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U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

DL

AUG 31 2005

FILE: [Redacted]
LIN 03 262 51363

Office: NEBRASKA SERVICE CENTER

Date:

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

PETITION: Petition for Alien Fiancé(e) Pursuant to Section 101(a)(15)(K) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(K)

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert P. Wiemann".

Robert P. Wiemann, Director
Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The nonimmigrant visa petition was denied by the Director, Nebraska Service Center, and is now on appeal before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO). The appeal will be dismissed.

The petitioner is a naturalized citizen of the United States who seeks to classify the beneficiary, a native of Congo and resident of Angola, as the fiancé of a United States citizen pursuant to section 101(a)(15)(K) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(K).

The director denied the petition after determining that the petitioner and the beneficiary had not personally met within two years before the date of filing the petition, as required by section 214(d) of the Act, and that the petitioner had not established that compliance with the meeting requirement would result in extreme hardship to the petitioner or violate strict and long-established customs of the beneficiary's foreign culture or social practice. The director further determined that the petitioner had not submitted credible documentary evidence to establish the fiancé relationship within the meaning of section 101(a)(15)(K) of the Act. *Decision of the Director*, dated July 27, 2004.

Section 101(a)(15)(K) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(K), provides nonimmigrant classification to an alien who:

- (i) is the fiancé(e) of a U.S. citizen and who seeks to enter the United States solely to conclude a valid marriage with that citizen within 90 days after admission;
- (ii) has concluded a valid marriage with a citizen of the United States who is the petitioner, is the beneficiary of a petition to accord a status under section 201(b)(2)(A)(i) that was filed under section 204 by the petitioner, and seeks to enter the United States to await the approval of such petition and the availability to the alien of an immigrant visa; or
- (iii) is the minor child of an alien described in clause (i) or (ii) and is accompanying, or following to join, the alien.

Section 214(d) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(d), states, in pertinent part, that a fiancé(e) petition:

. . . shall be approved only after satisfactory evidence is submitted by the petitioner to establish that the parties have previously met in person within two years before the date of filing the petition, have a bona fide intention to marry, and are legally able and actually willing to conclude a valid marriage in the United States within a period of ninety days after the alien's arrival. . . .

Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(k)(2), the petitioner may be exempted from this requirement for a meeting if it is established that compliance would:

- (1) result in extreme hardship to the petitioner; or
- (2) that compliance would violate strict and long-established customs of the beneficiary's foreign culture or social practice, as where marriages are traditionally arranged by the parents of the

contracting parties and the prospective bride and groom are prohibited from meeting subsequent to the arrangement and prior to the wedding day. In addition to establishing that the required meeting would be a violation of custom or practice, the petitioner must also establish that any and all other aspects of the traditional arrangements have been or will be met in accordance with the custom or practice.

The regulation at section 214.2 does not define what may constitute extreme hardship to the petitioner. Therefore, each claim of extreme hardship must be judged on a case-by-case basis taking into account the totality of the petitioner's circumstances. Generally, a director looks at whether the petitioner can demonstrate the existence of circumstances that are (1) not within the power of the petitioner to control or change, and (2) likely to last for a considerable duration or the duration cannot be determined with any degree of certainty.

The petitioner filed the Petition for Alien Fiancé(e) (Form I-129F) with Citizenship and Immigration Services on September 8, 2003. Therefore, the petitioner and the beneficiary were required to have met during the period that began on September 8, 2001 and ended on September 8, 2003.

In response to the director's request for evidence and additional information, the petitioner submitted a letter stating that she was unable to meet the beneficiary during the required two-year period owing to cultural custom and because she is the primary custodial parent for her two children and is thereby limited in her ability to travel. The director noted that the petitioner failed to submit a death certificate for the beneficiary's prior spouse providing only an attestation of death.

On appeal, the petitioner reiterates her assertions regarding her ethnic tradition of arranged marriage and states that she is unable to provide written supporting evidence because her clan has an oral tradition rather than a written one. She also reiterates that her ability to travel is limited owing to her responsibility to care for her children. *Form I-290B*, dated August 25, 2004.

The AAO notes that although section 214(d) of the Act requires the petitioner and the beneficiary to meet, it does not require the petitioner to travel to the beneficiary's home country. The record on appeal does not demonstrate that the petitioner and the beneficiary explored options for a meeting beyond the petitioner traveling to Angola, including, but not limited to the beneficiary traveling to meet the petitioner in the United States or a bordering country. Moreover, the financial and time commitments required for travel to a foreign country are a common requirement to those filing the Form I-129F petition and do not constitute extreme hardship to the petitioner.

The AAO acknowledges the petitioner's assertion that she is unable to travel to meet the beneficiary owing to cultural custom. In the absence of substantiating documentation, the assertions of the petitioner, standing alone, do not form the basis for a finding that compliance with the meeting requirement would violate strict and long-established customs of the beneficiary's foreign culture or social practice. While the petitioner asserts that her clan historically subscribes to an oral tradition, the record fails to establish that written documentation verifying the petitioner's contentions is unobtainable.

The evidence of record does not establish that the petitioner and the beneficiary met as required. Taking into account the totality of the circumstances as the petitioner has presented them, the AAO does not find that

compliance with the meeting requirement would result in extreme hardship to the petitioner or would violate strict and long-established customs of the beneficiary's foreign culture or social practice.

The AAO notes that, on appeal, the petitioner fails to provide a death certificate for the beneficiary's prior spouse as indicated by the director in his decision. The AAO finds that the petitioner has not submitted credible documentary evidence to establish the fiancé relationship within the meaning of section 101(a)(15)(K) of the Act. Therefore, the appeal will be dismissed.

Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(k)(2), the denial of the petition is without prejudice. The petitioner may file a new Form I-129F petition on the beneficiary's behalf when sufficient evidence is available.

The burden of proof in these proceedings rests solely with the petitioner. *See* Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. The petitioner has not met that burden.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.