U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Non-Precedent Decision of the Administrative Appeals Office

In Re: 42202352

Date: APR. 22, 2026

Appeal of Service Center Operations (SCOPS) Decision

Form I-140, Immigrant Petition for Alien Workers (Extraordinary Ability)

The Petitioner, a staff research associate in the neuroscience field, seeks classification as an alien of extraordinary ability. *See* Immigration and National Act (the Act) section 203(b)(1)(A), 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(1)(A). This first preference classification makes visas available to those who can demonstrate their extraordinary ability through sustained national or international acclaim and whose achievements have been recognized in their field through extensive documentation.

SCOPS denied the petition, concluding that the record did not establish that the Petitioner had satisfied at least three of the ten initial evidentiary criteria required for this classification. The matter is now before us on appeal pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 103.3.

The Petitioner bears the burden of proof to demonstrate eligibility by a preponderance of the evidence. *Matter of Chawathe*, 25 I&N Dec. 369, 375-76 (AAO 2010). We review the questions in this matter de novo. *Matter of Christo's, Inc.*, 26 I&N Dec. 537, 537 n.2 (AAO 2015). Upon de novo review, we will dismiss the appeal.

I. LAW

To qualify under this immigrant classification, a petitioner must demonstrate:

- The alien has extraordinary ability in the sciences, arts, education, business, or athletics which has been demonstrated by sustained national or international acclaim and whose achievements have been recognized in the field through extensive documentation;
- They seek to enter the country to continue working in the area of extraordinary ability; and
- Their entry will offer substantial prospective benefits to the United States.

Section 203(b)(1)(A)(i)–(iii) of the Act. The term "extraordinary ability" refers only to those individuals in "that small percentage who have risen to the very top of the field of endeavor." 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(2).

The implementing regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3) sets forth a multi-step analysis. In the first step, a petitioner can demonstrate international recognition of his or her achievements in the field

through a one-time achievement (that is, a major, internationally recognized award). If the petitioner does not submit this evidence, then he or she must provide sufficient qualifying documentation that meets at least three of the ten criteria listed at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(i)–(x) (including items such as awards, published material in certain media, and scholarly articles).

Where a petitioner meets these initial evidence requirements, we then move to the second step to consider the totality of the material provided in a final merits determination and assess whether the record shows sustained national or international acclaim and demonstrates that the individual is among the small percentage at the very top of the field of endeavor. *See Kazarian v. USCIS*, 596 F.3d 1115, 1121 (9th Cir. 2010) (discussing a two-step review where the documentation is first counted and then, if fulfilling the required number of criteria, considered in the context of a final merits determination); *see also Amin v. Mayorkas*, 24 F.4th 383, 394 (5th Cir. 2022).

II. ANALYSIS

The Petitioner received his Ph.D. in biological sciences from the [redacted] in India in 2017 and then worked as a postdoctoral scholar at the [redacted] at [redacted]. The Petitioner has worked in the department of neuroscience at [redacted] since 2019, initially as a postdoctoral fellow, and, since 2024, as a staff research associate. The Petitioner states that he intends to continue his work in the areas of neuroimmunology, neurodegeneration and multiple sclerosis (MS) research.

A. Evidentiary Criteria

Because the Petitioner has not indicated or established that he has received a major, internationally recognized award, he must satisfy at least three of the alternate regulatory criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(i)-(x). SCOPS found that the Petitioner met two of these evidentiary criteria relating to his participation as a judge of the work of others in his field and his authorship of scholarly articles in professional publications. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(iv) and (vi). We agree with SCOPS as there is ample evidence in the record of the Petitioner's service as a peer reviewer and editor for scientific journals and his authorship of scholarly articles in publications such as [redacted].

On appeal, the Petitioner asserts that he also meets the evidentiary criterion relating to original contributions of major significance to the field at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(v) and maintains that SCOPS failed to give sufficient weight to the expert opinion letters submitted in support of the petition. Further, the Petitioner contends that he provided evidence that he has performed in a critical role for an organization or establishment that has a distinguished reputation and therefore meets the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(viii). He notes that SCOPS failed to address this criterion in its decision.

