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TRAILBLAZERS

IMMIGRATION

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PIONEER SPIRIT Before law school, Ana Reyes worked for women's rights organizations. "My third year at Williams & Connolly, I assisted a woman from Egypt who was seeking asylum to avoid female genital mutilation for her daughter. She and her husband unsuccessfully tried to keep their village from committing it on their first daughter. They came to the United States to keep it from happening to their second daughter. We got asylum for them."

TRAILS BLAZED Reyes is now an international litigator who does pro bono appellate work for asylum-seekers. Among her clients, she represents the Center for Gender & Refugee Studies and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "These two groups are at the forefront of refugee work in the United States and internationally." Among her cases, Reyes represented an African man who was escaping political persecution in his home country. "He had basically been tortured on behalf of the opposition party. Even though he had been arrested and beaten, he kept up his political work. Then one day he was arrested, taken into a courtyard, turned upside down, had hot tar poured on his feet and was forced to walk around. He finally escaped and made it to the United States. We got asylum for him. He invited us to his wedding, because he said he wouldn't have the life he has without his lawyers. This is what pro bono counsel can do for asylum-seekers."

FUTURE EXPLORATIONS There is a great deal of activity around refugee and asylum issues, considering positions by the current administration. "The courts and appellate courts will spend a lot of time working out these issues over the next few years. The organizations that are helping refugees and asylum-seekers will continue to try to fulfill their mission."