

ProPublica Profiles Haynes and Boone-Supported Team Victory For Asylum Seeker

August 14, 2019 Brent Beckert, Michael Scanlon

ProPublica profiled Haynes Boone's efforts alongside Rio Grande Valley pro bono attorney, Laura Peña, to represent a Salvadoran man who had been detained after seeking political asylum at the border.

The client, Carlos, fled his home country last year with his two young children, fearing for their lives. He was separated from his children for seven months, until he was released from custody on May 7. The Haynes Boone team represented Carlos in administrative and legal proceedings.

The Haynes Boone team included Partner Emily Westridge Black, Counsel Luis Campos, and Associates Paloma Ahmadi, [Brent Beckert](#), Liz Dankers, Nick Nash, Joanna Pearce and [Michael Scanlon](#). Mr. A's legal team also included John Amaya, a counsel at Harris, Wiltshire & Grannis LLP and a former Deputy Chief of Staff of ICE from 2015-2017.

Here is an excerpt:

[Laura Peña's] colleagues at TCRP quickly agreed that Carlos' case was egregious enough to warrant their limited time and resources if she could persuade a larger firm to help. They'd heard of other families separated at the border because of vague gang allegations and wanted answers just as badly as she did. That night, she sent out an SOS to a handful of firms more accustomed to representing Fortune 500 companies and politicians than penniless fathers in immigration detention. Attached to her email was the photo of Carlos with his kids. Peña was direct in her plea for help. "Let's reunify this family before Christmas," she wrote. "Who's going to join me?"

A corporate law firm, Haynes Boone, had answered her SOS, volunteering to help pro bono. The firm had offices around the globe and exactly the kind of legal muscle she needed. A team of lawyers swung into action filing an emergency motion requesting that Carlos' deportation be stayed and that his asylum claim be reconsidered. The motion also requested that he be reunited with his children while his case went through the legal process. A judge immediately granted the stay, which bought them some time. ...

On the morning of the hearing, the team of six lawyers, including Peña, met on the front steps of the federal courthouse. Paloma Ahmadi, a young attorney with Haynes Boone, would argue the case before the judge along with Peña. Peña and Ahmadi greeted each other warmly — it was the first time they'd met in person.

In the weeks leading up to the hearing, Peña had gotten little sleep. Her report for the TCRP documenting the hundreds of new family separation cases had been released a week earlier, sounding the alarm that the government was still systematically removing children from their parents, often based on dubious evidence that the government never provided. In July 2019, the American Civil Liberties Union would further confirm her findings, documenting that more than 900 parents and children had been separated since Trump had supposedly ended the practice a year earlier.

Ahmadi and Peña laid out the evidence of Carlos' innocence before the court: the certified letter from the Justice Ministry stating he had no criminal record, a letter from his former employer attesting to his good moral character and the sworn affidavit from Carlos' mother about her findings in San Salvador.

To read the full article, click [here](#).

To read more about the case, click [here](#).