After reviewing all the evidence in the record, and for the reasons discussed below, we conclude the Petitioner has not demonstrated that he meets either of these two additional criteria. Therefore, he has not submitted evidence satisfying at least three of the ten criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(i)-(x) and is not eligible for classification as an alien of extraordinary ability.

1. Original Contributions of Major Significance

The regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(v) calls for "evidence of the alien's original scientific, scholarly, artistic, athletic, or business-related contributions of major significance in the field." A petitioner may show that their contributions have been widely implemented throughout the field, have remarkably impacted or influenced the field, or have otherwise risen to a level of major significance. *See Visinscaia v. Beers*, 4 F. Supp. 3d 126, 131-32 (D.D.C. 2013). Relevant evidence of the significance of an original contribution may include, but is not limited to:

- Published materials about the significance of the alien's original work;
- Testimonials, letters, and affidavits about the person's original work;
- Documentation that the person's original work was cited at a level indicative of major significance in the field; and
- Patents or licenses deriving from the alien's work evidence of commercial use of the person's work.

See generally 6 *USCIS Policy Manual* F.2(B)(1), www.uscis.gov/policy-manual.

The Petitioner's evidence in support of this criterion included: copies of his published research articles; his citation record and associated evidence (including copies of papers that cite to his work); his U.S. patent; and more than 15 reference letters from experts in his field who perform medical research in academia and in the pharmaceutical industry. The Petitioner's eligibility claims on appeal focus on (1) his research related to the biological mechanisms underlying MS and its progression and (2) his patented animal model for Alzheimer's disease research.

a. MS Research

In his personal statement, the Petitioner emphasized that his MS research undertaken at [redacted] "has produced discoveries that are widely recognized as original and strategically important." He identified four specific original contributions, and nearly all the testimonial evidence in the record focuses on this research. Specifically, he highlighted the following published work:[1] [redacted] article titled "[redacted]; (2) a [redacted] 2023 article titled [redacted]," published in [redacted]; (3) a 2024 [redacted] article titled "[redacted]"; and (4) an article titled "[redacted]" published in [redacted] in 2025.

[1] In a statement in support of his petition, the Petitioner also claimed eligibility under this criterion based on his research involving "Astrocytic regulation of remyelination [redacted]." He stated that his work resulted in the "first demonstration that astrocytes act as active gatekeepers of brain repair" and opened "an entirely new therapeutic pathway." According to the Petitioner's curriculum vitae submitted at the time of filing, he had a manuscript for an article titled "[redacted]" that was "ready for publication." The record does not include evidence that this article had been published at the time of filing or at the time the Petitioner filed this appeal, or that it was otherwise disseminated to the field.

The Petitioner asserted that these discoveries have been "cited by international researchers," "referenced in pharmaceutical research programs" and have influenced "the broader scientific and medical community."

With respect to evidence of citations, we note that published research that has provoked widespread commentary on its importance from others working in the field, and documentation that the research has been highly cited relative to others' work in that field, may be probative of the significance of the person's contributions in the field of endeavor. *See generally* 6 *USCIS Policy Manual*, *supra* at F.2(B)(1).

The record includes a copy of the Petitioner's Google Scholar profile printed in July 2025, just prior to the filing of the petition. This evidence shows: 13 citations to his 2021 [redacted] article; 4 citations to his 2024 [redacted] article; 5 citations to the 2023 [redacted] article; and 0 citations to his 2025 [redacted].[2] In its decision, SCOPS acknowledged that others in the Petitioner's field have cited to and relied on his work but emphasized that the record did not contain evidence demonstrating that the number of citations he has received is indicative of the major significance of his research contributions.

On appeal, the Petitioner suggests that SCOPS placed undue focus on his citation record rather than on the detailed expert opinion letters in the record. The Petitioner does not address SCOPS' determination that the record did not show how his original research contributions had provoked widespread commentary in the field indicative of their major significance or include documentation showing that the work was highly cited relative to that of others performing research in the field. In fact, he does not mention his citation record on appeal beyond observing that it is "noteworthy" that he had 584 citations to his entire body of published work at the time of filing in July 2025 and 628 aggregate citations as of December 2025.

