

Everybody does

## Pro Bono

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### A challenging and rewarding asylum case

In the three years I've worked at the firm, I've worked on quite a few pro bono cases, but the most memorable and rewarding pro bono case I've worked on was an asylum case involving a deaf and mute couple from Columbia. They were almost 60 years old and led very horrible lives in Columbia. They were outcast by their family and by other members of society, had little to no education and as adults were under a constant physical threat due to their disabilities. They came to the United States in 2000 and entered the Immigration Court System in 2004 and came to us in the summer of 2009.

There were many challenges that accompanied their case, one was interpretation, they spoke only basic Columbian sign language and it took us a couple of months to find a suitable interpreter for them, which we eventually found in Bogota, Columbia.

We also had some very difficult legal arguments to make that deal with discrimination or persecution based on disabilities.

We finally had the merits hearing about two years after we originally took on the case, in the summer of 2011. We put the husband on the witness stand and had five other witnesses prepared to testify, but the judge decided that the husband was credible and she decided she did not need to hear from the other witnesses. We moved directly to oral argument, where I was able to do the oral argument myself and we were able to persuade the judge of the legal sufficiency of our client's asylum claims. She granted them asylum, and our clients were absolutely thrilled. They were indescribably happy, and we were even able to go outside of the courthouse and take a picture in front of an American flag after the judge granted them asylum, and you could just see how happy they were.

The case was also a very rich, learning experience. We held dozens of client meetings, that probably comprised 75-100 hours worth of meetings where we put together our clients' story. We also wrote several motions to the court on various subjects. We prepared all of our witnesses for the hearing, filed a couple of expert reports. I personally was able to conduct the direct examination of the husband in the case and I was able to do the oral argument in front of the judge at Immigration Court. It was really one of the most gratifying experiences as a lawyer I've had, both because of the richness of the learning experience and because of the tangible result that it provided for our clients.

