

## **BEST TEXT EVER Immigs await ping making them legal**

Daily News (New York)

September 21, 2012 Friday, SPORTS FINAL EDITION

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**Section:** NEWS; Pg. 10

**Length:** 343 words

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### **Body**

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IT'S THE **TEXT** message that could change their lives.

Tens of thousands of young immigrants who came here illegally as children are waiting to hear from the feds after applying for work permits and deportation reprieves under a new program.

More than 82,000 have applied for the "deferred action" program, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service said.

Only 29 have been approved so far. The first to come forward is Carlos Martinez, 30, who was notified last week that he can stay and work in the U.S. for two years. "I felt like crying," Martinez, who has two engineering degrees but couldn't work because he's undocumented, told the Arizona Republic.

Many others are anxiously **awaiting a text** message telling them about action on their case. Officials said the initial approvals happened sooner than they expected, adding that full reviews could take up to six months.

John, a College of Staten Island student who left Nigeria for Brooklyn when he was 2, sent in his \$465 application Aug. 20. On Tuesday, he had fingerprints taken at a service center; he's one of 60,000 who have appointments for that step in the application process. Next comes a background check and final review.

"I'm happy, but I don't want to get my hopes up too high yet," said the graphic design student, who did not want his last name used. The new program does not provide a green card or a path to citizenship. But John can use a work permit to get a Social Security card and then apply for a driver's license.

Daniela Alulema, 25, who helps run the New York State Youth Leadership Coalition, said many of the group's members have applied, but attendance at workshops has dropped recently.

"People are scared of applying, for fear of jeopardizing their families," she said. "Also the fees are pretty high. For an immigrant family, it's a lot of money."

Applicants must be between 15 and 30, have lived in the U.S. since June 15, 2007, and be in school, have graduated or have a GED. To qualify for the two-year, renewable program, they must have arrived in the U.S. before they were 16.

## Graphic

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Daniela Alulema, of New York State Youth Leadership Coalition, says many people have applied for "deferred action" status, but the \$465 fee can be too high for many immigrant families. Photo by Craig Warga/Daily News

## Classification

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**Language:** ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** PASSPORTS & VISAS (90%); IMMIGRATION (90%); CITIZENSHIP (90%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (90%); CHILDREN (89%); LICENSES & PERMITS (89%); STUDENTS & STUDENT LIFE (78%); APPROVALS (77%); ENGINEERING (74%); CERTIFICATES, DEGREES & DIPLOMAS (74%); DEPORTATION (73%); BACKGROUND CHECKS (67%)

**Industry:** TEXT MESSAGING (89%); ENGINEERING (74%)

**Geographic:** NEW YORK, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (94%); NIGERIA (79%)

**Load-Date:** September 21, 2012