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U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Administrative Appeals Office (AAO)
20 Massachusetts Ave., N.W. MS 2090
Washington, DC 20529-2090



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

[REDACTED]

L1

Date: OCT 17 2011

Office: NEW YORK

FILE: [REDACTED]

IN RE: Applicant: [REDACTED]

APPLICATION: Application for Status as a Temporary Resident pursuant to Section 245A
of the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended, 8 U.S.C. § 1255a

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.

Perry Rhew
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The application for temporary resident status pursuant to the terms of the settlement agreements reached in *Catholic Social Services, Inc., et al., v. Ridge, et al.*, CIV. NO. [REDACTED] (E.D. Cal) January 23, 2004, and *Felicity Mary Newman, et al., v. United States Immigration and Citizenship Services, et al.*, CIV. NO. [REDACTED] (C.D. Cal) February 17, 2004 (CSS/Newman Settlement Agreements), was denied by the director of the New York office. The decision is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

The director erroneously denied the I-687 application, finding that the applicant abandoned the application, pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 103.2(b)(13), by failing to appear for a scheduled interview on August 1, 2005.¹ Because the director erred in denying the application based on abandonment, on September 29, 2010, the director of the National Benefits Center issued a notice advising the applicant of the right to appeal the AAO. On September 2, 2011, the AAO withdrew the director's decision. The matter is now before the AAO on appeal.²

On September 2, 2011, the AAO sent the applicant a notice of intent to deny (NOID) the I-687 application, and requesting that the applicant provide additional evidence. Specifically, the AAO requested that the applicant provide evidence that he entered the United States before January 1, 1982, and that he continuously resided in the United States in an unlawful status since such date for the duration of the requisite period. In addition, the NOID noted inconsistencies in the record regarding the date of the applicant's initial entry into the United States, the identity of the applicant's spouse, and the dates of the applicant's absences from the United States during the requisite statutory period. Due to the inconsistencies in the record regarding the date of the applicant's first entry into the United States and the dates of his absences from the United States, the AAO also requested a listing of all of the applicant's entries and exits from the United States, since the date of his initial entry and through the end of the requisite statutory period. In response to the AAO's request, the applicant has submitted an additional copy of the employment verification letter from [REDACTED] and an additional copy of the death certificate for his first wife, [REDACTED] both of which have previously been submitted into the record.³ The applicant has also submitted an additional employment verification letter from [REDACTED] which contains almost identical language to the statement from this witness previously submitted into the record. Further, the witness has submitted a joint statement from representatives of the [REDACTED]. The AAO has reviewed all of the evidence, and has made a *de novo* decision based on the record and the AAO's

¹ On December 14, 2009, the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California ruled that United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) may not apply its abandonment regulation, 8 C.F.R. § 103.2(b)(13), in adjudicating legalization applications filed by CSS class members. *See, CSS v. Michael Chertoff*, Case [REDACTED]

² The AAO notes that the applicant's FOIA request, number [REDACTED] was processed on November 20, 1990.

³ The applicant has also submitted copies of affidavits from his brother and sister-in-law, dated September 10, 2001, attesting to the death of his first wife.

assessment of the credibility, relevance and probative value of the evidence.⁴

An applicant for temporary resident status must establish entry into the United States before January 1, 1982, and continuous residence in the United States in an unlawful status since such date and through the date the application is filed. Section 245A(a)(2) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1255a(a)(2). The applicant must also establish that he or she has been continuously physically present in the United States since November 6, 1986. Section 245A(a)(3) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1255a(a)(3). The regulations clarify that the applicant must have been physically present in the United States from November 6, 1986 until the date of filing the application. 8 C.F.R. § 245a.2(b)(1).

For purposes of establishing residence and physical presence under the CSS/Newman Settlement Agreements, the term "until the date of filing" in 8 C.F.R. § 245a.2(b) means until the date the applicant attempted to file a completed Form I-687 application and fee or was caused not to timely file during the original legalization application period of May 5, 1987 to May 4, 1988. CSS Settlement Agreement paragraph 11 at page 6; Newman Settlement Agreement paragraph 11 at page 10.

The applicant has the burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence that he or she has resided in the United States for the requisite periods, is admissible to the United States under the provisions of section 245A of the Act, and is otherwise eligible for adjustment of status. The inference to be drawn from the documentation provided shall depend on the extent of the documentation, its credibility and amenability to verification. 8 C.F.R. § 245a.2(d)(5).

