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U.S. Department of Justice

Immigration and Naturalization Service

identifying data deleted to prevent clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy

[redacted]

OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS
425 Eye Street N.W.
ULLB, 3rd Floor
Washington, D.C. 20536

FILE: [redacted] Office: Vermont Service Center Date:
EAC 01 222 50314

IN RE: Petitioner: [redacted]
Beneficiary:

JAN 30 2003

APPLICATION: Petition for Special Immigrant Battered Spouse Pursuant to Section 204(a)(1)(A)(iii) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. 1154(a)(1)(A)(iii)

IN BEHALF OF PETITIONER: Self-represented

PUBLIC COPY

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is the decision 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.

If you believe the law was inappropriately applied or the analysis used in reaching the decision was inconsistent with the information provided or with precedent decisions, you may file a motion to reconsider. Such a motion must state the reasons for reconsideration and be supported by any pertinent precedent decisions. Any motion to reconsider must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reconsider, as required under 8 C.F.R. 103.5(a)(1)(i).

If you have new or additional information that you wish to have considered, you may file a motion to reopen. Such a motion must state the new facts to be proved at the reopened proceeding and be supported by affidavits or other documentary evidence. Any motion to reopen must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reopen, except that failure to file before this period expires may be excused in the discretion of the Service where it is demonstrated that the delay was reasonable and beyond the control of the applicant or petitioner. Id.

Any motion must be filed with the office that originally decided your case along with a fee of $110 as required under 8 C.F.R. 103.7.

FOR THE ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER,
EXAMINATIONS

Robert P. Wiemann, Director
Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The preference visa petition was denied by the Director, Vermont Service Center, and is now before the Associate Commissioner for Examinations on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

The petitioner is a native and citizen of India who is seeking classification as a special immigrant pursuant to section 204(a)(1)(A)(iii) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. 1154(a)(1)(A)(iii), as the battered spouse of a citizen of the United States.

The director determined that the petitioner failed to establish eligibility for the benefit sought because she was divorced from her allegedly abusive U.S. citizen spouse for more than two years prior to the filing of the self-petition. The director, therefore, denied the petition.

On appeal, the petitioner asserts that she was not aware that there is no provision of law whereby an alien may self-petition based on a former spousal relationship when more than two years have passed between the date of the legal termination of the marriage and the date of filing of the petition. The petitioner requests that her case be dealt with sympathetically because she is the beneficiary of an approved visa petition filed by her U.S. citizen father, she is a person of good moral character, all her family members are U.S. citizens, and she has no life back home since she has nowhere to go. The petitioner indicates that she is sending a brief and/or evidence within 30 days. However, it has been approximately six months since the filing of the appeal in this matter, and neither a brief nor additional evidence has been received in the record of proceeding. Therefore, the record is considered complete.

8 C.F.R. 204.2(c)(1) states, in pertinent part, that:

> (i) A spouse may file a self-petition under section 204(a)(1)(A)(iii) or 204(a)(1)(B)(ii) of the Act for his or her classification as an immigrant relative or as a preference immigrant if he or she:
>
> > (A) Is the spouse of a citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States;
> >
> > (B) Is eligible for immigrant classification under section 201(b)(2)(A)(i) or 203(a)(2)(A) of the Act based on that relationship;
> >
> > (C) Is residing in the United States;
> >
> > (D) Has resided in the United States with the citizen or lawful permanent resident spouse;

> (E) Has been battered by, or has been the subject of extreme cruelty perpetrated by, the citizen or lawful permanent resident during the marriage; or is the parent of a child who has been battered by, or has been the subject of extreme cruelty perpetrated by, the citizen or lawful permanent resident during the marriage;
>
> (F) Is a person of good moral character;
>
> (G) Is a person whose deportation (removal) would result in extreme hardship to himself, herself, or his or her child; and
>
> (H) Entered into the marriage to the citizen or lawful permanent resident in good faith.

The record reflects that the petitioner married her United States citizen spouse on June 11, 1995, in India. The petitioner arrived in the United States as a conditional resident (CR-1) on October 10, 1995. The petitioner's spouse subsequently petitioned for dissolution of the marriage, and the judgment of divorce became effective on November 14, 1996. On July 2, 2001, a self-petition was filed by the petitioner claiming eligibility as a special immigrant alien who has been battered by, or has been the subject of extreme cruelty perpetrated by, her United States citizen spouse during their marriage.

8 C.F.R. 204.2(c)(1)(ii) states, in pertinent part:

> The self-petitioning spouse must be legally married to the abuser when the petition is properly filed with the Service. A spousal self-petition must be denied if the marriage to the abuser legally ended through annulment, death, or divorce before that time. After the self-petition has been properly filed, the legal termination of the marriage will have no effect on the decision made on the self-petition.

The record of proceeding contains a copy of the Judgment of Dissolution of Marriage, entered on November 14, 1996, by the Superior Court of California, County of Contra Costa. The director determined that the petitioner failed to establish eligibility for the benefit sought because she was divorced from her U.S. citizen spouse more than two years prior to the filing of the self-petition on July 2, 2001.

On October 28, 2000, the President approved enactment of the Violence Against Women Act, 2000, Pub. L. No. 106-386, Division B, 114 Stat. 1464, 1491 (2000). Section 1503(b) amends section

204(a)(1)(A)(iii) of the Act so that an alien self-petitioner claiming to qualify for immigration as the battered spouse or child of a United States citizen is no longer required to be married to the alleged abuser at the time the petition is filed as long as the petitioner can show a connection between the legal termination of the marriage within the past two years and battering or extreme cruelty by the United States citizen spouse. Id. section 1503(b), 114 Stat. at 1520-21. Pub. L. 106-386 does not specify an effective date for the amendments made by section 1503. This lack of an effective date strongly suggests that the amendments entered into force on the date of enactment. Johnson v. United States, 529 U.S. 694, 702 (2000); Gozlon-Peretz v. United States, 498 U.S. 395, 404 (1991).

Although the divorce of the two parties prior to the filing of the petition is no longer a bar as long as there is a connection between the legal termination of the petitioner's marriage within the past two years and battering or extreme cruelty by her spouse, the record reflects that the petitioner and her U.S. citizen spouse divorced on November 14, 1996, and that the petitioner filed the instant petition on July 2, 2001, more than two years after the divorce was final. Accordingly, the appeal must be dismissed.

The petitioner, on appeal, asserts that she was not aware that there is no provision of law whereby an alien may self-petition based on a former spousal relationship when more than two years have passed between the date of the legal termination of the marriage and the date of filing of the petition. The Administrative Appeals Office is bound by the clear language of the statute and lacks the authority to change the statute. Further, there is no provision to waive the two-year requirement based on the petitioner's assertion that she lacks knowledge of the immigration laws.

The burden of proof in these proceedings rests solely with the petitioner. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. 1361. The petitioner has not met that burden.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.