The burden is on the Petitioner to identify his original contributions and explain why they are of major significance. The Petitioner did not demonstrate how the cumulative number of citations to his entire body of published research is indicative of his original contributions of major significance in the field. Aggregate citation figures tend to reflect a petitioner's overall publication record rather than identifying which research the field considers to be majorly significant. Here, the Petitioner seeks to rely on certain research he published between 2021 and 2025 to demonstrate that he satisfies this criterion. Therefore, his overall citation record is not directly relevant to this analysis.

Generally, citations can serve as an indication that the field has taken interest in a petitioner's research or written work. However, we agree with SCOPS that the Petitioner has not sufficiently shown that the number of citations for any of the published articles he highlighted in his personal statement, and addressed in the supporting letters discussed below, is commensurate with contributions of major significance. Nor has he demonstrated the significance or relevance of the citations to his articles. *See Gadhave v. Thompson*, No. 3:21-CV-2938-D, 2023 WL 6931334, at *5 (N.D. Tex. Oct. 19, 2023) (finding the record contained little evidence that contextualized the number of citations the petitioner's work had received). For example, he did not demonstrate that these citations are unusually high in his

[2] On appeal, the Petitioner provides an updated Google Scholar profile indicating that the number of citations to the referenced articles was 15, 8, 5 and 1, respectively, as of December 2025.

field or how they compare to other articles that the field views as having been majorly significant. Although his citations are indicative that his research into the biological mechanisms underlying MS have received some attention from the field, the Petitioner did not establish that his citation numbers for his individual articles are indicative of widespread commentary or a high rate of citation indicative of majorly significant contributions in the field.

As further evidence of the significance of his research contributions, the Petitioner emphasized that an image from his research article was selected to appear on the cover of the [redacted] 2023 issue of [redacted]. He claimed that this distinction is "reserved for research considered particularly novel, visually impactful and of broad interest to the scientific community." The Petitioner further asserted that the selection of this image "serves as objective documentary evidence that [his] research was regarded by the editorial board of a prestigious scientific journal as work of extraordinary significance" and "exceptional impact and importance."

The record does not support the Petitioner's assertions. While the Petitioner claims that the cover feature "amplified the reach of his findings" and provided "broader dissemination within the global immunology and neuroimmunology research communities," the record lacks evidence that the Petitioner's research provoked widespread commentary within those communities or was otherwise deemed to be of major significance by others working in the field. The Petitioner provided evidence that the article had been cited five times between its publication in [redacted] 2023 and [redacted] 2025 but did not provide evidence showing that it was highly cited relevant to other articles considered majorly important in the field, despite being featured on the cover of a journal. Further, the record does not include, for example, evidence from the journal's publisher to corroborate the Petitioner's statement that only images from articles of "extraordinary significance" are selected for appearance on the cover of the [redacted].

In evaluating whether a petitioner has made original contributions of major significance, we will also consider evidence of published material about the significance of their work. *See generally* 6 *USCIS Policy Manual*, *supra* at F.2(B)(1). Here, the Petitioner provided evidence that his [redacted] 2025 publication in [redacted] was "highlighted in an official news release by the [redacted]," which describes the study as "a big step forward in understanding repair failure in the progressive stage of M.S." The news release provides additional insight into the Petitioner's co-authored study regarding how the enzyme Dicer1 affects remyelination and demyelination and indicates that "Dicer1 could be a promising target for drug development." However, the article was published by the [redacted] as an update on research activities conducted by its own scientists. The submitted evidence of published material about the Petitioner's research does not extend beyond the institution that produced it and therefore is not necessarily indicative of the major significance of the work or its receipt of widespread attention.

The Petitioner also provided evidence that he deposited a "high throughput RNA sequencing dataset" into "the NCBI Gene Expression Omnibus (GEO), an NIH-curated international repository of functional genomics data." The Petitioner noted that the data set was generated from the research he published in his [redacted] 2025 [redacted] article. He asserts that "deposition in GEO is regarded as a contribution to scientific transparency, reproducibility and global collaboration," noting that the dataset will be cited and incorporated into future publications, thus making it "a permanent scientific resource of major significance to MS research." The Petitioner's statements regarding the

major significance of the inclusion of his dataset in GEO are not supported by independent, objective evidence regarding GEO, such as its guidelines or requirements for accepting such data. Without such context, the Petitioner has not corroborated his claim that the mere inclusion of his dataset in the GEO repository, and the possibility of the future use of such data, is indicative of the major significance of the research from which the dataset was derived.

