

# Kelley Drye Team Successfully Obtains Asylum for Pro Bono Client

March 22, 2011

Associate **Melissa E. Byroade** successfully represented pro bono a Côte d'Ivoire citizen on her application for asylum in the United States. Among other things, the client was subjected to physical abuse as a young child and later forced into an abusive marriage with a man twice her age. The husband brought her to the United States where for the next several years she was trapped in a physically and emotionally abusive marriage. The client sought asylum in the United States with Kelley Drye as her lawyers.

In February 2010, the Kelley Drye team submitted numerous fact and expert affidavits, documentary evidence, and a detailed legal brief in support of the client's application for asylum, withholding of removal, and relief under the Convention Against Torture. A major obstacle to asylum was that the client had been in the United States for well over the one year limitation on filing for asylum. Kelley Drye established that domestic violence constituted extraordinary circumstances preventing the client from timely filing for asylum.

In February 2011, Ms. Byroade and Ms. Suh took the lead at the hearing establishing the basis for granting the client asylum through a lengthy direct examination of the client. The judge granted the client's asylum application from the bench.

Receiving asylum was life changing for this client and her children. Ms. Byroade commented, "This was an amazing and memorable experience for us as well, and we are thrilled to have been able to help ensure her safety and that of her children." The Kelley Drye team is now assisting the client in obtaining benefits available to asylees.