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# Hughes Hubbard & Reed

## Firm Obtains Significant Settlement for Pro Bono Client

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Hughes Hubbard & Reed LLP • A New York Limited Liability Partnership  
One Battery Park Plaza • New York, New York 10004-1482 • +1 (212) 837-6000

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**June 27, 2018** — Only days before trial was set to commence, Hughes Hubbard obtained an excellent outcome for a pro bono client by negotiating a \$50,000 settlement to resolve civil rights claims related to a pattern of harassment by prison correctional officers that culminated in a brutal assault.

Since he was first transferred to Green Haven Correctional Facility in 2006, Jose Quezada suffered an escalating campaign of harassment and abuse by certain correctional officers and staff in retaliation for his exercise of his constitutional right to file grievances and lawsuits. Their actions ranged from minor nuisances, including the destruction of his identification card and the denial of special dietary meals, to serious violations of Quezada's constitutional rights, such as the denial of water and electricity in his cell and spreading rumors among other inmates that Quezada was a "snitch," which led the inmates to assault Quezada. On the day of Quezada's long-awaited transfer out of Green Haven, the correctional officers' campaign culminated in an assault on Quezada that left him hospitalized.

In February 2016, Dustin P. Smith agreed to represent Quezada for the limited purpose of assisting him in conducting discovery and taking depositions of the defendants in the action. However, following the conclusion of discovery, HHR agreed to continue to represent Quezada for the remainder of his case. HHR then successfully opposed the defendants' summary judgment motion, ensuring that Quezada's claims would be able to proceed to trial. After successfully arguing several motions in limine at the final pre-trial conference, HHR and the Attorney General's office, which represented the defendants, entered into settlement discussions facilitated by the Court. After six hours of negotiations, HHR obtained the \$50,000 settlement for Quezada.

Chief Judge Colleen McMahon praised HHR's representation of Quezada: "I will state for the record that the Court has been very impressed with the representation that Hughes Hubbard has put in on this case," she said. "I'm very glad that we appointed Hughes Hubbard to be on this case. And my own personal opinion, Mr. Quezada, for what it's worth is you had very good lawyers in this case."

In addition to the excellent outcome for Quezada, the case provided a unique opportunity for HHR junior

associates to develop and advance their litigation skills. Many of them were responsible for the formulation and drafting of discovery requests for the first time. They also learned the importance of identifying early in a proceeding the theory of a case and the elements of a client's claim in order to obtain discovery that will be useful at trial. Further, the HHR team developed and honed its deposition-taking skills with over 20 depositions, including the first opportunity for four associates.

The case also presented several writing opportunities, including numerous letter briefs to the court regarding discovery disputes, the brief in opposition to summary judgment and numerous motions in limine. Finally, although the case ultimately settled just days before trial, the HHR team had the opportunity to conduct full trial preparation, including the drafting of pre-trial orders and jury instructions, the selection of trial exhibits, the process for preparing for jury selection, the preparation of witness outlines (and the preparation of witnesses themselves), and the preparation of opening statements.

In addition to Smith, Quezada was represented by Jennifer Suh, Sara Echenique, Matt Reynolds, Vanessa Diamataris and Dina Hoffer, with supervision by Jim Fitzpatrick and Vilia Hayes. Jonathan Misk and Brittany Cohen also provided key assistance on this matter. HHR alumni Sawvas Foukas, Ken Aulet and Melissa Saldana also assisted at various points in the representation.

## **Related People**



**Dustin P. Smith**



**Jennifer Suh**



**Dina Hoffer**



**James C. Fitzpatrick**



**Vilia B. Hayes**



**Brittany Cohen**