

Pittsburg mom's deportation delayed after close call

Cosmetologist from Liberia has been a U.S. resident since 1980s

[By Matt O'Brien](#)

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As she raised two sons and ran a Pittsburg hair salon, Nancy Beyan heard little from the immigration authorities who had ordered her back to Liberia nearly two decades ago.

Then, suddenly, a letter arrived in late February announcing her looming deportation this week. The 50-year-old widow and her two sons were devastated, but the family found a lawyer and, on Monday afternoon, was able to delay the deportation until September.

"It's really been very stressful on me and on my children," Beyan said.

"I have two kids. I'm their surviving parent. They depend on me for everything."

The licensed cosmetologist and her lawyer, Andrew Taylor, filed an emergency request Monday afternoon asking immigration authorities to let her stay.

The stay wasn't formally granted, but immigration agents agreed to put the deportation on hold, telling Beyan to return to their San Francisco office in September.

The move brought temporary relief to a family's monthlong emotional roller coaster.

When the deportation letter arrived, her son Joseph Wiles, 22, handed over the brief, blunt message.

"It is now incumbent upon this Service to enforce your departure from the United States," wrote a field officer from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Bring your luggage -- no more than 40 pounds -- the letter told the Contra Costa County resident, who has lived in the United States for 27 years.

Beyan was told to report to her scheduled deportation on Wednesday.

"We cried," Beyan said. "He said, 'Mommy, it's going to be OK.' I said, 'I'm not going to run anymore. I'm tired.' We prayed. If it comes to the point where I have to go, I was going to go. It's not up to us."

"She's my mom. I can't lose her. I already lost my dad. I can't lose my mom," said Joseph Wiles, his voice breaking Monday morning before he learned of the last-minute reprieve.

Both sons were born in the United States. His younger brother, Jeremy Wiles, 19, attends Grinnell College in Iowa on a football scholarship.

Their father, Beyan's husband, was a Liberian immigrant who died in 2002 after a long illness.

Beyan came to California on a tourist visa in the 1980s. Although an immigration judge denied her appeal for political asylum and ordered her deported in 1994, Taylor said Beyan sought other legal means to remain in the country with her family.

Her husband fought a decade-long battle to win a green card but died before he could sponsor Beyan as his wife.

Later, she successfully applied to delay her deportation because of Liberia's protracted civil war, which cost hundreds of thousands of lives between 1989 and 2003.

"She reported to them: 'Here I am, I'm living at this address,' " Taylor said.

In 2003, however, Beyan failed to file the \$80 form to renew that protection, known as Temporary Protected Status. Taylor suspects immigration authorities finally decided to pursue Beyan's deportation this year after updating some of the technology they use to keep track of cases.

But Beyan deserves to stay in the United States, he said. Family members and friends at Beyan's church, the International Christian Ministry in Antioch, are hoping the Obama administration's new policy to halt some deportations of upstanding illegal immigrants will apply in this case.

"The entire time, Nancy was raising her sons, taking care of her husband, working to support the family," Taylor said.

"If the government won't help Nancy under this prosecutorial discretion initiative, then who will be helped?"

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