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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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DATE:

OFFICE: NEW YORK

FILE:

MAR 05 2012



IN RE:

Applicant:



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:

SELF-REPRESENTED

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. S-86-1343-LKK (E.D. Cal) January 23, 2004, and *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, New York. The decision is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

On February 16, 2005, the applicant submitted a Form I-687, Application for Status as a Temporary Resident under Section 245A of the Immigration and Nationality Act (Act). On February 24, 2006, the director of the New York office 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 scheduled interview on November 8, 2005.¹ Because the director erred in denying the application based on abandonment, on March 7, 2011, the director of the National Benefits Center issued a notice advising the applicant of the right to appeal the decision to the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO).

On February 15, 2007, the applicant submitted a Form I-694, Notice of Appeal of Decision Under Section 210 or 245A. On January 17, 2012, the AAO issued the applicant a Notice of Intent to Deny (NOID) and provided the applicant 21 days in which to respond or to provide additional evidence in support of his claim. The applicant submits four additional affidavits in support of his claim. The director's decision will be withdrawn and the AAO will consider the applicant's claim *de novo*, evaluating the sufficiency of the evidence in the record according to its probative value and credibility as required by the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 245a.2(d)(6).²

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 245(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)(1) 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.

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 2:86-cv-01343-LKK-JFM.

² 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).

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 period, 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). To meet his or her burden of proof, an applicant must provide evidence of eligibility apart from his or her 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).

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).

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.* at 80. 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.

Even if the director has some doubt as to the truth, if the petitioner 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, 431 (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.

The issue in this proceeding is whether the applicant established he: (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. The evidence submitted in support of the applicant’s claim to have arrived in the United States before January 1982 and to have resided in an unlawful status during the requisite period consists of attestations from six individuals claiming to know the applicant during the requisite period. The AAO has reviewed the document to determine the applicant’s eligibility.

The affidavits from [REDACTED] are general in nature and state that the applicant resided in the United States for all, or a portion, of the requisite period. The statements fail to establish the applicant's continuous unlawful residence in the United States for the duration of the requisite period. As stated previously, the evidence must be evaluated not by the quantity of evidence alone but by its quality; an applicant must provide evidence of eligibility apart from his or her own testimony; and the sufficiency of all evidence produced by the applicant will be judged according to its probative value and credibility.

The affidavits fail to provide concrete information, specific to the applicant and generated by the asserted associations with him, which would reflect and corroborate the extent of those associations and demonstrate that the affiants have a sufficient basis for reliable knowledge about the applicant's residence during the time addressed in the statements. 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 the relationship probably did exist and that the witness does, by virtue of that relationship, have knowledge of the facts alleged.

The affidavits from [REDACTED] are virtually identical. They both assert in one sentence that they have known the applicant for a specific period of time during the requisite period. The remaining four affidavits are also virtually identical, state that they have known the applicant for a specific period of time during the requisite period, and attest to the applicant's moral character. No other relevant information is provided regarding the applicant's residence in the United States during the requisite period. The affidavits fail to provide concrete details, such as the applicant's place of residence, employment, or the circumstances of the applicant's residence during the requisite period, which would corroborate the extent of his relationship with the applicant and demonstrate that the affiants have reliable knowledge about the applicant's residence during the time addressed in the statement. Given the general nature of the affidavits, the affidavits have nominal probative value and will be given minimal weight as evidence in support of the applicant's claim.

The evidence, in totality, provides a general account of the applicant's claimed residence in the United States during the requisite period and fails to provide specific details which would reflect and corroborate a reliable knowledge of the circumstances of the applicant's residence for the length of time claimed by the witnesses. Upon a *de novo* review of all of the evidence in the record, the AAO finds that the applicant has not established that he is eligible for the benefit sought.

Based upon the foregoing, the AAO finds that the applicant has failed to establish by a preponderance of the evidence that he continuously resided in an unlawful status in the United States from before January 1, 1982 through 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.

Beyond the decision of the director, the record reflects that on October 24, 2004, the applicant was arrested and charged with *disorderly conduct*, section 240.20 of the New York Penal Law, a violation, in the Criminal Court of the City of New York County of New York (Docket Number ██████████). The applicant pled guilty and was sentenced to a conditional discharge based on community service. This single misdemeanor conviction does not render the applicant ineligible pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 245a.2(c)(1).

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