a fee increase. The government fees now total \$725, and hiring a lawyer can add several thousand dollars to the cost.

The population of naturalized citizens in the United States tripled between 1995 and 2019, to 22.1 million from 7.6 million, according to Pew estimates. The share of all eligible immigrants who were naturalized has climbed steadily, to nearly two-thirds in 2019 from 38% in 1995.

Newly minted voters could be crucial in states like Pennsylvania, Nevada, Michigan, and Arizona, whose large naturalized-citizen electorates have been influential. Many more permanent residents in such battleground states are likely to naturalize in coming years.

"These new voters are ripe for mobilization and will help determine which party comes to dominate in these states," said Louis DeSipio, a professor of political science at the University of California, Irvine. "Needless to say, these states determine which party wins the presidency."

Some nine million immigrants in the United States are legal permanent residents eligible to obtain citizenship. Less than half of those from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Japan are naturalized, compared with at least 80% from Cambodia, Iran, Laos, Poland, and Vietnam. In addition to conferring the right to vote, citizenship allows people to serve on a jury and to sponsor other family members for U.S. residency. It also gives them access to certain federal benefits and government jobs. ...

© 2023 The New York Times Company

This article originally appeared in [The New York Times](#).



An inflatable Lunar New Year dragon is displayed in the Californian suburb of Hacienda Heights. | PHOTO: Frederic J. Brown/Getty Images



Protesters march against anti-Asian hate in California's San Gabriel Valley in 2021. | PHOTO: Xinhua News Agency/Picture Alliance

## COMMENT

## What Asian immigrants, seeking the American Dream, found in Southern California suburbs

**ASIAN AMERICANS** As Asian families built thriving communities, they had to balance maintaining their heritage with adapting to mainstream American norms.

BY JAMES ZARSADIAZ\*

FOR GENERATIONS, suburban homeownership has symbolized American success – epitomizing the American Dream, the myth of a universally achievable “good life.” Over the last four decades, L.A. has been the promised land for Asian immigrants seeking this all-American lifestyle. The East San Gabriel Valley made some of these dreams a reality. How did this happen? How did Asians change – and cleave to – American suburbia? L.A.’s rise from western outpost to global city took off in the 1920s. Buoyed by agriculture, then the defense, entertainment, and hospitality industries, and later trans-Pacific trade, L.A.’s economic growth led to rapid expansion that beckoned more residents. After the 1965 Hart-Celler Act relaxed immigration restrictions, American Dream-seekers included people from Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, and the Philippines, predominantly educated professionals fulfilling labor shortages throughout California. Many middle- and upper-middle-class Asian immigrants looked to suburbia as the best place to raise a family. During the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, these families were lured to the Valley by newer housing that provided access to

the East Valley courted Asian residents and their buying power, in contrast to urban neighborhoods and inner-ring suburbs where real estate agents imposed formal and informal restrictions mostly to exclude Black and Latino residents during the early and mid-20th century. Asian homebuyers were also drawn to what developers, homebuilders, and sellers called “country living” – a design aesthetic and local culture inspired by romanticized, imagined histories of old California as rural, conservative, and white. Housing brochures and newspaper ads promised that country living shielded its residents from modern urban life. The subtext: These suburbs kept you away from the vice, crime, and poverty associated with cities, which were facing the challenges of deindustrialization, cycles of white flight, and gentrification, as well as government disinvestment in the social safety net since the Cold War. While white families understood that country living was designed for them, many foreign-born Asian people also gravitated to this landscape. Homeownership in a desirable suburb afforded immigrants bragging rights as people who “made it” in America, seemingly granting a path to assimilation. As Asian families built thriving communities in Diamond Bar, Walnut, Rowland Heights, and

