
Hughes Hubbard & Reed

Hughes Hubbard Wins Asylum for Victim of Ghanaian Terror

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Hughes Hubbard, with assistance from Immigration Equality, secured asylum for a pro bono client who had been arrested and detained in New York after fleeing police brutality against gays in her native Ghana.

The client, 24, fled to the United States in November 2011, two months after she was arrested, starved, beaten and gang raped by the police, who left her for dead in a ditch. The police targeted her after she witnessed a mob attack on a lesbian classmate at her university and spoke to a journalist about the violence against gays in Ghana. The journalist reported to the police that she was a lesbian.

A few days after she was released from the hospital, the client found her girlfriend strangled to death in their bed. Afraid for her life, she purchased a forged U.S. visa and passport and flew to New York. She was arrested at JFK International Airport and taken to an immigration detention center in New Jersey.

HHR teamed up with Immigration Equality, a national organization fighting for equality under U.S. immigration law for gays, and secured her release on parole in January 2012. HHR then successfully represented her in Immigration Court, arguing that she deserved asylum because of past and probable future persecution based on her sexual orientation. On Feb. 22, the Immigration Court granted her refugee asylum. The client now lives in New Jersey and has begun technical school to become a physician assistant.

The client thanked Jaime Hernandez, who represented her, at Immigration Equality's "Safe Haven Awards" ceremony on May 17. Hernandez worked on the case with supervision from George Tsougarakis.

"If it wasn't for Immigration Equality and Hughes Hubbard, I would be dead now," the client said.

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George A. Tsougarakis