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U.S. Department of Justice
Immigration and Naturalization Service

OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS
425 Eye Street N.W.
ULLB, 3rd Floor
Washington, D.C. 20536



Public Copy

FILE: [Redacted]
EAC 99 115 51072

Office: Vermont Service Center

Date: AUG 2 2001

IN RE: Petitioner: [Redacted]
Beneficiary: [Redacted]

APPLICATION: Petition for Special Immigrant Battered Child Pursuant to Section 204(a)(1)(A)(iv) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. 1154(a)(1)(A)(iv).

IN BEHALF OF PETITIONER: Self-represented

Identifying data deleted to prevent clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy

INSTRUCTIONS:

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

If you believe the law was inappropriately applied or the analysis used in reaching the decision was inconsistent with the information provided or with precedent decisions, you may file a motion to reconsider. Such a motion must state the reasons for reconsideration and be supported by any pertinent precedent decisions. Any motion to reconsider must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reconsider, as required under 8 C.F.R. 103.5(a)(1)(i).

If you have new or additional information which you wish to have considered, you may file a motion to reopen. Such a motion must state the new facts to be proved at the reopened proceeding and be supported by affidavits or other documentary evidence. Any motion to reopen must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reopen, except that failure to file before this period expires may be excused in the discretion of the Service where it is demonstrated that the delay was reasonable and beyond the control of the applicant or petitioner. Id.

Any motion must be filed with the office which originally decided your case along with a fee of \$110 as required under 8 C.F.R. 103.7.

FOR THE ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER,
EXAMINATIONS

Robert P. Wiemann, Acting Director
Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The preference visa petition was denied by the Director, Vermont Service Center, and is now before the Associate Commissioner for Examinations on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

The petitioner is a native and citizen of Russia who is seeking classification as a special immigrant pursuant to section 204(a)(1)(A)(iv) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. 1154(a)(1)(A)(iv), as the battered child of a citizen of the United States.

The director determined that the petitioner failed to establish that he: (1) has been battered by, or has been the subject of extreme cruelty perpetrated by, the citizen or lawful permanent resident parent while residing with that parent; and (2) is a person whose deportation (removal) would result in extreme hardship to himself. The director, therefore, denied the petition.

On appeal, the petitioner submits a letter from an individual stating that he has personally known the petitioner and his mother for the last four months and believe that they have and will continue to provide positive contributions to our society and that they clearly deserve to become U.S. citizens based on their circumstances. The individual further states that after reviewing the documentation provided, he is impressed with the support of all of the upstanding individuals within the community, including a U.S. State Senator, a Circuit Court Judge, and a local police officer. He claims that he intends to provide any and all financial support to help in this matter including hiring a competent attorney to help them understand the immigration process.

8 C.F.R. 204.2(c)(1), in effect at the time the self-petition was filed, states, in pertinent part, that:

(i) A child may file a self-petition under section 204(a)(1)(A)(iv) or 204(a)(1)(B)(iii) of the Act for his or her classification as an immigrant relative or as a preference immigrant if he or she:

(A) Is the child of a citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States;

(B) Is eligible for immigrant classification under section 201(b)(2)(A)(i) or 203(a)(2)(A) of the Act based on that relationship;

(C) Is residing in the United States;

(D) Has resided in the United States with the

citizen or lawful permanent resident parent;

(E) Has been battered by, or has been the subject of extreme cruelty perpetrated by, the citizen or lawful permanent resident parent while residing with that parent;

(F) Is a person of good moral character; and

(G) Is a person whose deportation (removal) would result in extreme hardship to himself or herself.

The record reflects that the petitioner's mother married her United States citizen spouse on [REDACTED] at Coffee County, Alabama. On September 19, 1998, the petitioner applied for admission into the United States and his inspection was deferred until October 3, 1998. He was subsequently paroled into the United States until October 29, 1999 in order that he may pursue his application for adjustment of status. On February 25, 1999, a self-petition was filed by the petitioner claiming eligibility as a special immigrant alien who has been battered by, or has been the subject of extreme cruelty perpetrated by, his U.S. citizen stepparent while residing with that parent.

PART I

8 C.F.R. 204.2(e)(1)(i)(E) requires the petitioner to establish that he has been battered by, or has been the subject of extreme cruelty perpetrated by, the citizen parent while residing with that parent.

The qualifying abuse must have been sufficiently aggravated to have reached the level of "battery or extreme cruelty." 8 C.F.R. 204.2(e)(1)(vi) provides:

[T]he phrase, "was battered by or was the subject of extreme cruelty" includes, but is not limited to, being the victim of any act or threatened act of violence, including any forceful detention, which results or threatens to result in physical or mental injury. Psychological or sexual abuse or exploitation, including rape, molestation, incest (if the victim is a minor), or forced prostitution shall be considered acts of violence. Other abusive actions may also be acts of violence under certain circumstances, including acts that, in and of themselves, may not initially appear violent but that are

a part of an overall pattern of violence. The qualifying abuse must have been committed by the citizen or lawful permanent resident parent, must have been perpetrated against the self-petitioner, and must have taken place while the self-petitioner was residing with the abuser.

