

Three years ago I wanted to attend a wedding in the US and they gave me a visa for a month. Now I want to go to my uncle's funeral, but the Embassy said they can't give me a visa because I'm not qualified. Why can't they give me just a visa for a week? I don't need a ten year visa; just give me one month so I can pay my respects.

TriniMan2009

We understand that there is a lot of confusion on this point. For several years applicants in Port of Spain were able to receive, what we call, "limited-validity" visas for one trip to the United States for events like weddings, funerals, and graduations, etc. Recently, however, in accordance with instructions received from Washington DC and to make us consistent with all US Embassies around the world, the Embassy in Port of Spain stopped issuing limited-validity visas. This means that we cannot issue visas for a week just so you can attend a funeral. We figure that, if you are qualified, we will just save you the time and money that it takes to reapply and just issue a full-validity, ten-year visa. So, instead of applying for a week-long visa every time you want to go to a wedding, if you are qualified, we will issue a ten year visa so that you do not need to come to the Embassy and wait in line every year and pay the fee every year.

We look at it as you are either qualified or you are not; there is no middle ground, even if you have a great reason to travel. Our job is to enforce U.S. Immigration Law, not to bend the rules in order to accommodate travel for events like funerals and weddings. If an applicant does not have sufficient ties (remember our first column) then we cannot issue any sort of visa, even if the person has sincere desire to travel to the United States for a good reason. U.S. Immigration Law states that you, the applicant, are an intending immigrant until you can prove otherwise. This means that by law our Consular Officers are not allowed to give you the benefit of the doubt. If an applicant is considered an intending immigrant, then why would the Consular Officer issue any kind of visa? Even for just one week? To be blunt: it only takes one entry into the United States for a person to immigrate illegally. So if an applicant cannot prove that they have ties to Trinidad and Tobago, our officers will not give them that one entry.