

Dorsey Wins Asylum for Northern Triangle Mother and Daughter

Ryan Meyer, an IP litigator in the Seattle office, won asylum this month for his client and her young daughter - who fled from the Northern Triangle region of Central America - on the basis of the client's membership in a particular social group. Notorious for organized crime, gang violence and poverty, the three countries in the Northern Triangle are among the most dangerous in the Western Hemisphere. The client's home country is patriarchal and crime-ridden. Men can generally harm women with impunity. It is acceptable in the client's home country for a man to beat his wife or to forbid her from leaving the house without his permission or without a suitable chaperone.

The police do not take domestic abuse complaints seriously and often blame the woman for causing the abuse. In addition, police and other authorities are ineffective at controlling gangs due to a mixture of lack of political support, fear, incompetence, corruption, and collusion with the gangs themselves. The murder of women in the client's home country has reached such epidemic levels that they use a special name for it: femicide. At home, the client suffered domestic abuse by her husband as well as violence and death threats from a vicious local gang. Based on threats from her husband and the gang, she was terrified of returning to her home, believing that she and her daughter would be killed if they went back.

In briefing, Ryan argued that the client was persecuted by her husband and the gang because of her membership in one of two groups: (1) women of her home country or (2) women of her home country without family support who are the victims of gender-motivated crimes. After a three hour hearing, the Seattle Immigration Court judge granted asylum to the client and her daughter. The grant was based on the domestic abuse, not the gang violence and threats. Because of some inconsistencies, the judge found that the client's testimony regarding the gang was not credible and she had not met her burden with respect to past persecution by the gang. The government reserved its right to appeal within 30 days.

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Ryan was assisted with trial preparation by Seattle patent attorney Ronnie Stern and fellow Seattle IP litigator David Tseng. And for their great showing of coast to coast teamwork, Ryan would like to thank, in particular, these members of the immigration / asylum practice group for their assistance and counsel: Chris Bercaw, Jamie Erickson, Lucas Olson, and Eric Epstein.