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# Hughes Hubbard & Reed

## Hughes Hubbard Helps Gay Dominican Obtain 'Life-Saving' Asylum

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Hughes Hubbard successfully helped a gay, HIV-positive Dominican man obtain asylum in the US on the basis of his well-founded fear of persecution in his home country. The client's application for asylum was granted in March.

Working with Immigration Equality, Hughes Hubbard took the case of the 26-year-old man in July 2012. The client came to the United States in December 2011 to escape ongoing extortion, torture and false arrest by the police and armed groups in the Dominican Republic, where social, employment, and medical discrimination against gays and HIV-positive individuals is pervasive.

The evidence supporting the client's application showed that from an early age he was harassed and ostracized by his teachers and peers based on his perceived homosexuality, despite his attempts to keep his sexuality discreet. He was frequently abducted by police and criminals alike, who targeted gays near nightspots and in Internet communities and forced them to pay to maintain their secrets. These abductions were often accompanied by beatings or acts of sexual aggression, often at gunpoint, and, in one instance, under gunfire.

After the client's HIV diagnosis, the harassment he faced intensified. The Dominican Republic has long been accused of diverting international funds intended for prevention and treatment of the virus, and the client experienced firsthand doctors' refusal to treat related conditions. Gossip in the gay community—in which there is discrimination against HIV-positive individuals—increasingly centered on the client. These issues finally came to a head when one tormentor spotted him at a treatment center identified with HIV patients. Realizing his secrets were no longer safe, he fled the country. His US visa application included extensive international and non-governmental reports of persecution of gay and HIV-positive individuals in the Dominican Republic.

John Wood supervised the case. On hearing the news that his application had been granted, the client said that asylum had "saved his life."

