

Leslie Thorne, Emily Westridge Black Honored as Attorneys of Year by Texas Lawyer

September 19, 2019 Leslie Thorne

PRACTICES Litigation

Haynes Boone Partners [Leslie Thorne](#) and Emily Westridge Black were honored as Attorneys of the Year by Texas Lawyer for their successful work on behalf of a Honduran woman seeking asylum. The duo achieved one of the first and most impactful court victories in family-separation litigation in a federal suit, which they filed in Houston last year.

The Austin-based lawyers were recognized at an awards ceremony at the Belo Mansion in Dallas on September 18 as part of Texas Lawyer's Professional Excellence Awards. They were [profiled](#) in the publication earlier this month.

"Our two partners' tireless work exemplifies the highest standards of the profession," said Haynes Boone Managing Partner [Tim Powers](#). "They have been at the forefront of a serious humanitarian and legal crisis in Texas and other border states and have shown incredible perseverance and dedication to an important cause.

"We are proud to have lawyers of this caliber on our team and happy to see them recognized for their hard work," he added.

[Ben Mesches](#), chair of the firm's Litigation Department, added: "The entire firm is proud of Leslie and Emily's precedent-setting work. It underscores the firm's commitment to the rule of law and due process and serves as a powerful example about how lawyers can and should help address the continuing crisis at the U.S. border."

Thorne and Westridge Black won a major victory for their asylum-seeking client when Chief U.S. District Judge Lee H. Rosenthal, of the Southern District of Texas, exercised jurisdiction over immigration proceedings and granted a temporary restraining order enjoining the client's removal from the U.S.

The client fled Honduras with her minor daughter to escape brutal, life-threatening violence by people affiliated with her local government. In early June, the client and her daughter surrendered themselves to border enforcement near the U.S.-Mexico border with the intent to seek asylum. The client was forcibly separated from her daughter, who was sent to a children's home in another state.

While still separated from her child, the client had a credible fear interview with an asylum officer. After a cursory telephonic interview, during which the client was unrepresented and was not allowed a meaningful opportunity to explain the basis of her claim, the officer found that she had no "credible fear" and was not entitled to asylum.

The client requested, in writing, that an immigration judge review the negative finding—relief to which she was entitled under the applicable laws and regulations. However, immigration officials refused to grant the review and instead told her that she and her daughter would be removed from the U.S.

Haynes Boone lawyers and staff filed a complaint alleging that the client's constitutional due process rights had been violated and an application for protective order, temporarily preventing her removal. Judge Rosenthal's order stays removal of the woman pending (1) reunification with her daughter, (2) review of her asylum claim by an immigration judge, and (3) any additional process to which she is entitled after that review. The case sets important precedent in the Fifth Circuit by recognizing that district courts have jurisdiction to ensure that due process is afforded in immigration proceedings.

Thorne and Westridge Black were assisted by Counsel Luis Campos, and [Jennifer Littlefield](#); Associates Wesley Lewis, [Carla Green](#), [Brent Beckert](#), Duncan Delano, and [Taryn McDonald](#); and staff Michelle Meuhlen.

About Thorne and Westridge Black

Thorne is a partner and co-chair of the firm's Litigation Practice Group. She is widely recognized as a leader in the legal community and is listed among *The Best Lawyers in America* directory published by Woodward/White, Inc., 2018-2020. She also is included in *Texas Super Lawyers Rising Stars*, Thomson Reuters, 2015-2019.

Westridge Black is an accomplished litigator who was named a top lawyer for commercial litigation in Texas by *Chambers USA*, Chambers and Partners in 2015. She has successfully represented prominent businesses and individuals on a range of issues, including data breach and cybersecurity, anti-corruption and Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), securities regulation, antitrust, and class actions.

Haynes Boone is an international corporate law firm with offices in Texas, New York, California, Charlotte, Chicago, Denver, Washington, D.C., London, Mexico City and Shanghai, providing a full spectrum of legal services in energy, technology, financial services and private equity. With more than 550 lawyers, Haynes Boone is ranked among the largest U.S.-based firms by *The National Law Journal*, *The American Lawyer* and *The Lawyer*. It also ranks among the nation's most recommended law firms by general counsel, according to BTI Consulting Group's "Most Recommended Law Firms 2019" report.

To read the *Texas Lawyer's* article about the award, click on the PDF linked below:

[Thorne-Black-Named-Texas-Lawyer-AOTY.PDF](#)