

**Best LGBT Lawyers Under 40: Class of 2013
Nomination Form**

Nominee Information

Name: Aaron C. Morris Date of Birth: February 5, 1978
Title: Senior Staff Attorney Firm/Organization: Immigration Equality
Mailing Address: 40 Exchange Place, 17th Floor City, State Zip: New York, NY 10005
Phone Number: (212) 714-2904 Email Address: amorris@immigrationequality.org

Nominator Information

Name: Michael Kavey
Title: Lecturer-in-Law Firm/Organization: Columbia Law School
Mailing Address: 49 North 8th Street #3C City, State Zip: Brooklyn, NY 11249
Phone Number: (917) 623-8884 Email Address: mikekavey@gmail.com
Relationship to Nominee: Longtime friend

Optional: To your knowledge, does the nominee identify as any of the following?

☐ Racial or Ethnic Minority ☐ Female ☐ Transgender
☐ Person with Disability ☐ Other: _____

The complete nomination package must be submitted via email to nominations@LGBTbar.org **no later than 5:00 pm EDT on June 3, 2013**. Please submit the following information:

- Nomination Form
- Statement of Support of Nominee (not to exceed 2 pages). Please include:
 - Details on achievements within their legal field
 - Details on their commitment to LGBT equality
- Current Resume of the Nominee
- Letters of Support

Michael Kavey
49 North 8th Street #3C
Brooklyn NY 11249
mikekavey@gmail.com
(917) 623-8884

National LGBT Bar Association
1301 K Street NW Suite 1100, East Tower
Washington, DC 20005
Nominations@LGBTbar.org

Re: Nomination of **Aaron C. Morris** as one of the Best LGBT Attorneys Under 40

June 3, 2013

To the National LGBT Bar Association:

I write with tremendous enthusiasm to nominate **Aaron C. Morris** as one of this year's Best LGBT Attorneys Under 40. Aaron's legal work quite literally saves lives, and I support his nomination in the strongest possible terms. An official nomination form, a résumé, and two additional letters of support—from Joseph Loy, a partner at Kirkland & Ellis LLP, and Victoria F. Neilson, the Legal Director of Immigration Equality—accompany this letter.

As a Senior Staff Attorney at Immigration Equality, Aaron has devoted his legal career to protecting some of the most vulnerable members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. Since joining Immigration Equality in 2007, he has directly assisted *hundreds* of LGBT and HIV-positive immigrants and their families. He also offers free legal advice to the public, and he directly represents clients before the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, and the federal courts. Aaron specializes in removal defense work, and he carries a heavy docket of cases for indigent LGBT immigrants who have been threatened with persecution and torture.

Aaron also coordinates a pro bono asylum program at Immigration Equality, through which the organization partners with the country's top law firms to secure excellent representation for some of the world's most vulnerable people. Over the last six years, Aaron has trained and assisted hundreds of attorneys to ensure the highest quality of work, and LGBT clients represented through the program have a 99% success rate. The stellar reputation of the program has ensured robust and widespread interest, which continues to grow. In Aaron's first year at Immigration Equality, the organization successfully closed 35 cases. Last year, it closed 121. For each and every case, Aaron offers advice, strategic planning and peace of mind to the attorneys who assist an LGBT client.

Aaron also hosts a free legal clinic twice a year with the law firm Ropes & Gray LLP and with Goldman Sachs. The clinics have assisted (and will continue to assist) dozens of

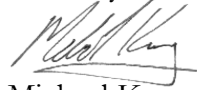
LGBT individuals to obtain green cards and to file mandamus actions when immigration cases are delayed.

Aaron is also very active in the LGBT community outside of his official duties as a Senior Staff Attorney. For example, he is Of Counsel to the Gender and Sexuality Law Clinic of Columbia University, where he mentors 5-7 law students each semester. He has also trained doctors and nurses at a variety of medical facilities, including at the HIV/AIDS units of St. Luke's Hospital and St. Vincent's Hospital in New York, at the Weil Cornell Center for Human Rights, and at Physicians for Human Rights. He is a frequent lecturer on human rights for the LGBT community, and travels extensively to speak on the issue. Just last month, he traveled to Jamaica—a notoriously dangerous place for LGBT advocates—to speak at an event for the International Day Against Homophobia. He met with local LGBT activists, and he spoke on the forced migration of the LGBT community.

Last year, Aaron joined the LGBT Committee for the New York City Bar Association. Through the Committee, he offered a free CLE program with the City Bar Justice Center to encourage and enable pro bono services for LGBT people. Previously, he served on the City Bar's AIDS Committee for six years, holding the office of Committee Secretary for three years. Aaron is also the co-author of *The Gay Bar: The Effect of the One-year Filing Deadline on Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, Transgender, and HIV-positive Foreign Nationals Seeking Asylum or Withholding of Removal*, published in 2005 and described more fully in Ms. Neilson's letter of support.

Aaron's extraordinary record of service to the LGBT community makes him an outstanding candidate for inclusion in this year's Best LGBT Attorneys Under 40. He is a role model and inspiration to advocates and attorneys of all ages working to advance LGBT equality. As a former recipient of the honor, I support this nomination in the strongest possible terms.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Kavey", with a stylized, cursive script.

Michael Kavey

Aaron C. Morris, Esq.

40 Exchange Place, 17th Floor, New York, NY 10005

Email: amorris@immigrationequality.org

Phone: (212) 714-2904

Education

American University - Washington College of Law, Washington, D.C.

