



Fact Sheet

February 8, 2016

Outstanding American by Choice Initiative

Established in January 2006, the Outstanding American by Choice initiative recognizes the significant contributions and achievements of naturalized U.S. citizens. Through civic participation, professional achievement, and responsible citizenship, recipients of this honor have demonstrated their commitment to this country and to the common civic values that unite us all as Americans.

Throughout each year, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services recognizes individuals who chose to become Americans and have made significant contributions to both their community and the United States. By doing so, we hope to inspire and encourage new immigrants and new citizens alike to participate in their communities and exercise the important rights and responsibilities that accompany U.S. citizenship. Since 2006, the Outstanding American by Choice initiative has recognized:

- More than 120 men and women from a variety of backgrounds and nearly all sectors of society;
- Recipients from more than 40 countries, including Afghanistan, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Germany, Haiti, India, Iran, Iraq, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Russia, and Spain;
- Such notable Americans as **Carlos M. Gutierrez**, former U.S. secretary of commerce; **Indra K. Nooyi**, chairman and chief executive officer of PepsiCo; **Elie Wiesel**, author and Nobel Peace Prize winner; **Franklin Chang Diaz**, former NASA astronaut; **Gerda Weissmann Klein**, founder of Citizenship Counts, Holocaust survivor, author, and human rights activist; **Madeleine Albright**, former U.S. secretary of state; **Khaled Hosseini**, author of *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and UNHCR goodwill envoy; **José Andrés**, chef, restaurateur, and food advocate; **Maria Contreras-Sweet**, administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration; **Thalia**, singer, author, actor, and entrepreneur; and **Mariano Rivera**, former professional baseball pitcher for the New York Yankees and founder of the Mariano Rivera Foundation.

A recipient of the Outstanding American by Choice recognition must:

- Be a naturalized U.S. citizen;
- Have exhibited leadership and outstanding achievements in at least one of the following categories: professional/business, culture and the arts, community service and civic participation, government service, military service, or overcoming adversity; and
- Have demonstrated responsible citizenship and a commitment to this country and the common civic values that unite us all as Americans.

For more information on the Outstanding American by Choice initiative or to see the biographies of past recipients, please visit www.uscis.gov/americansbychoice.

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