

# Human Rights First

## Discrimination, Detention, and Deportation: Immigration & Refugees

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### Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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If you are seeking asylum, we can help

Areas of Focus

Current Initiatives

By **Jenna Gilbert**

As part of the American Bar Associations Celebrate Pro Bono Week, we are recognizing individuals with outstanding dedication to pro bono service as Pro Bono Stars. Today we highlight Christopher Boling and Ying Wang from Vinson & Elkins LLP in Houston, Texas.



Christopher Boling and Ying Wang from the Houston office of Vinson & Elkins LLP had never handled a pro bono asylum case before they took on a case with Human Rights First in February 2016. Their clients, a husband, wife, and their two children from El Salvador, had a compelling claim for asylum based on their Evangelical Christian religion and family membership.

Their teenage son was targeted and threatened by the brutal 18th Street Gang, who disapproved of his religious evangelizing to gang members in their neighborhood. The father was beaten and the family forced to flee El Salvador, the unfortunate result of the gangs violent response to the familys involvement in the church.

Unfortunately, their asylum case involved a series of procedural complications relating to periods of immigration detention, venue changes, separate cases, and one-year filing deadlines that preceded Christopher and Yings involvement in the familys case. Christopher and Ying knew they were taking on a challenge when they agreed to represent the family, and faced it head on working with experts and witnesses, some of whom reside in El Salvador, and compiling country conditions information and drafting an extensive legal brief.

After Christopher and Ying began their representation, the familys case moved quickly, culminating in a difficult merits hearing earlier this month. Thanks to their tireless advocacy, the family is now awaiting a written decision from the immigration judge, which hopefully will result in the family obtaining asylum status. Christopher and Ying will literally be responsible for saving each member of this familys life.

Human Rights Firsts Houston office has taken on many cases such as this involving adults with children who have fled the Northern Triangle of Central America (Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras). These cases often involve complicated legal and procedural issues. Individual asylum seekers would never be able to navigate these cases, let alone win them, on their own without the incredible advocacy and litigation efforts of attorneys like Christopher and Ying.

Given the horrific violence within the Northern Triangle, the consequences of proceeding without representation can be life-threatening. In recognition of the American Bar Associations Celebrate Pro Bono Week, Human Rights First awards Christopher Boling and Ying Wang from Vinson & Elkins LLP (Houston) as Pro Bono Stars for their tremendous commitment to pro bono representation. Without the support of attorneys like them, these families would not have the opportunity to live in safety in the United States.

Published on October 27, 2016

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