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FILE: [REDACTED]
SRC 05 010 51515

Office: TEXAS SERVICE CENTER Date: OCT 28 2011

IN RE: Petitioner: [REDACTED]
Beneficiary: [REDACTED]

PETITION: Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker as an Alien of Extraordinary Ability Pursuant to Section 203(b)(1)(A) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(1)(A)

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:

SELF-REPRESENTED

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. All documents have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Any further inquiry must be made to that office.

Mari Plurson

Robert P. Wiemann, Director
Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The employment-based immigrant visa petition was denied by the Director, Texas Service Center, and is now before the Administrative Appeals Office on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

The petitioner seeks classification as an employment-based immigrant pursuant to section 203(b)(1)(A) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(1)(A), as an alien of extraordinary ability in the arts. The director determined the petitioner had not established the sustained national or international acclaim necessary to qualify for classification as an alien of extraordinary ability.

Section 203(b) of the Act states, in pertinent part, that:

(1) Priority Workers. -- Visas shall first be made available . . . to qualified immigrants who are aliens described in any of the following subparagraphs (A) through (C):

(A) Aliens with Extraordinary Ability. -- An alien is described in this subparagraph if --

- (i) the alien has extraordinary ability in the sciences, arts, education, business, or athletics which has been demonstrated by sustained national or international acclaim and whose achievements have been recognized in the field through extensive documentation,
- (ii) the alien seeks to enter the United States to continue work in the area of extraordinary ability, and
- (iii) the alien's entry to the United States will substantially benefit prospectively the United States.

As used in this section, the term "extraordinary ability" means a level of expertise indicating that the individual is one of that small percentage who have risen to the very top of the field of endeavor. 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(2). The specific requirements for supporting documents to establish that an alien has sustained national or international acclaim and recognition in his or her field of expertise are set forth in the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3). The relevant criteria will be addressed below. It should be reiterated, however, that the petitioner must show that she has earned sustained national or international acclaim at the very top level.

This petition, filed on October 14, 2004, seeks to classify the petitioner as an alien with extraordinary ability as a Henan Opera performer. The statute and regulations require the petitioner's acclaim to be sustained. The record reflects that the petitioner has been residing in the United States since December 2001. Given the length of time between the petitioner's arrival in the United States and the petition's filing date, it is reasonable to expect the petitioner to have earned national acclaim in the United States during that time. The petitioner has had ample time to establish a reputation as a performer in this country.

The petition was unaccompanied by supporting evidence. On November 8, 2004, the director denied the petition, finding that the petitioner had not established eligibility pursuant to section 203(b)(1)(A) of the Act.

The regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3) indicates that an alien can establish sustained national or international acclaim through evidence of a one-time achievement (that is, a major, international recognized award). Barring the alien's receipt of such an award, the regulation outlines ten criteria, at least three of which must be satisfied for an alien to establish the sustained acclaim necessary to qualify as an alien of extraordinary ability. On appeal, the petitioner has submitted evidence pertaining to the following criteria.

Documentation of the alien's membership in associations in the field for which classification is sought, which require outstanding achievements of their members, as judged by recognized national or international experts in their disciplines or fields.

In order to demonstrate that membership in an association meets this criterion, the petitioner must show that the association requires outstanding achievement as an essential condition for admission to membership. Membership requirements based on employment or activity in a given field, minimum education or experience, standardized test scores, grade point average, recommendations by colleagues or current members, or payment of dues, do not satisfy this criterion as such requirements do not constitute outstanding achievements. In addition, it is clear from the regulatory language that members must be selected at the national or international level, rather than the local or regional level. Therefore, membership in an association that evaluates its membership applications at the local or regional chapter level would not qualify. Finally, the overall prestige of a given association is not determinative; the issue here is membership requirements rather than the association's overall reputation.

The petitioner submits a "Membership Card" for the Henan Artists' Association. According to the translation accompanying the membership card, the petitioner's grade of membership is listed as "National Second-Class Expert." The petitioner does not explain how being a "Second-Class Expert" indicates that she is one of that small percentage who have risen to the very top of the performing arts field. The record contains no evidence of the bylaws or official membership requirements of the Henan Artists' Association to demonstrate that admission to membership requires outstanding achievement in the performing arts or that the petitioner was evaluated by national or international experts in consideration of her admission to membership.

Evidence of commercial successes in the performing arts, as shown by box office receipts or record, cassette, compact disk, or video sales.

The petitioner submits photocopies of the jacket of a digital video compact disc that she alleges is evidence of her work. While we cannot state with certainty that none of the images of the performers on this compact disc jacket are that of the petitioner, we note that a recent photograph of the petitioner attached to her Form I-485, Application to Register Permanent Residence of Adjust Status, bears little resemblance to the images of the women on this compact disc.

Nevertheless, the mere fact that the petitioner was included in a digital recording of a stage performance does not demonstrate that her work is commercially successful. The plain wording of this criterion requires the petitioner to submit evidence of her commercial success in the form of "sales" of compact discs, cassettes, videos, or box office receipts. In this instance, the petitioner has not shown that her compact disc has enjoyed a high sales volume in China or the United States. To satisfy this criterion, the petitioner must establish that

her performances have consistently drawn larger audiences and/or higher compact disc sales than most others in her field, at the national or international level. The record includes no such evidence.

In this case, the petitioner has failed to demonstrate that she meets at least three of the criteria that must be satisfied to establish the sustained national or international acclaim necessary to qualify as an alien of extraordinary ability.

Review of the record does not establish that the petitioner has distinguished herself as a performer to such an extent that she may be said to have achieved sustained national or international acclaim or to be within the small percentage at the very top of her field. The evidence is not persuasive that the petitioner's achievements set her significantly above almost all others in her field at a national or international level. Therefore, the petitioner has not established eligibility pursuant to section 203(b)(1)(A) of the Act and the petition may not be approved.

Beyond the decision of the director, the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(5) requires "clear evidence that the alien is coming to the United States to continue work in the area of expertise. Such evidence may include letter(s) from prospective employer(s), evidence of prearranged commitments such as contracts, or a statement from the beneficiary detailing plans on how he or she intends to continue his or her work in the United States." The record contains no such evidence.

An application or petition that fails to comply with the technical requirements of the law may be denied by the AAO even if the Service Center does not identify all of the grounds for denial in the initial decision. *See Spencer Enterprises, Inc. v. United States*, 229 F. Supp. 2d 1025, 1043 (E.D. Cal. 2001), *aff'd*, 345 F.3d 683 (9th Cir. 2003); *see also Dor v. INS*, 891 F.2d 997, 1002 n. 9 (2d Cir. 1989)(noting that the AAO reviews appeals on a *de novo* basis).

The petition will be denied for the above stated reasons, with each considered as an independent and alternative basis for denial. In visa petition proceedings, the burden of proving eligibility for the benefit sought remains entirely with the petitioner. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. Here, that burden has not been met.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.