8 C.F.R. 204.2(e)(2) provides, in part:

(i) Self-petitioners are encouraged to submit primary evidence whenever possible. The Service will consider, however, any credible evidence relevant to the petition. The determination of what evidence is credible and the weight to be given that evidence shall be within the sole discretion of the Service.

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(iv) Evidence of abuse may include, but is not limited to, reports and affidavits from police, judges and other court officials, medical personnel, school officials, clergy, social workers, and other social service agency personnel. Persons who have obtained an order of protection against the abuser or have taken other legal steps to end the abuse are strongly encouraged to submit copies of the relating legal documents. Evidence that the abuse victim sought safe-haven in a battered women's shelter or similar refuge may be relevant, as may a combination of documents such as a photograph of the visibly injured self-petitioner supported by affidavits. Other types of credible relevant evidence will also be considered. Documentary proof of non-qualifying abuse may only be used to establish a pattern of abuse and violence and to support a claim that qualifying abuse also occurred.

The director, in his decision, reviewed and discussed all the evidence furnished by the petitioner, including evidence furnished in response to the director's request for additional evidence. The discussion will not be repeated here. Because the record did not contain satisfactory evidence to establish that the petitioner has been battered by, or has been the subject of extreme cruelty perpetrated by, the citizen parent, the director denied the petition.

On appeal, the petitioner neither addressed nor furnished additional evidence to establish that he is eligible for the benefit sought, and to overcome the director's finding pursuant to 8 C.F.R. 204.2(e)(1)(i)(E).

PART II

8 C.F.R. 204.2(e)(1)(i)(G) requires the petitioner to establish that his removal would result in extreme hardship to himself.

At the time of the director's decision 8 C.F.R. 204.2(e)(1)(i)(G) required the petitioner to establish that his removal would result in extreme hardship to himself. On October 28, 2000, the President approved enactment of the Violence Against Women Act, 2000, Pub. L. No. 106-386, Division B, 114 Stat. 1464, 1491 (2000). Section 1503(b) amends section 204(a)(1)(A)(iii) of the Act so that an alien self-petitioner claiming to qualify for immigration as the battered spouse or child of a citizen or resident alien is no longer required to show that the self-petitioner's removal would impose extreme hardship on the self-petitioner or the self-petitioner's child. Id. section 1503(c), 114 Stat. at 1520-21. Pub. L. 106-386 does not specify an effective date for the amendments made by section 1503. This lack of an effective date strongly suggests that the amendments entered into force on the date of enactment. Johnson v. United States, 529 U.S. 694, 702 (2000); Gozlon-Peretz v. United States, 498 U.S. 395, 404 (1991).

As a general rule, an administrative agency must decide a case according to the law as it exists on the date of the decision. Bradley v. Richmond School Board, 416 U.S. 696, 710-11 (1974); United States v. The Schooner Peggy, 1 Cranch 103, 110 (1801); Matter of Soriano, 21 I & N Dec. 516 (BIA 1996, AG 1997); Matter of Alarcon, 20 I & N Dec. 557 (BIA 1992). For immigrant visa petitions, however, the Board has held that, to establish a priority date, the beneficiary must have been fully qualified for the visa classification on the date of filing. Matter of Atembe, 19 I & N Dec. 427 (BIA 1986); Matter of Drigo, 18 I & N Dec. 223 (BIA 1982); Matter of Bardouille, 18 I & N Dec. 114 (BIA 1981). Even if the law changes in a way that may benefit the beneficiary, the appeal must be denied, without prejudice to the filing of a new petition, to ensure that the beneficiary does not gain an advantage over the beneficiaries of other petitions. Id.

Atembe, Drigo, and Bardouille each involved petitions under the family-based preference categories in section 203(a) of the Act. In this case, however, the beneficiary seeks classification as the child of a citizen. INA section 204(a)(1)(A)(iii), 8 U.S.C. section 1154(a)(1)(A)(iii), as amended by Pub. L. No. 106-386, section 1503, supra. As immediate relatives, the spouses and children of citizens are not subject to the numerical limits on immigration, and do not need priority dates. INA section 201(b)(2)(A)(i), 8 U.S.C. section 1151(b)(2)(A)(i). The purpose of the Atembe, Drigo and Bardouille decisions would not be served by



affirming the director's decision on this particular basis of the director's denial. For this reason, the director's objections have been overcome on this one issue (8 C.F.R. 204.2(e)(1)(i)(G)).

The burden of proof in these proceedings rests solely with the petitioner. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. 1361. The petitioner has not met that burden. Accordingly, the appeal will be dismissed.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.