The Petitioner's primary claim on appeal is that the submitted letters from experts in his field are sufficient to demonstrate the major significance of his original research contributions. Overall, the letters in the record offer a detailed summary of the Petitioner's research and findings related to MS and corroborate the originality of his work, but they do not sufficiently articulate how his research and findings have been considered of such importance and how their impact on the field to date rises to the level of significance required by this criterion. Rather, they declare with minimal elaboration that the Petitioner's work is of major significance.

For instance, Dr. A-S-, a professor at [redacted], stated in her letter that the Petitioner's "groundbreaking work has advanced understanding of neuroimmunological mechanisms in demyelinating diseases" and "profoundly influenced our research and the broader scientific community" and "advanced the field."[3] However, she does not provide further insight or examples as to how the Petitioner's contributions have had a profound influence or impact on research in his field. Without elaboration on this critical point, the letter does not show how the Petitioner's work, in particular, is of major significance. This is a separate issue from the *overall* importance of MS research.

Similarly, Dr. L-L-, a professor at [redacted] opines that the Petitioner "made several highly original contributions that are advancing our understanding of MS." He notes that the Petitioner's "prestigious" article in the [redacted] journal "received extensive national media coverage" but the record does not include independent evidence to corroborate this statement. Dr. L-L- further states that the Petitioner's entire body of work has "deepened understanding of inflammation, degeneration and repair in MS," and is "shaping the future of MS research." A letter from Dr. P-C-, a professor at [redacted] states that the Petitioner's contributions to MS research extend "well beyond incremental science" and "provide entirely new frameworks for how the field understands and targets neurodegeneration inflammation and repair in MS." However, neither author further explains how the Petitioner's original contributions have meaningfully shaped or influenced MS research or pointed to indicators that there has been widespread adoption of these "new frameworks" among researchers in the field.

Other letters in the record speculate on the potential influence of the Petitioner's work and propose that it will have a significant impact in the future. For example, Dr. F-S-, a professor at [redacted] at [redacted], stated that his prior work with the Petitioner has "advanced understanding of molecular barriers to repair in MS," that two of their manuscripts in development "have the potential to shape future neurodegenerative therapies" and that the Petitioner has "demonstrated potential for groundbreaking discoveries." However, he did not elaborate and explain how their joint research discoveries have already been applied in the field at a level indicative of major significance.[4]

[3] While we discuss a sampling of letters, we have reviewed and considered each one.

[4] Dr. F-S- is named as a co-author of the Petitioner's 2024 publication in [redacted] which had four citations as of the date of filing.

Likewise, Dr. J-H- highlights the clinical relevance of the Petitioner's original research and asserts that it expands "therapeutic possibilities for controlling chronic inflammation in MS" and "new strategies to mitigate progressive disease." These statements do not indicate or establish how his work already qualifies as a contribution of major significance in the field based on its known outcomes or widespread adoption, but rather highlight its prospective, potential impacts and significance.

The Petitioner also provided letters from pharmaceutical industry scientists in support of his claim that his contributions are being implemented or relied on by others in his field. A letter from Dr. A-S-, an associate director at [redacted], states that the Petitioner's discovery of biological pathways that can be targeted for treatment are "the kind of breakthroughs that pharmaceutical companies like [redacted] look for when designing the next generation of therapies" and are "strategically important for industry." Dr. M-W-, a senior scientist at [redacted] states that the Petitioner's research "has already begun to shape the way pharmaceutical companies, including [redacted], conceptualize progressive MS and approaches to repair," and states that his work provides "actionable therapeutic insights" that can be incorporated into "future drug development programs." While these letters support the Petitioner's claim that his work is relevant outside academia and may impact future efforts to development treatments for MS, they offer insufficient detail to show that his research contributions are already influencing the industry's drug development efforts and do not provide adequate evidence of the commercial use of his research findings at a level indicative of major significance.

