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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**



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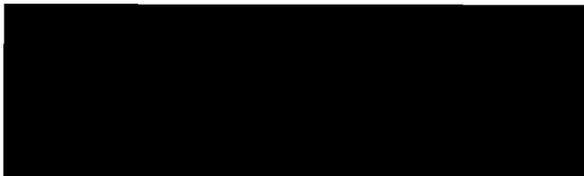
IN RE:

Applicant:



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for Certificate of Citizenship under former Section 321 of the Immigration and Nationality Act; 8 U.S.C. § 1432 (repealed).

ON BEHALF OF APPLICANT:



INSTRUCTIONS:

Enclosed please find the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. All of the documents related to this matter have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Please be advised that any further inquiry that you might have concerning your case must be made to that office.

If you believe the law was inappropriately applied by us in reaching our decision, or you have additional information that you wish to have considered, you may file a motion to reconsider or a motion to reopen. The specific requirements for filing such a request can be found at 8 C.F.R. § 103.5. All motions must be submitted to the office that originally decided your case by filing a Form I-290B, Notice of Appeal or Motion, with a fee of \$630. Please be aware that 8 C.F.R. § 103.5(a)(1)(i) requires that any motion must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reconsider or reopen.

Thank you,

Perry Rhew
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The application was denied by the Field Office Director, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and the matter is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

The record reflects that the applicant was born in Colombia on November 19, 1967. The applicant's parents were married at the time of his birth. The applicant was admitted to the United States as a lawful permanent resident on October 10, 1969. The applicant's mother became a U.S. citizen upon her naturalization on June 28, 1985. The applicant's father is not a U.S. citizen. The applicant seeks a Certificate of Citizenship under former section 321 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1432, claiming that he derived citizenship through his mother.

The director determined that the applicant failed to establish eligibility for derivative citizenship because only his mother naturalized prior to his eighteenth birthday. *See Decision of the Director*, dated Feb. 10, 2011. The director noted further that the applicant's parents were both living, and not legally separated, prior to the applicant's eighteenth birthday. *Id.* The application was denied accordingly. *Id.*

On appeal, the applicant, through counsel, concedes that the director's decision "correctly states the law at issue" but requests that U.S. citizenship be granted in the exercise of discretion. *See Letter dated April 14, 2011 in support of Appeal.*

The AAO conducts appellate review on a de novo basis. *See Soltane v. DOJ*, 381 F.3d 143, 145 (3d Cir. 2004). Because the applicant was born abroad, he is presumed to be an alien and bears the burden of establishing his claim to U.S. citizenship by a preponderance of credible evidence. *See Matter of Baires-Larios*, 24 I&N Dec. 467, 468 (BIA 2008).

The applicable law for derivative citizenship purposes is that in effect at the time the critical events giving rise to eligibility occurred. *Minasyan v. Gonzales*, 401 F.3d 1069, 1075 (9th Cir. 2005); *accord Jordon v. Attorney General*, 424 F.3d 320, 328 (3d Cir. 2005). Former section 321 of the Act, in effect at the time of the applicant's mother's naturalization in 1985, is applicable in this case.

Former section 321(a) of the Act provided, in pertinent part:

A child born outside of the United States of alien parents . . . 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 such child is unmarried and 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 (1) of this subsection, or the parent 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.

Here, the applicant satisfied several of the requirements for derivative citizenship set forth in former section 321(a) of the Act before his eighteenth birthday. Specifically, the applicant was admitted to the United States as a lawful permanent resident when he was one year old, and the applicant's mother became a naturalized U.S. citizen when he was seventeen years old. However, the applicant has not shown that his father naturalized prior to his eighteenth birthday; he therefore cannot derive citizenship under former section 321(a)(1) of the Act. The record also does not indicate that the applicant's father was deceased prior to the applicant's eighteenth birthday and he is consequently ineligible to derive citizenship from his mother under former section 321(a)(2) of the Act. The applicant is also ineligible to derive citizenship through his mother under the second clause of former section 321(a)(3) of the Act because he was born in wedlock and his paternity was established at birth. Lastly, the applicant's parents were not legally separated while he was under the age of 18 years, as required by section 321(a)(3) of the Act.¹ Rather, the record reflects that the applicant's parents were married in 1965 and remained married. Consequently, the applicant did not derive citizenship upon his mother's naturalization under former section 321(a)(3) of the Act.

The applicant request that his application for a certificate of citizenship be granted in the exercise of discretion. It is well established, however, that the requirements for citizenship, as set forth in the Act, are statutorily mandated by Congress, and United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) lacks statutory authority to issue a certificate of citizenship when an applicant fails to meet the relevant statutory provisions set forth in the Act. A person may only obtain citizenship in strict compliance with the statutory requirements imposed by Congress. *INS v. Pangilinan*, 486 U.S. 875, 885 (1988). Even courts may not use their equitable powers to grant citizenship, and any doubts concerning citizenship are to be resolved in favor of the United States. *Id.* at 883-84; *see also United States v. Manzi*, 276 U.S. 463, 467 (1928) (stating that "citizenship is a high privilege, and when doubts exist concerning a grant of it ... they should be resolved in favor of the United States and against the claimant"). Moreover, "it has been

¹ The term legal separation means "either a limited or absolute divorce obtained through judicial proceedings." *Afeta v. Gonzales*, 467 F.3d 402, 406 (4th Cir. 2006) (affirming the Board of Immigration Appeals' construction of the term legal separation as set forth in *Matter of H*, 3 I&N Dec. 742, 744 (BIA 1949)) (internal quotation marks omitted).

universally accepted that the burden is on the alien applicant to show his eligibility for citizenship in every respect." *Berenyi v. District Director, INS*, 385 U.S. 630, 637 (1967).

The applicant bears the burden of proof to establish his eligibility for citizenship under the Act. Section 341 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1452; 8 C.F.R. § 341.2(c). Here, the applicant has not established that he met all of the conditions for the automatic derivation of U.S. citizenship pursuant to former section 321 of the Act before his eighteenth birthday. Accordingly, the appeal will be dismissed.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.