

Civil and Human Rights

Hausfeld lawyers have been dedicated to protecting civil and human rights through the civil court system for decades. Combining experience in litigating complex cases with a passion for preserving human dignity, Hausfeld lawyers have successfully represented victims of human rights abuses in the United States and around the world – including victims of South African apartheid, the Tulsa Race Riots, and the Holocaust.

Human Rights

Hausfeld submitted an amicus brief in the Supreme Court of the United States on behalf of international human-rights scholars urging the Court to grant review as to whether customary international law excuses exhaustion of local remedies where a state accused of wrongdoing unduly delays the local remedial process. Hausfeld has also been involved in precedent-setting litigation on behalf of Southern African gold miners who have suffered disabling lung diseases from underground exposure to silica including silicosis and pulmonary tuberculosis. The resulting historic class action settlement, the first ever of its kind in South Africa, reflects more than a decade of preparation and litigation aimed at providing compensation to the gold miners who suffered from silicosis and tuberculosis over the last 50 years.

Sexual Harassment and Discrimination

Hausfeld Chairman Michael Hausfeld was among the first lawyers in the U.S. to assert that sexual harassment was a form of discrimination prohibited by Title VII; he successfully tried the first case establishing that principle—*Williams v. Saxby*, 413 F. Supp. 654 (D.D.C. 1976). More recently, Hausfeld represented several female employees alleging sexual harassment against their former supervisor and employer, a San Francisco venture capitalist firm, which resulted in a favorable settlement agreement.

Gay Marriage

We represented several clients in proceedings before the California Supreme Court concerning the right of a bare majority of Californians to pass legislation preventing gays and lesbians from marrying the individual of their choice. In May 2009, the Court affirmed the right of a simple majority of Californians to alter the state Constitution to allow this type of discrimination, though it also required the state to recognize approximately 18,000 same-sex marriages that had been performed before voters outlawed the practice. Justice Carlos Moreno recognized in dissent that “[g]ranteeing same-sex couples all of the rights enjoyed by opposite-sex couples, except the right to call their officially recognized and protected family relationship a marriage, still denies them equal treatment.”