

## Q124 – The Nation’s first motto was “E Pluribus Unum.” What does that mean?

**DOUGLAS GINSBURG, Federal Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, D.C. Circuit:**

“E Pluribus Unum” is a Latin phrase that means “Out of many – one.” We are fifty states but one nation. We are a nation of immigrants from many places but one people: Americans.

Some nations are wracked by separatism. Whatever our problems, we don’t see Americans of Italian descent – or Japanese, or Lebanese – demanding their own republic.

For more than two centuries, America has been called a melting pot where “individuals of all nations are melted into a new race.” We toss the customs of the Old World into the pot and produce a unique blend: American.

During the height of European immigration, Theodore Roosevelt warned against “hyphenated Americanism”: He wrote, “The one absolutely certain way of bringing this nation to ruin ... would be to permit it to become a tangle of squabbling nationalities – an intricate knot of German-Americans, Irish-Americans, English-Americans, French-Americans, Scandinavian-Americans, or Italian-Americans – each preserving its separate nationality, each at heart feeling more sympathy with Europeans of that nationality, than with the other citizens of the American Republic.”

In America, you are not by defined by the color of your skin or the god you worship or the language of your ancestors. Whether your ancestors arrived four hundred years ago at Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts, or you arrived yesterday, there’s one thing that binds all Americans: the Constitution.

That’s why it’s important to learn about the American past and the constitutional republic that makes E Pluribus Unum out of many – one.