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U.S. Department of Homeland Security
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U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

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FILE:



Office: VERMONT SERVICE CENTER

Date: **MAY 16 2005**

EAC 04 080 52543

IN RE:

Petitioner:

Beneficiary



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 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.

Robert P. Wiemann, Director
Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The nonimmigrant visa petition was denied by the Acting Director, Vermont 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 and citizen of Liberia, 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 acting director denied the petition after determining that the petitioner and the beneficiary had not personally met within the two years immediately preceding the date of filing of the petition, as required by section 214(d) of the Act. *Decision of the Director*, dated July 20, 2004.

Section 101(a)(15)(K) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (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 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 January 27, 2004. Therefore, the petitioner and the beneficiary were required to have met during the period that began on January 27, 2002 and ended on January 27, 2004.

At the time of filing, the petitioner indicated she had previously met the beneficiary, but did not state whether the meeting(s) had occurred within the two-year period immediately preceding the filing of the Form I-129F. In response to the director's request for evidence, the petitioner submitted a notarized statement, as well as notarized statements from her father and a friend, attesting that her relationship with the beneficiary began in 1976. None of these statements, however, indicated that the petitioner and beneficiary had met during the two-year period preceding the filing of the Form I-129F. Therefore, the record does not establish that the petitioner has complied with the meeting requirement in section 214(d) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(d).

On appeal, the petitioner states that she has not been able to return to Liberia since 1995 and, therefore, was unable to meet with the beneficiary during the two-year period preceding her filing of the Form I-129F. She submits an August 16, 1995 letter from the Immigration and Naturalization Service granting her asylum as proof of her inability to return to Liberia.

The record fails to establish the petitioner's eligibility for an exemption under 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(k)(2). While section 214(d) of the Act requires the petitioner and the beneficiary to meet, it does not require that meeting to occur in the beneficiary's home country. The record does not demonstrate that the petitioner and the beneficiary explored options for a meeting beyond the petitioner traveling to Liberia, including, but not limited to, the beneficiary traveling to meet the petitioner in the United States or a country bordering the United States.

Taking into account the totality of the circumstances, as presented by the petitioner, the AAO does not find that compliance with the meeting requirement would have resulted in extreme hardship to the petitioner or would have violated any strict and long-established customs of the beneficiary's foreign culture or social practice, as required for an exemption from the meeting requirement at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(k)(2). 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 I-129F petition in the beneficiary's behalf so that a new two-year period in which the parties are required to have met will apply.

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.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.