Detailed letters from experts explaining the nature and significance of the person's contribution may provide valuable context for evaluating the claimed original contributions of major significance, particularly when the record includes documentation corroborating the claimed significance. *See generally* 6 *USCIS Policy Manual*, *supra*, at F.2(B)(1). Here, the submitted letters offer thorough explanations of the novelty of the Petitioner's discoveries, but do not contain specific, detailed information explaining the unusual influence or high impact his research or work has already had on the overall field to establish that it has been of major significance. We do not question the competence of the various individuals to attest to the technical details of the Petitioner's work. But it cannot suffice to describe that work and then assert that it is of major significance with the contention that it will eventually lead to new treatments or methods that have yet to be discovered, particularly where the record contains little supplemental documentation corroborating the claimed significance.

As discussed above, while the Petitioner has consistently published his MS research since joining [redacted], he neither claimed nor provided evidence that any of the articles resulting from this research has been highly cited by other researchers or otherwise provoked widespread commentary within the field. While we acknowledge opinions that the Petitioner's work is "groundbreaking" and influential, the record does not contain sufficient corroborating evidence showing that his research is viewed throughout the field, rather than by a solicited few, as having risen to the level of original contributions of major significance.

B. U.S. Patent

The Petitioner provided evidence that he is listed as a co-inventor on a U.S. patent titled '[redacted]," issued in 2016. He asserts that the patent "is a significant, original and field-shaping contribution to neurodegenerative disease research" because Alzheimer's disease affects over 6 million Americans and because reliable animal models are essential for testing new therapies.

SCOPS acknowledged that a patent provides evidence of originality. However, SCOPS observed that the issuance of a patent, by itself, does not verify the significance of the innovation patented because a patent's significance is not evaluated during the application process.

On appeal, the Petitioner asserts "the fact that independent scientists are already using [his] patented model and citing it in their publications demonstrates that the field has adopted his invention and it is making a tangible impact on Alzheimer's research worldwide." He explained that his model is "uniquely valuable, physiologically relevant, and broadly applicable for researchers studying the most common form of Alzheimer's disease."

As noted by SCOPS, evidence that the person's work was patented, while potentially demonstrating the work's originality, will not necessarily establish, on its own, that the work is of major significance to the field. Evidence that a petitioner's patented technology has attracted significant attention or commercialization may establish the significance of the contribution. *See generally* 6 *USCIS Policy Manual*, *supra*, at F.2(B)(1); *see also Amin v. Mayorkas*, 24 F.4th at 394 (upholding agency decision that held evidence insufficient "because it did not show widespread replication of [the petitioner's invention]").

In support of his claim that his patented animal model "is making a tangible impact on Alzheimer's research worldwide," the Petitioner submitted two research articles published in [redacted] (2023) and [redacted] (2024). While both articles cited to the Petitioner's co-authored Alzheimer's research studies, it is not evident based on the provided evidence that these two groups of researchers adopted his patented animal model for Alzheimer's research, which is not cited and which according to the Petitioner's Google Scholar citation history, has been cited only once. The Petitioner did not provide other evidence that his patented animal model has attracted significant attention or is widely being used to the extent that it is regarded as a contribution of major significance in the field.

For the reasons discussed, the Petitioner has not provided evidence that he has made original scientific contributions of major significance in the field.

2. Critical Role

The regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(viii) calls for "evidence that the alien has performed in a leading or critical role for organizations or establishments that have a distinguished reputation." The role may be shown to be leading or critical for a division or department of an organization or establishment, or for the organization or establishment overall. For a critical role, evidence should show that the alien has contributed in a way that is significantly important to the outcome of the organization or establishment's activities or those of a division or department of the organization or establishment. In determining whether the organization or establishment, or a department or division thereof, has a distinguished reputation, relevant factors include its size, longevity, scale of its customer base, and relevant media coverage. *See generally* 6 *USCIS Policy Manual*, *supra*, at F.2(B)(1).

The Petitioner claims that he has served in a critical role with the [redacted] and refers to letters from R-D- and B-T-. The record demonstrates that both the [redacted] and the [redacted] enjoy a distinguished reputation. However, based on the

submitted letters, the Petitioner has not met his burden to demonstrate that he has served in a critical role during his tenure as a postdoctoral fellow and staff research associate. Letters submitted in support of this criterion should contain detailed and probative information that specifically addresses how the person's role for the organization, establishment, division or department was leading or critical. *See generally* 6 *USCIS Policy Manual supra* at F.2(B)(1).