Although the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 245a.2(d)(3) provides an illustrative list of contemporaneous documents that an applicant may submit in support of his or her claim of continuous residence in the United States in an unlawful status since prior to January 1, 1982, the submission of any other relevant document is permitted pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 245a.2(d)(3)(vi)(L). To meet his or her burden of proof, an applicant must provide evidence of eligibility apart from the applicant's own testimony, and the sufficiency of all evidence produced by the applicant will be judged according to its probative value and credibility. 8 C.F.R. § 245a.2(d)(6).

The "preponderance of the evidence" standard requires that the evidence demonstrate that the applicant's claim is "probably true," where the determination of "truth" is made based on the factual circumstances of each individual case. *Matter of E-M-*, 20 I&N Dec. 77, 79-80 (Comm. 1989). In evaluating the evidence, *Matter of E-M-* also stated that "[t]ruth is to be determined not by the quantity of evidence alone but by its quality." *Id.* Thus, in adjudicating the application pursuant to the preponderance of the evidence standard, the director must examine each piece of evidence for relevance, probative value, and credibility, both individually and within the context

⁴ The AAO conducts appellate review on a *de novo* basis. The AAO's *de novo* authority is well recognized by the federal courts. See *Soltane v. DOJ*, 381 F.3d 143, 145 (3d Cir. 2004).

of the totality of the evidence, to determine whether the fact to be proven is probably true. See 8 C.F.R. § 245a.2(d)(6). The weight to be given any affidavit depends on the totality of the circumstances, and a number of factors must be considered. More weight will be given to an affidavit in which the affiant indicates personal knowledge of the applicant's whereabouts during the time period in question rather than a fill-in-the-blank affidavit that provides generic information. The regulations provide specific guidance on the sufficiency of documentation when proving residence through evidence of past employment or attestations by churches or other organizations. 8 C.F.R. §§ 245a.2(d)(3)(i) and (v).

Even if the director has some doubt as to the truth, if the applicant submits relevant, probative, and credible evidence that leads the director to believe that the claim is "probably true" or "more likely than not," the applicant or petitioner has satisfied the standard of proof. See *U.S. v. Cardozo-Fonseca*, 480 U.S. 421 (1987) (defining "more likely than not" as a greater than 50 percent probability of something occurring). If the director can articulate a material doubt, it is appropriate for the director to either request additional evidence or, if that doubt leads the director to believe that the claim is probably not true, deny the application or petition. Doubt cast on any aspect of the applicant's proof may lead to a reevaluation of the reliability and sufficiency of the remaining evidence offered in support of the application. *Matter of Ho*, 19 I & N Dec. 582, 591-592 (BIA).

The issue in this proceeding is whether the applicant has established that he (1) entered the United States before January 1, 1982 and (2) has continuously resided in the United States in an unlawful status throughout the requisite period. The documentation that the applicant submits in support of his claim to have arrived in the United States before January 1982 and lived in an unlawful status during the requisite period consists of witness statements and documents. The AAO has reviewed each document in its entirety to determine the applicant's eligibility; however, the AAO will not quote each witness statement in this decision. Some of the evidence submitted indicates that the applicant resided in the United States after May 4, 1988; however, because evidence of residence after May 4, 1988 is not probative of residence during the requisite time period, it shall not be discussed.

The applicant has submitted employment verification letters from [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] states that from 1981 to 1984 the applicant worked as a construction painter with [REDACTED] states that from 1987 through the end of the requisite period the applicant worked as a painter for [REDACTED]

The employment verification letters from [REDACTED] do not meet the requirements set forth in the regulations, which provide specific guidance on the sufficiency of documentation when proving residence through evidence of past employment. The regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 245a.2(d)(3)(i) provides that letters from employers must include: (A)

Alien's address at the time of employment; (B) Exact period of employment; (C) Periods of layoff; (D) Duties with the company; (E) Whether or not the information was taken from official company records; and (F) Where records are located and whether the Service may have access to the records. If the records are unavailable, an affidavit-form letter stating that the alien's employment records are unavailable and why such records are unavailable may be accepted in lieu of subsections (E) and (F). The employment verification letters fail to comply with the above cited regulation because they lack considerable detail regarding the applicant's employment. For instance, the witnesses do not state the applicant's daily duties, the number of hours or days he was employed, or the location at which he was employed. Furthermore, the witnesses do not state how they were able to date the applicant's employment. It is unclear whether they referred to their own recollection or any records they may have maintained. For these reasons, the employment verification letters are of little probative value.

