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Major Pro Bono Asylum Victory for GYH

Our story opens on a sprawling trailer jail in Southern Texas in January 2019. Partner [Meg Hobbins](#) travelled to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention center in Dilley to spend a week volunteering with [Proyecto Dilley](#). Meg was with a group of volunteer attorneys providing legal guidance to the migrant mothers, most of whom were fleeing extreme violence in Central America and seeking asylum protection in the United States.

Meg and her peers were assigned to help these exhausted and terrified [migrant mothers](#) prepare for their “credible fear” interviews. In order to qualify for asylum in the U.S., and to be considered an asylee, applicants must meet a series of stringent requirements regarding the severity and type of persecution they face in their home countries. The credible fear interview is the applicant’s chance to demonstrate that what they have suffered can legally qualify them for asylum protection.

With many years of immigration law experience, Meg was assigned to the cases that proved most challenging, with fact patterns that did not neatly fit into the U.S. definition of an asylee but had clear merit. Meg soon met a mother whose daughter was the same age as her own and heard a story of unbearable suffering: years of severe sexual abuse at the hands of an employer, that the mother kept silent out of fear, shame, and a desperate need to feed her family. Because of the severity of abuse the mother suffered, and because it was not a straightforward legal claim, Meg represented her at her credible fear interview. The mother courageously told her full story to the asylum officer, and she succeeded in passing through the first hurdle. Meg gave the mother her contact information and said she would gladly continue to represent her before the Immigration Court.

Over the next three years, Meg worked intensively with an incredible team of paralegals, law clerks, and associate attorneys, including Emily Sklar, Jared Shadeed, and Elana Gold, to develop the country conditions research and legal arguments for the case. Maria Hall, a psychologist Meg met while in Dilley, volunteered to conduct a psychological evaluation of the mother, meeting with her dozens of times, and corroborating her full story and its impact on her.

Finally, in February, the Immigration Judge granted the mother’s asylum application, providing a lasting safe refuge to her and her now 9-year-old daughter. It was a genuine honor for GYH to play this role in their journey to safety, and we will forever remain in awe of this mother’s courage and resilience.