Q68 – How can people become United States citizens?

DOUGLAS GINSBURG, Federal Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, D.C. Circuit:
There are three ways in which a person can become a United States citizen.
One is by naturalization. A foreign adult who has lived lawfully in the United States for five years may apply for citizenship. After passing a background check, an interview, and the citizenship test, you swear the Oath of Allegiance to United States and receive a certificate of naturalization.

Second, citizenship can be derived. A child born abroad and living with at least one American parent derives American citizenship from that parent. This also applies to a child under 18 whose parent or parents became naturalized U.S. citizens.
The third way is simply by being born here. Under the Fouteenth Amendment, if you're born here, then you're automatically an American citizen – with one exception.
You must also be "subject to the jurisdiction" of the United States. That means owing no allegiance to another country. For example, the child of foreign diplomats who was born in the United States is not an American citizen.
But however one became an American citizen, we have one thing in common – not a national ethnicity – not a national religion – but a national creed. We're the first nation founded on an ideal – self-government.
And here's our owner's manual – the Constitution.