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Amanda C. Gillespie inc.

Helping Brits to find success in America



Introducing Amanda Gillespie – the Fairy Godmother for those of you that want to work in the United States. Amanda is the founder of Amanda C. Gillespie Inc., an agency which specialises in securing O visas for creative professionals. With several years of working with the immigration system, coupled with a dedicated team, her more than 99% success rate speaks for itself. Talking to Flavour, Amanda dispels the myth behind the visa for 'extraordinary aliens' and the daunting-sounding process of immigration.

Can you briefly explain what Amanda Gillespie Inc. is about?

I specialise in getting visas for artists and in particular the O-1 visa; it's for – this is the statute not me – 'aliens of extraordinary ability'. It's a visa for people who are doing well in all sorts of fields. Most people associate it with artists, but it's also for people who may be working in business, education, athletics and science.

What are the exact requirements for an O-1 visa?

The O-1 visa is a very democratic visa in some ways. For example, if you're a photographer, it's great if you're working with huge commercial clients, but the visa is also appreciative of people who are doing niche work that's being recognised. Extraordinary careers tend to mani-

fest the same kinds of materials so they came up with seven kinds of evidence. If you can submit three out of the seven, then you qualify.

As you're not a lawyer who deals with the legalities?

There's an attorney that we are in constant contact with and he always reviews everything before it goes out. While the O-1 is my little universe and I am very comfortable with it, if anything happens that I don't recognise or that I'm unsure of, the attorney is always right there.

How long does the process take?

It takes about a month to do our work and we're very solid in regards to this deadline. We like to submit several letters of recommendation, so it can take some time to get those back from the client. It really varies by industry and on how keen you are to complete the process. Once everything is finally sent to the government it then depends on how much you spend. The more you pay, the quicker your application is processed. For \$320 they'll respond within 2-4 months and for \$1,320 they'll respond within 2 weeks.

Once you have a visa can you work straight away?

The visa does require a US sponsor, sometimes that will be a full-time employer or an agent. So when you

come to the US, it sort of depends on what your deal is with your sponsor. The word on the street is that the O-1 is a freelance visa and it's really not.

Are you involved in all cases?

Yes, I review everything, but we all work pretty closely together. I meet with all my paralegals every day; some of the cases are pretty straightforward, but it's still up to me to accept all of the cases. What's really important is that all the clients feel they can contact me directly.

Do many of your clients stay in the US permanently?

You can renew the O-1 forever; it's also a really good stepping stone to a Green Card. A lot of clients renew the O-1 two or three times, then they'll apply for a Green Card.

What is your success rate?

Better than 99%. I'm delighted and so lucky that I have such great people working for me!

Can people contact Amanda Gillespie Inc. just for information?

I give free consultations and I'm always really glad to speak to people who are considering it because there's so much scary information out there. I'm happy to help.

You now have an office in London. Does it offer the same services as your New York office?

Our representative in London is there to give initial consultations: how the process works, what visa might work for you, how long it takes and other tasty basics. Once she's determined that you qualify for the visa, you begin work with the New York office to prepare the petition.

Any final tips for our readers about obtaining an O-1 visa?

I think they should all call me [laughs]. Do not be afraid of finding out the truth. I think people can waste time gathering horror stories about how immigration works here and what New York is like. Just speak to me or someone who deals with the process. I know immigration can seem like a very grim, terrifying and unfair system and I think I can offer a tonic to that – or I certainly try to.

For more detailed information, email Amanda at amandagillespie.com or visit Amanda's company website at www.amandagillespie.com