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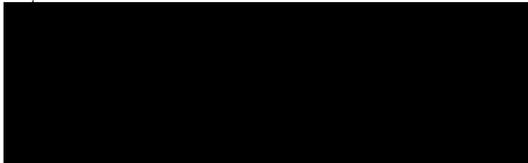
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
20 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Rm. 3000  
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U.S. Citizenship  
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FILE: [REDACTED] Office: BUFFALO, NY

Date: DEC 21 2007

IN RE: Applicant: [REDACTED]

APPLICATION: Application for Certificate of Citizenship under Section 321 of the former Immigration and Nationality Act; 8 U.S.C. § 1432.

ON BEHALF OF APPLICANT:

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 cursive script, appearing to read "Robert P. Wiemann".

Robert P. Wiemann, Chief  
Administrative Appeals Office

**DISCUSSION:** The application was denied by the District Director, Buffalo, New York, and is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

The record reflects that the applicant was born on January 7, 1983 in Bangladesh. The applicant's father, [REDACTED] became a naturalized U.S. citizen on October 25, 1997, when the applicant was 14 years old. The applicant's parents were married on March 21, 1982. The applicant was admitted to the United States as a lawful permanent resident on January 29, 2000, when the applicant was 17 years old. The applicant turned 18 years old on January 7, 2001. The applicant seeks a certificate of citizenship under section 321 of the former Immigration and Nationality Act (the former Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1432, claiming that he derived citizenship through his father.

The director determined that the applicant did not qualify for citizenship under section 321 of the former Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1432, because the record did not establish that both his parents were naturalized or that his parents had obtained a "legal separation" prior to the applicant's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

On appeal, the applicant maintains that his father has sole custody of him. The applicant submits, among other things, his high school transcript, a motor vehicle registration, copies of social security cards, a copy of his permanent resident card, a copy of his father's naturalization certificate and marriage certificate.

The AAO first notes that the Child Citizenship Act of 2000 (the CCA), which took effect on February 27, 2001, amended sections 320 and 322 of the Act, and repealed section 321 of the Act. The provisions of the CCA are not retroactive, and the amended provisions of section 320 and 322 of the Act apply only to persons who were not yet 18 years old as of February 27, 2001. Because the applicant was over the age of 18 on February 27, 2001, he is not eligible for the benefits of the amended Act. *See Matter of Rodriguez-Tejedor*, 23 I&N Dec. 153 (BIA 2001). Section 321 of the former Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1432, is therefore applicable in this case.

Section 321 of the former Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1432, provides, in pertinent part, that:

(a) a child born outside of the United States of alien parents, or of an alien parent and a citizen parent who has subsequently lost citizenship of the United States, becomes a citizen of the United States upon fulfillment of the following conditions:

- (1) The naturalization of both parents; or
- (2) The naturalization of the surviving parent if one of the parents is deceased; or
- (3) The naturalization of the parent having legal custody of the child when there has been a legal separation of the parents or the naturalization of the mother if the child was born out of wedlock and the paternity of the child has not been established by legitimation; and if-
- (4) Such naturalization takes place while said child is under the age of eighteen years; and

(5) Such child is residing in the United States pursuant to a lawful admission for permanent residence at the time of the naturalization of the parent last naturalized under clause (2) or (3) of this subsection, or thereafter begins to reside permanently in the United States while under the age of eighteen years.

The AAO finds that the requirements set forth in section 321(a) of the former Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1432(a), have not been met. Specifically, the AAO finds that the applicant has failed to establish the "legal separation" requirement set forth in section 321(a)(3) of the former Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1432. Because the AAO finds that the applicant's parents were not legally separated, the AAO does not address the issue of "legal custody."

The AAO notes that the Board stated clearly in *Matter of H*, 3 I&N Dec. 742 (1949), that "legal separation" means either a limited or absolute divorce obtained through judicial proceedings. *See also, Nehme v. INS*, 252 F.3d 415, 425-26 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2001). A married couple, even when living apart with no plans of reconciliation, is not legally separated. *Matter of Mowrer*, 17 I&N Dec. 613, 615 (BIA 1981). A privately-executed separation agreement made between the applicant's parents does not qualify as a "legal separation" under section 321(a)(3) of the former Act. *Afeta v. Gonzales*, 467 F.3d 402, 407 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2006).

The record contains a copy of the applicant's parents' 1982 marriage certificate. There is no evidence in the record indicating that that applicant's parents obtained a "legal separation." Accordingly, the AAO finds the applicant has failed to establish that he derived citizenship pursuant to section 321(a) of the former Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1432(a).

The AAO notes "[t]here must be strict compliance with all the congressionally imposed prerequisites to the acquisition of citizenship." *Fedorenko v United States*, 449 U.S. 490, 506 (1981). 8 C.F.R. § 341.2(c) provides that the burden of proof shall be on the claimant to establish the claimed citizenship by a preponderance of the evidence. In order to meet this burden, the applicant must submit relevant, probative and credible evidence to establish that the claim is "probably true" or "more likely than not." *Matter of E-M-*, 20 I&N Dec. 77, 79-80 (Comm. 1989). The AAO finds that the applicant has not met his burden of proof and the appeal will be dismissed.

**ORDER:** The appeal is dismissed.