Hacienda Heights, they had to balance maintaining their heritage with adapting to mainstream American and suburban norms. Many Asian residents thus performed the rituals expected of model suburbanites: They tended to family life, prayed, and shopped. On the whole, immigrants in these communities largely attempted to fit in. When they tried to establish even conservative or basic institutions reflecting their culture, the pushback – from white residents, but also from pro-assimilation Asian people – demonstrated the stubbornness of Southern California’s suburban ideals. Walnut especially illustrates how cultural pressures to assimilate originated both outside and within the Asian American community. Between 1980 and 1990, as Walnut’s white population fell from 75% to 48% of its total, its Asian population rose from 10% to 35%. The latter group sought modest changes. Take, for instance, St. Lorenzo Ruiz Catholic Church. In 1992, church leaders and an architect approached Walnut’s planning commission and city council with blueprints to build a freestanding parish with a growing Filipino congregation. Walnut officials claimed St. Lorenzo’s design clashed with the suburb’s rural aesthetic, calling it “too ultramodern.”

Others chided the height of the proposed cross, claiming it suggested Catholicism reigned over Protestantism. Witnesses of these debates, including St. Lorenzo’s Filipino congregation, realized the criticism was less about the building plan and more about opponents’ fears that the church would mark Walnut as an Asian community. The anti-Asian sentiment here was mostly covert, though some white critics specifically argued that the church stymied Filipinos’ abilities to assimilate because it was named after the first Filipino saint. But the message was clear: St. Lorenzo’s sizable Filipino congregation made an otherwise typical suburban space – a Christian church – transgressive and inappropriate for country living. It took years of disputes (and fatigue between parties) before the parish opened in 1995. But white residents’ criticisms and fears of how Asian people occupied suburbia were echoed by affluent Asian residents too. In the mid-1990s, the Taiwanese grocery chain 99 Ranch Market – which launched in Southern California – wanted to open a Walnut location. City leaders assumed Chinese homeowners would welcome the plan. The opposite occurred. Joining white naysayers, Chinese suburbanites

safety. In other words, critics stereotypically equated Asian retail hubs with density and disorder. They also considered Chinese stores déclassé – a threat to property values and to the image of suburbia.

While many immigrants believed a local 99 Ranch would be convenient, they feared Walnut would become “the next Monterey Park” – in their eyes a cautionary tale of a bedroom community turned suburban Chinatown. A loose alliance of white and Asian homeowners ensured 99 Ranch never came to Walnut. These Asian suburbanites’ fight to preserve country living’s Anglocentric milieu bolstered their claims of assimilation. The East San Gabriel Valley of today is radically different from 40 years ago. Suburbs with modest Asian populations in the 1980s had Asian majorities by the new century. Asian grocery stores, boba shops, and other businesses eventually established a presence in these communities. Yet while the demographics have transformed, other characteristics of country living suburbia have barely changed – from its largely right-leaning voter base to the bustling strip malls still ironically upholding the region’s “rural” character. Many East Valley residents across racial lines, like suburbanites across America, continue to promote static ideas of how a suburb should look and feel. All of this is a reminder that changing racial demographics can’t tell you exactly how a place will or won’t evolve. It depends on how willing and able new residents are to challenge that place’s long-held myths.

© 2022 Los Angeles Times. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

\* James Zarsadiaz is an associate professor of history at the University of California, Los Angeles.

# ‘Nomadland’ review: The unsettled Americans

**FILM REVIEW** Frances McDormand hits the road in Chloé Zhao’s intimate, expansive portrait of itinerant lives.

By A.O. SCOTT

“PEOPLE WISH to be settled,” Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote. “Only as far as they are unsettled is there any hope for them.” This tension between stability and uprooting, between the illusory consolations of home and the risky lure of the open road, lies at the heart of ‘Nomadland,’ Chloé Zhao’s expansive and intimate third feature.

Based on Jessica Bruder’s lively, thoroughly reported book of the same name, ‘Nomadland’ stars Frances McDormand as Fern, a fictional former resident of a formerly real place. The movie begins with the end of Empire, Nevada, a company town that officially went out of existence in late 2010 after the local gypsum mine and the Sheetrock factory shut down. Fern, a widow, takes to the highway in a white van that she christens with the name Vanguard and customizes with a sleeping alcove, a cooking area, and a storage space for the few keepsakes from her previous life. Fern and Vanguard join a rolling, dispersed tribe – a subculture and a literal movement of itinerant Americans and their vehicles, an unsettled nation within the boundaries of the USA.

