
Hughes Hubbard & Reed

Firm Wins Asylum for Refugee from El Salvador

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Hughes Hubbard won an important victory for pro bono client Andrea R. at the Arlington Immigration Court, obtaining a grant of asylum after a long and arduous process.

Andrea fled to the United States from El Salvador in 2006 at the age of 19 because of the severe physical, sexual and mental abuse that she had faced from her father and other male relatives. In 2007, she was detained by authorities in the United States and placed in removal proceedings.

The matter was referred to HHR, which assisted Andrea through a string of delays and setbacks as her case was transferred between six different immigration judges. During that time, HHR helped Andrea to obtain a social security number, driver's license and work permit, as well assisting on interim crises -- such as when her two children were detained in Mexico after Andrea's mother sent them to travel alone to the United States. (They later safely returned to El Salvador.)

At a hearing in 2011, HHR argued that Andrea should be granted asylum. The immigration judge agreed that Andrea had been persecuted, but denied her claim for asylum on the grounds that this abuse had not been inflicted because of her membership in a particular social group.

HHR appealed the decision, and three years later, in 2014, the Board of Immigration Appeals remanded the case for a new hearing.

In August 2016, on the day of new hearing, HHR made a final effort to resolve the case with the government, focusing on specific concerns that the Department of Homeland Security had regarding the particular social group issue. Minutes before the hearing began, the government agreed on the basis of these discussions that Andrea should be granted asylum.

In addition to allowing Andrea to remain permanently in the U.S., the decision also allows her two children-whom she has not seen over the past 10 years-to join her here as well. Following the victory, Andrea expressed to HHR

attorneys through tears how she could not wait to call her daughter and give her the news as a present on her upcoming 15th birthday.

Daniel McLaughlin, who has led the firm's efforts since the case was first referred in 2007, took on the matter as a first-year associate in the Washington, D.C. office. Norma Velez provided invaluable assistance with translation and moral support (both for HHR and Andrea) through the years; Calvin Liu and Julia Nelson helped to achieve the most recent victory.

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Daniel J. McLaughlin