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U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
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U.S. Citizenship
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[REDACTED]

FILE: [REDACTED]
MSC-05-236-16313

Office: FRESNO

Date:

SEP 14 2009

IN RE: Applicant: [REDACTED]

APPLICATION: Application for Temporary Resident Status under 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.

John F. Grissom
Acting 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. S-86-1343-LKK (E.D. Cal) January 23, 2004, or *Felicity Mary Newman, et al., v. United States Immigration and Citizenship Services, et al.*, CIV. NO. 87-4757-WDK (C.D. Cal) February 17, 2004, (CSS/Newman Settlement Agreements) was denied by the director of the Fresno office and is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

The applicant submitted a Form I-687, Application for Status as a Temporary Resident under Section 245A of the Immigration and Nationality Act (Act) and a Form I-687 Supplement, CSS/Newman (LULAC) Class Membership Worksheet. The director denied the application, finding that the applicant was ineligible for adjustment to temporary resident status because the applicant had not established by a preponderance of the evidence that she had continuously resided in the United States in an unlawful status for the duration of the requisite time period.

On appeal, counsel for the applicant asserts that the evidence which the applicant previously submitted establishes by a preponderance of the evidence that she continuously resided in the United States in an unlawful status for the duration of the requisite time period.

The AAO has considered the counsel's assertions, reviewed all of the evidence, and has made a *de novo* decision based on the record and the AAO's assessment of the credibility, relevance and probative value of the evidence.¹

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).

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.

¹ The AAO maintains plenary power to review each appeal on a *de novo* basis. 5 U.S.C. § 557(b) ("On appeal from or review of the initial decision, the agency has all the powers which it would have in making the initial decision except as it may limit the issues on notice or by rule."); *see also, Janka v. U.S. Dept. of Transp., NTSB*, 925 F.2d 1147, 1149 (9th Cir. 1991). The AAO's *de novo* authority has long been recognized by the federal courts. *See, e.g. Dor v. INS*, 891 F.2d 997, 1002 n.9 (2d Cir. 1989).

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 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 she (1) entered the United States before January 1, 1982 and (2) has continuously resided in the United States in an

unlawful status for the requisite period of time. The documentation that the applicant submits in support of her claim to have arrived in the United States before January 1982 and lived in an unlawful status during the requisite period consists of several witness statements, and several 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 record contains one letter and two affidavits from [REDACTED] who states that she met the applicant in 1981. In her letter and one of her affidavits the witness states that the applicant lived with her at [REDACTED] in Mendota, California from January 1982 for the duration of the requisite statutory period. In the other of her affidavits the witness states that the applicant lived with her, helping care for her son, from 1983 for the duration of the requisite statutory period.

The applicant has submitted almost identical affidavits from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] all of whom state that they have known the applicant since 1981 when they met her at a friend's house in Mendota, California.² None of the affiants state the address or the name of the friend at whose house they met the applicant. Affiant [REDACTED] states that the applicant has been working in the United States since 1981, but he does not state how he acquired this information, nor does he provide any details regarding the nature of the applicant's employment. Affiant [REDACTED] states that she worked with the applicant in 1981, but she does not state the location or the nature of the employment at which she worked with the applicant.

The record also contains two employment verification letters from [REDACTED] of Iresa Bros. Inc. in Mendota, California.³ The affiant states that he has known the applicant since 1981, and that the applicant was employed by the company's contracting firm from November 1981 through December 1987 as a part-time agricultural worker. The affiant states that the company is no longer in business and that the company's payroll records were destroyed in a fire. The affiant states that he recalls the dates when the applicant worked for the company because he hired her. However, when an officer of United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) contacted the witness for verification of the information contained in his letters, the witness stated that, although he did remember the applicant, he did not know when it was that she worked for him. Due to these inconsistencies these letters have minimal probative value.

² The affidavits of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were all attested to on the same date before the same notary.

³ The most recent affidavits of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were attested to on the same date before the same notary.

In addition, although the witnesses claim to have personal knowledge of the applicant's residence in the United States during the requisite period, the witness statements do not provide concrete information, specific to the applicant and generated by the asserted associations with her, which would reflect and corroborate the extent of those associations, and demonstrate that they were a sufficient basis for reliable knowledge about the applicant's residence in the United States during the requisite period. To be considered probative and credible, witness affidavits must do more than simply state that an affiant knows an applicant and that the applicant has lived in the United States for a specific time period. Their content must include sufficient detail from a claimed relationship to indicate that it probably did exist and that the witness, by virtue of that relationship, does have knowledge of the facts alleged. For instance, the witnesses do not state how they date their initial meeting with the applicant or specify social gatherings, other special occasions or social events when they saw and communicated with the applicant during the requisite period. The affiants also do not state how frequently they had contact with the applicant during the requisite period. The affiants do not provide sufficient details that would lend credence to their claimed knowledge of the applicant's residence in the United States during the requisite period. For these reasons the AAO finds that the witness statements do not indicate that their assertions are probably true.

Furthermore, the employment verification letters from [REDACTED] fail to conform to the regulatory standards for letters from employers. 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 statements of employment of the affiant fail to comply with the above cited regulation because they lack considerable detail regarding the applicant's employment. For instance, the affiant does not state how he was able to date the applicant's employment. It is unclear whether he referred to his own recollection or any records he may have maintained. For these additional reasons, the affiant's statements regarding the applicant's employment are of little probative value.

The remaining evidence in the record is comprised of copies of the applicant's statements, and the I-687 application. However, as stated previously, 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 the evidence produced by the applicant will be judged according to its probative value and credibility. 8 C.F.R. § 245a.2(d)(6). Here, the inconsistencies regarding the dates the applicant lived and worked at a particular location within the United States are material to the applicant's claim in that they have a direct bearing on the applicant's residence in the United States during the requisite period. No evidence of record resolves these inconsistencies. It is incumbent upon the applicant to resolve any inconsistencies in the record by independent objective evidence pointing to where the truth lies. 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 applicant has failed to provide

probative and credible evidence of her continuous residence in the United States for the duration of the requisite period.

Upon a *de novo* review of all of the evidence in the record, the AAO agrees with the director that the evidence submitted by the applicant has not established that she is eligible for the benefit sought. The various statements and affidavits currently in the record, which attempt to substantiate the applicant's residence and employment in the United States during the statutory period, are not sufficiently probative to support the applicant's claim that she maintained continuous residence in the United States throughout the statutory period.

Therefore, based upon the foregoing, the applicant has failed to establish by a preponderance of the evidence that she 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.