
Hughes Hubbard & Reed

Firm Helps Pave Honduran's Path to Legal Residency

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A Florida Juvenile Court judge declared a young Honduran immigrant named a dependent of the court after Hughes Hubbard argued that she would be at substantial risk of further abuse, abandonment and neglect if forced to return to her native country.

The July 30, 2012 court declaration paves the way for the client, who nearly died crossing the border, to pursue a path to legal permanent residency. Her asylum status was granted on Aug. 2.

It's been a long and painful journey for the client, who was abandoned by her parents in Honduras at the age of 2. She lived with various caretakers who severely abused her physically and emotionally. At 13, her caretaker kicked her out of the house. While living on the streets, she was the victim of gang rape. Finally, in 2009, she headed to the United States to reunite with the only caretaker who had shown her any compassion.

For one month, the client and a young cousin walked hundreds of miles with little food or water through the desert. Traveling by bus and train, they were exposed to potential death by dehydration, cold weather, exhaustion and assaults by criminal groups. When U.S. Customs and Border Patrol apprehended her in Arizona, she was relieved that someone had found her. She was released to her former sought-after caretaker in Miami, but even that caretaker then refused to take responsibility for her, leaving her on her own without any support.

Hughes Hubbard worked with Catholic Charities after the client's original pro bono counsel was unable to continue representing her. Hughes Hubbard had to work quickly to have the court hear the dependency petition before her 18th birthday on Aug. 3 when she would have lost her right to pursue these remedies.

Rebecca Sosa and Nyana Miller represented the client with supervision from Gisela Munoz and Stacey Koch Lieberman. They will continue to work with the client as she strives to obtain legal permanent residency and to resume her education.

