

Los Angeles Pro Bono Team Wins Asylum and Prevents Deportation of Transgender Peruvian Client

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A Los Angeles-based Winston & Strawn team recently secured asylum for a 35-year-old transgender man who feared that if he were forced to return to Peru, he would be persecuted because of his sexual orientation and gender identity.

Before transitioning, our client identified as a lesbian in Peru, where he was denied employment and harassed on several occasions because of his sexual orientation and masculine presentation. Fearing for his life, our client entered the United States seeking asylum in 2013. In 2015, he identified as a transgender man and began hormone therapy so that his outward appearance would mirror his actual gender identity.

Reports of psychological, physical, and sexual abuse against LGBT individuals are common in Peru, and this abuse is explicitly condoned, and often perpetuated by, Peruvian authorities. Given the discrimination our client faced in Peru due to his sexual orientation and the appalling conditions LGBT individuals face in Peru, our client had a legitimate fear that if he were to return to Peru as a transgender man, he would be persecuted.

A Winston & Strawn associate represented our client at the hearing, where the judge and the government questioned our client at length regarding his personal history and fear of returning to Peru. In an oral decision, the immigration judge granted asylum for our client. The judge found that our client was credible, that he had a well-founded fear of future persecution if he were forced to return to Peru, and that there were no bars to asylum.

Associate Shawn Obi assisted with the case. Immigration Pro Bono Supervisory Attorney Nareeneh Sohbatian provided the team with mentorship and trial support.

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