Here, the submitted letters from the Petitioner's employer do not contain specific information signifying the Petitioner's critical role. The letter from D-T-, Chair of the Department of Neurosciences, is similar in content to other expert opinion letters that discuss the Petitioner's research contributions and their significance under the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(3)(v). He summarizes some of the research the Petitioner has performed during his time at the [redacted], and states that "[h]is contributions extend and complement the [redacted]'s legacy of groundbreaking MS research while carving out entirely new directions that are distinctly his own." However, D-T-'s letter is otherwise silent on the nature of the Petitioner's role within the institution. His broad assertion that the Petitioner, through his published research, has extended and complemented the [redacted]'s existing reputation does not contain sufficient detailed and probative information specifically addressing how his role for the organization, or a department or division of the organization, has been significantly important to the outcome of its activities.

The letter from R-D-, who states that he has been the Petitioner's supervisor and mentor at the [redacted], similarly focuses on the Petitioner's contributions to MS research. He praises the Petitioner's abilities and accomplishments as a researcher, but his letter does not specifically address the Petitioner's role within the [redacted] or [redacted] or indicate whether or how that role has been critical to the organization or a department or division of the organization.

While it is apparent that the Petitioner has earned the regard of his superiors, the evidence does not sufficiently address, and therefore does not establish, how his role as a postdoctoral fellow or staff research associate has been in a critical capacity for the [redacted] or [redacted]. The support letters submitted by the Petitioner do not demonstrate that he has been responsible for the institution's success, standing, or the outcome of its activities to a degree consistent with the meaning of "critical role." Accordingly, the Petitioner has not shown that he meets this criterion.

B. Final Merits Determination

The Petitioner has not submitted the required initial evidence of either a one-time achievement or documents that meet at least three of the ten criteria. As a result, we need not provide the type of final merits determination referenced in *Kazarian*, 596 F.3d at 1119-20. We therefore reserve this issue.[5]

Nevertheless, we have reviewed the record in the aggregate and conclude that it does not support a finding that the Petitioner has established the acclaim and recognition required for the classification sought. The Petitioner seeks a highly restrictive visa classification, intended for individuals already at the top of their respective fields, rather than for individuals progressing toward the top. *Matter of Price*, 20 I&N Dec. 953, 954 (Assoc. Comm'r 1994) (concluding that even major league level athletes

[5] *See INS v. Bagamasbad*, 429 U.S. 24, 25 (1976) (per curiam) (holding that agencies are not required to make "purely advisory findings" on issues that are unnecessary to the ultimate decision).

do not automatically meet the statutory standards for classification as an individual of "extraordinary ability,"); *Amin v. Mayorkas*, 24 F.4th at 394 (stating that extraordinary ability is such an elite level of accomplishment); *Lapteva v. Schuurmans*, No. 8:24CV83, 2025 WL 815087, at *1 (D. Neb. Mar. 10, 2025) (stating that EB-1 visa are intended to be available to only an exceedingly small amount of individuals with extraordinary ability). In this case, the Petitioner has not shown the significance of his work is indicative of the required sustained national or international acclaim or it is consistent with a career of acclaimed work in the field. *See* Section 203(b)(1)(A) of the Act. While the Petitioner need not establish that there is no one more accomplished to qualify for the classification sought, the record is insufficient to demonstrate that he is among the small percentage at the top of his field. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(h)(2).

III. CONCLUSION

For the reasons discussed above, the Petitioner has not demonstrated his eligibility as an individual of extraordinary ability. Accordingly, the appeal will be dismissed.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.

NOTICE: This constitutes the final decision in this matter. The filing of a motion will not postpone the effect of the decision. 8 C.F.R. § 103.5(a)(1)(iv). Aliens who are not lawfully present, or who are otherwise inadmissible or deportable, may be subject to the commencement of removal proceedings under section 240 of the Act through the issuance of a Form I-862, Notice to Appear. Those proceedings may result in their removal from the United States and possible ineligibility for future visas or other immigration benefits.