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U.S. Citizenship  
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[REDACTED]

FILE:

MSC 02 226 61056

Office: HOUSTON

Date:

JUN 20 2008

IN RE: Applicant:

[REDACTED]

APPLICATION: Application for Status as a Permanent Resident pursuant to Section 1104 of the Legal Immigration Family Equity (LIFE) Act of 2000, Pub. L. 106-553, 114 Stat. 2762 (2000), amended by Life Act Amendments, Pub. L. 106-554, 114 Stat. 2763 (2000).

ON BEHALF OF APPLICANT:

[REDACTED]

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. If your appeal was dismissed or rejected, all documents have been returned to the National Benefits Center. You no longer have a case pending before this office, and you are not entitled to file a motion to reopen or reconsider your case. If your appeal was sustained or remanded for further action, you will be contacted.

Robert P. Wiemann, Chief  
Administrative Appeals Office

**DISCUSSION:** The application for permanent resident status under the Legal Immigration Family Equity (LIFE) Act was denied by the District Director, Houston, and is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

The director denied the application because the applicant had failed to establish that he satisfied the “basic citizenship skills” required under section 1104(c)(2)(E) of the LIFE Act.

On appeal, counsel states that the applicant is now enrolled in Houston Community College. Counsel, on behalf of the applicant, requests the opportunity to continue his application.

Under section 1104(c)(2)(E)(i) of the LIFE Act, regarding basic citizenship skills, an applicant for permanent resident status must demonstrate that he or she:

- (I) meets the requirements of section 312(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1423(a)) (relating to minimal understanding of ordinary English and a knowledge and understanding of the history and government of the United States); or
- (II) is satisfactorily pursuing a course of study (recognized by the [Secretary of Homeland Security]) to achieve such an understanding of English and such a knowledge and understanding of the history and government of the United States.

Under section 1104(c)(2)(E)(ii) of the LIFE Act, the Secretary of Homeland Security may waive all or part of the above requirements for applicants who are at least 65 years of age or who are developmentally disabled. See 8 C.F.R. § 245a.17(c).

The applicant, who is neither 65 years old nor developmentally disabled, does not qualify for either of the exceptions in section 1104(c)(2)(E)(ii) of the LIFE Act. Nor does he satisfy the “basic citizenship skills” requirement of section 1104(c)(2)(E)(i)(I) of the LIFE Act because he does not meet the requirements of section 312(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (Act). An applicant may establish that he or she has met the requirements of section 312(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (Act) by demonstrating an understanding of the English language, including an ability to read, write, and speak words in ordinary usage in the English language and by demonstrating a knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of the history and of the principles and form of government of the United States. 8 C.F.R. § 245a.17(a)(1) and 8 C.F.R. §§ 312.1 – 312.3.

An applicant may also establish that he or she has met the requirements of section 1104(c)(2)(E)(i) of the LIFE Act by providing a high school diploma or general educational development diploma (GED) from a school in the United States. 8 C.F.R. § 245a.17(a)(2). The high school or GED diploma may be submitted either at the time of filing the Form I-485 LIFE Act application, subsequent to filing the application but prior to the interview, or at the time of the interview. *Id.*

Finally, an applicant may also establish that he or she has met the requirements of section 1104(c)(2)(E)(i) of the LIFE Act by establishing that:

He or she has attended, or is attending, a state recognized, accredited learning institution in the United States, and that institution certifies such attendance. The course of study at such learning institution must be for a period of one academic year (or the equivalent thereof according to the standards of the learning institution) and the curriculum must include at least 40 hours of instruction in English and United States history and government. The applicant may submit certification on letterhead stationery from a state recognized, accredited learning institution either at the time of filing Form I-485, subsequent to filing the application but prior to the interview, or at the time of the interview (the applicant's name and A-number must appear on any such evidence submitted).

8 C.F.R. § 245a.17(a)(3).

An applicant who fails to pass the English literacy and/or the United States history and government tests at the time of the initial LIFE interview shall be afforded a second opportunity after six months (or earlier at the request of the applicant) to pass the required tests or to submit the evidence described above. 8 C.F.R. § 245a.17(b).

Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 245a.17(b), the applicant was interviewed twice in connection with his LIFE Act application, on October 28, 2002, and again on July 9, 2003. On both occasions, the applicant failed to demonstrate a minimal understanding of ordinary English and knowledge of civics and history of the United States. The applicant does not dispute this fact on appeal. The applicant did not provide evidence of having passed a standardized citizenship test, as permitted by 8 C.F.R. § 245a.3(b)(4)(iii)(A)(2). The applicant does not have a high school diploma or a GED from a United States school, and therefore does not satisfy the regulatory requirement of 8 C.F.R. § 245a.17(a)(2).

In the Notice of Decision, dated December 19, 2003, the director denied the instant application based on the reasons stated in the Notice of Intent to Deny (NOID), dated August 4, 2003. In the NOID, the director stated that the applicant presented a school certificate for an English course from Alar Institute; however, the applicant failed to meet the criteria under the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 245a.17(3). On appeal, counsel contends that the applicant is now enrolled in Houston Community College. Counsel failed to provide evidence to substantiate his claim. Without documentary evidence to support the claim, the assertions of counsel will not satisfy the petitioner's burden of proof. The unsupported assertions of counsel do not constitute evidence. *Matter of Obaighbena*, 19 I&N Dec. 533, 534 (BIA 1988); *Matter of Laureano*, 19 I&N Dec. 1 (BIA 1983); *Matter of Ramirez-Sanchez*, 17 I&N Dec. 503, 506 (BIA 1980).

Even if counsel's assertion is taken at face value, the record reflects that the applicant enrolled in Houston Community College after his second interview. The applicant must have submitted such evidence before or at his second interview. This requirement is a mandatory time frame and clearly

stated in the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 245a.17(a)(3). Thus, the applicant has failed to satisfy the basic citizenship skills requirement.

Based on the above discussion, the applicant does not satisfy either alternative of the “basic citizenship skills” requirement set forth in section 1104(c)(2)(E)(i) of the LIFE Act. Accordingly, the AAO affirms the director’s decision that the applicant is ineligible for adjustment to permanent resident status under section 1104 of the LIFE Act.

**ORDER:** The appeal is dismissed. This decision constitutes a final notice of ineligibility.