In response to the AAO's request, the applicant has submitted a joint attestation from representatives of the [REDACTED]. The attestation states that the applicant has been a member of the [REDACTED] since [REDACTED]. However, the applicant failed to list his membership in the [REDACTED] or any other religious organization on the I-687 application. At part 31 of the application where applicants are asked to list their involvement with any religious organizations, the applicant did not list any organizations. This is an inconsistency which is material to the applicant's claim in that it has a direct bearing on the applicant's residence in the United States for the duration of the requisite period. As stated above, doubt cast on any aspect of the applicant's proof may lead to a reevaluation of the reliability and sufficiency of the remaining evidence offered in support of the application. *Matter of Ho, supra*. This contradiction undermines the credibility of the applicant's claim of entry into the United States prior to January 1, 1982 and continuous residence in the United States during the requisite period.

More importantly, the witness statement does not meet the requirements set forth at 8 C.F.R. § 245a.2(d)(3)(v), which provides requirements for attestations made on behalf of an applicant by churches, unions, or other organizations. Attestations must: (1) identify applicant by name; (2) be signed by an official (whose title is shown); (3) show inclusive dates of membership; (4) state the address where the applicant resided during membership period; (5) include the seal of the organization impressed on the letter or the letterhead of the organization, if the organization has letterhead stationery; (6) establish how the author knows the applicant; and (7) establish the origin of the information being attested to. This attestation fails to comply with the cited regulation. Therefore, this attestation is of little probative value.

The remaining evidence in the record is comprised of copies of the applicant's statements, the I-687 application, a Form I-485, application to adjust to permanent resident status under the Legal Immigration Family Equity (LIFE) Act, filed in 2002, and a Form I-130, application for alien relative, filed on the applicant's behalf by his U.S. citizen spouse in 2001. The AAO finds in its *de novo* review that the record of proceedings contains materially inconsistent statements regarding the date of the applicant's initial entry into the United States, the identity of his spouse, and the dates of his absences from the United States during the requisite period.

In a statement dated August 8, 1990, the applicant stated that he entered the United States without inspection in 1985.

The record contains a death certificate for the applicant's spouse stating that she died on February 7, 1996.

The record contains a New York marriage certificate, stating that the applicant married on April 6, 2001.

The record contains an I-130 petition, filed on the applicant's behalf by his spouse, on April 20, 2001. The applicant filed contemporaneously with the I-130 petition a Form G-325A, signed by him on April 16, 2001. The Form G-325A requests applicants to list their last address outside the United States of more than one year. On the Form G-325A, the applicant stated that he resided in from September 1958 to March 1985. The Form G-325A also requests applicants to list their last occupation abroad. On the Form G-325A the applicant stated that he worked abroad in farming until March 1985.

In the I-485 application signed by the applicant on December 23, 2001, and filed under the LIFE Act, the applicant listed the date of his last arrival into the United States as being on March 15, 1985. He also listed his marital status as "divorced", and his spouse as . He filed contemporaneously with the I-485 application a Form G-325A, biographic information sheet, stating that his marriage to terminated on February 7, 1996.

At the time of completing the I-687 application, the applicant listed residences and employment in the United States from 1981 through the end of the requisite period. He listed three absences from the United States during the requisite period, from October to November 1984, from February to March 1985, and from October to November 1987.

The applicant has failed to provide probative and credible evidence of his continuous residence in the United States for the duration of the requisite period. The inconsistencies in the record regarding the date of the applicant's initial entry into the United States, the identity of his spouse, and the dates of his absences from the United States during the requisite statutory period are material to his claim, in that they have a direct bearing on his residence in the United States for the duration of the requisite period. As stated above, doubt cast on any aspect of an applicant's proof may lead to a reevaluation of the reliability and sufficiency of the remaining evidence offered in support of the application. *Matter of Ho, supra*. These contradictions undermine the credibility of his claim of entry into the United States prior to January 1, 1982 and continuous residence in the United States during the requisite period.

Upon a *de novo* review of all of the evidence in the record, the AAO finds that the evidence submitted by the applicant has not established that he is eligible for the benefit sought. The various statements currently in the record which attempt to substantiate the applicant's residence and employment in the United States during the statutory period are not objective, independent evidence

such that they might overcome the inconsistencies in the record regarding the applicant's claim that he maintained continuous residence in the United States throughout the statutory period, and thus are not probative.

Based upon the foregoing, the applicant has failed to establish by a preponderance of the evidence that he entered the United States before January 1, 1982 and continuously resided in an unlawful status in the United States for the requisite period as required under both 8 C.F.R. § 245a.2(d)(5) and *Matter of E- M--*, *supra*. The applicant is, therefore, ineligible for temporary resident status under section 245A of the Act on this basis.

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