

Axinn Assists Pro Bono Client with Obtaining Settlement of Civil Rights Claims

March 6, 2024

ATTORNEYS

Auroprem, Ramya
Bitton, Daniel
Camposanto, Ricardo
Doyle, Patrick
Moorthy, Neelesh
Morrison, Francis
Murata, Jason
Singh, Darpan
Solórzano, Isabella

Axinn is proud to have assisted pro bono client Mayito Guzman in obtaining a favorable settlement in his civil rights claims against two California prison officials. Mr. Guzman alleged that he had been transferred on the basis of his race in violation of the U.S. Constitution's Equal Protection Clause.

While incarcerated at San Quentin State Prison (SQSP), Mr. Guzman was taking advantage of its one-of-a-kind in-prison college program and vocational opportunities. In fact, although Mr. Guzman was a Level-III inmate, Mr. Guzman was permitted to stay at the Level-II SQSP, because of his commitment to his education and his performance at work that qualified him to be a special skills worker.

Shortly after being granted the exemption to remain at SQSP, Mr. Guzman was called into an irregular Classification Committee meeting, in which he was told he was going to be transferred out of SQSP because a decision had been made to "get all of you out of here." Prison officials stated that he was in a position of influence within the prison gangs and thus disruptive to programming, notwithstanding that prison officials had never validated Mr. Guzman as a gang member.

Through discovery, Axinn attorneys discovered that, at the time Mr. Guzman was transferred, the Hispanic inmate population at SQSP decreased by 34%, which far exceeded any other race. Furthermore, the Axinn team successfully obtained a court order compelling the identities of confidential informants that was among the bases for SQSP's arguments that Mr. Guzman was a prison gang member. Shortly after winning this motion, the defendants and California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation requested that the parties engage in mediation to resolve this case. Through mediation, Mr. Guzman was able to obtain a very favorable settlement.

The Axinn team leading the case was Jason Murata, Fran Morrison, Patrick Doyle, Darpan Singh, and Ramya Auroprem. Other attorneys who helped on the case along the way include Daniel Bitton, Ricky Camposanto, Bella

Solórzano, Neel Moorthy, and former Axinn attorney Alex Krois. The case was referred to Axinn through the Northern District of California Federal Pro Bono Project.

Congratulations to the team and Mr. Guzman for an outstanding result!

