Q64 – Who can vote in federal elections, run for federal office, and serve on a jury in the United States?

DOUGLAS GINSBURG, Federal Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, D.C. Circuit:
Only a United States citizen can vote in a federal election, run for federal office, or sit on a jury.

Sometimes people complain about jury duty, but if you talk to Americans who have done it, they'll tell you how fulfilling it is. A jury is an example of democracy at work. Twelve men and women setting aside emotion, sifting the facts, applying the law, debating their views, and, most of the time, reaching a unanimous verdict.
The roots of our jury system go back 800 years, to when English nobles forced King John to grant them certain rights – including trial by a jury of their peers. In fact, King George's violation of that right is a grievance listed in our Declaration of Independence.
Take a look at the first ten amendments to the Constitution: the Bill of Rights, the cornerstone of American liberty. You'll find that half of those amendments protect the rights of a person accused of a crime.
Police dramas illustrate those rights: A public trial. A statement of the charges. The right to counsel. The right to present and to confront witnesses. The right not to be tried twice for the same crime, or double jeopardy. And the right to trial by an impartial jury of your peers.
Without citizens willing to perform jury duty, persons accused of a crime would be left to the mercy of – well, judges. Sitting on a jury, and voting in an election, are not just obligations, they're privileges. Three billion people don't have these privileges – which is why we who do should cherish them.