### Footloose but also desperate

Bruder’s book, unfolding in the wake of the Great Recession, emphasizes the economic upheaval and social dislocation that drive people like Fern – middle-aged and older; middle-class, more or less – out onto the road. Reeling from unemployment, broken marriages, lost pensions, and collapsing home values, they work long hours in Amazon warehouses during the winter holidays and poorly paid stints at national parks in the summer months. They are footloose but also desperate, squeezed by rising inequality and a frayed safety net. Zhao smooths away some of this social criticism, focusing on the practical particulars of vagabond life and the personal qualities – resilience, solidarity, thrift – of its adherents. Except for McDormand and a few others, nearly all the people in ‘Nomadland’ are playing versions of themselves, made necessary by their

transition from nonfiction page to nondocumentary screen. They include Bob Wells, the magnificently bearded mentor to legions of van dwellers, who summons them to an annual conclave – part cultural festival, part self-help seminar – in Quartzsite, Arizona; Swankie, an intrepid kayaker, problem-solver, and nature lover; and Linda May, a central figure in Bruder’s book who nearly steals the movie as Fern’s best friend. Friendship and solitude are the poles between which Zhao’s film oscillates. It has a loose, episodic structure and a mood of understated toughness that matches

the ethos it explores. Zhao, who edited ‘Nomadland’ in addition to writing and directing, sometimes lingers over majestic Western landscapes and sometimes cuts quickly from one detail to the next. As in ‘The Rider,’ her 2018 film about a rodeo cowboy in South Dakota, she’s attentive to the interplay between human emotion and geography – to the way space, light, and wind reveal character. She captures the busyness and the tedium of Fern’s days – long hours behind the wheel or at a job; disruptions caused by weather, interpersonal conflict, or vehi-

cle trouble – without rushing or dragging. ‘Nomadland’ is patient, compassionate, and open, motivated by an impulse to wander and observe rather than to judge or explain.

Fern, we eventually discover, has a sister (Melissa Smith), who

helps her out of a jam and praises her as “the bravest and most honest” member of their family. We believe those words because they also apply to McDormand, whose grit, empathy, and discipline have never been so powerfully evident. I don’t mean to suggest that this is an awards-soliciting display of acting technique, a movie star’s bravura impersonation of an ordinary person. Quite the opposite. A lot of what McDormand does is listen, giving moral and emotional support to the nonprofessional actors as they tell their stories. Her skill and sensitivity help persuade you that what you are seeing isn’t just realistic but true.

### ‘Nomadland’ wishes to be settled

Which brings me, somewhat reluctantly, to David Strathairn, who plays a fellow wanderer named Dave. He’s a soft-spoken, silver-haired fellow who catches Fern’s eye and gently tries to win her affection. His attempts to be helpful are clumsy and not always well judged – he offers her a bag of licorice sticks when what she wants is a pack of cigarettes – and although Fern likes him pretty well, her feelings are decidedly mixed.

Mine too. Strathairn is a wonderful actor and an intriguing, non-toxic masculine presence, but the fact that you know that as soon as you see him is a bit of a problem. Our first glimpse of Dave, coming into focus behind a box of can openers at an impromptu swap meet, is close to a spoiler. The vast horizon of Fern’s story suddenly threatens to contract into a plot. He promises – or threatens – that a familiar narrative will overtake both Fern and the movie.

To some degree, ‘Nomadland’ wishes to be settled – wants not necessarily to domesticate its heroine but at least to bend her journey into a more or less predictable arc. At the same time, and in a fine Emersonian spirit, the movie rebels against its own conventional impulses, gravitating toward an idea of experience that is more complicated, more open-ended, more contradictory than what most American movies are willing to permit.

© 2021 The New York Times Company

[This article originally appeared in The New York Times.](#)



| PHOTO: Searchlight Pictures/Zumapress/Picture Alliance

**QUIZ | BY ALETTA ROCHAU**



Wie gut kennen Sie die Vereinigten Staaten?  
Lösen Sie das USA-Quiz auf unserem Blog [sprachzeitungen.de](https://www.sprachzeitungen.de)