Juris Doctor, Emphasis in International Politics: May 2005

University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma

Bachelor of Arts in Letters, French Major: May 2001

Université de Blaise Pascal, Clermont-Ferrand, France

Intensive French Language Courses: 1999-2000

Experience

Immigration Equality

Senior Staff Attorney

Represent (1) lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and HIV+ asylum seekers and (2) transgender couples seeking a marriage-based green card; write and edit appellate amici curiae; mentor for-profit attorneys who take part in ImEq's pro bono program; educate the public about issues unique to the LGBT/HIV+ immigrant community

Masliah & Soloway, PC

Associate Attorney

Represented predominately LGBT and HIV+ asylum seekers in all phases of their administrative proceedings; prepped clients, drafted documents and appeared in court; researched and wrote appeals to the Board of Immigration Appeals and to the Circuit Courts; filed immigrant and non-immigrant applications and petitions with USCIS

United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit

Immigration Law Clerk

Made recommendations to federal circuit judges in immigration appeals; composed legal memoranda applying immigration law to individual appeals; disposed of motions, drafted preliminary orders, responded to research requests by judges, and edited the Court's Noteworthy Legal Issues Periodical; trained incoming law clerks

Servicemembers Legal Defense Network

Legal Intern

Participated in policy and strategy sessions aimed at overturning the Federal "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy ("DADT"); drafted documents for court hearings; attended parole and clemency hearings; conducted intakes and counseled clients on DADT and its effect on service members; conducted legal research for the policy director and staff attorneys

American University International Human Rights Clinic

Student Attorney

Provided representation to immigrant clients seeking asylum or redress of human rights violations in the U.S.; researched country conditions, prepared an affirmative asylum application, and drafted a brief in support thereof; counseled and represented clients during negotiations, at hearings and during litigation; assisted clients in obtaining lawful permanent residence, work permits, travel documents, and other immigrant benefits; drafted discovery in support of 12 Latino construction workers in a employment dispute involving unpaid wages

Human Rights Campaign

Legal Intern

Researched and compiled employment discrimination cases for LGBT people for HRC's annual Corporate Equality Index; drafted legal news and policy memoranda updating the staff of recent changes in the law; researched legal and political issues for the law and policy team

Lycée St. Pierre - Vichy, France

High School English Teacher

Taught American Culture/Civilization, English Grammar/Usage, and Advanced Conversation

Awards/Memberships

Member of the Bars of New York (June 2006) and Massachusetts (February 2006)

LGBT Committee for the New York City Bar Association

American Immigration Lawyers' Association

The National LGBT Bar Association

Pride Law Foundation Fellowship

Awarded to law students working in the LGBT and HIV+ Communities

Equal Justice Foundation Fellowship

Awarded to law students working in the public interest

Publications

•*The Gay Bar: The Effect of the One-Year Filing Deadline on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and HIV-Positive Foreign Nationals Seeking Asylum or Withholding of Removal*, with Victoria Neilson, New York City Law Review (Spring 2005)

•*The Fugitive Disentitlement Doctrine*, with Elizabeth Badger and Paul Zoltan, Benders Immigration Bulletin (Summer 2008)



National Headquarters

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212 714-2904

Washington, DC Office

1325 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Suite 250
Washington, DC 20005
202 347-0002

Best Lawyers under 40 Committee
National LGBT Bar Association
1301 K Street NW, Ste 1100 East Tower,
Washington, DC 20005

May 30, 2013

Dear Sirs/Madams:

I write to give Aaron Morris my highest recommendation to be included among the National LGBT Bar Association's "Best Lawyers under 40." Aaron has been an attorney with Immigration Equality for over five years. During that time, our pro bono asylum project has grown in quantity and quality every year. Over the past five years, Immigration Equality, along with our pro bono partners, has won over 500 asylum cases for LGBT and HIV-positive individuals fleeing persecution in their home countries.

Aaron began at Immigration Equality as a law student intern in 2004. Even then I was struck by his intelligence, commitment to LGBT issues, work ethic, and, most of all, his unique sense of humor. Aaron was a pleasure to have in the office. Even after his summer internship ended, we kept in touch during the school year and co-authored a law review article together: "The Gay Bar: The Effect of the One-Year Filing Deadline on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and HIV-Positive Foreign Nationals Seeking Asylum or Withholding of Removal," by Victoria Neilson & Aaron Morris, 8 New York City Law Review 233 (Summer 2005). As things got busy at work, I repeatedly told Aaron that I might not have time to work on the article and that we did not have to go forward, but Aaron's resolve was strong and we produced a truly collaborative piece. Even recently, I have had immigration judges tell me how helpful the article is, and the article is cited in the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, "Guidance for Adjudicating Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) Refugee and Asylum Claims."¹ From my experience working on the law review article with Aaron, I saw firsthand what a talented writer and editor he was.

When a staff attorney position opened up at Immigration Equality in 2008, I was delighted to offer it to Aaron. As Immigration Equality's pro bono project was growing, we needed to add an attorney with substantive immigration knowledge, a passion for LGBT rights issues, exceptional editing skills, and the diplomacy and sense of humor to respectfully mentor law firm attorneys who were not necessarily familiar with immigration law. Aaron has stepped into this role masterfully, whether he is strategizing with an experienced attorney about the complex overlap of immigration law and criminal law, or whether he is explaining patiently to a law graduate why it is not a good idea to refer to sexual orientation as a "lifestyle."

¹ Available at <http://www.uscis.gov/USCIS/Humanitarian/Refugees%20&%20Asylum/Asylum/AOBTC%20Lesson%20Plans%20and%20Training%20Programs/RAIO-Training-March-2012.pdf>

Meanwhile, while mentoring hundreds of pro bono attorneys at law firms or in small practices, Aaron has maintained his own docket of cases, generally those that are in some way too complicated or time-sensitive to give to a volunteer. Aaron is wonderful at working with clients, explaining complex concepts to them in terms they can comprehend, and (knock on wood) has never had a client deported. There have been many times after conducting an intake for a particularly challenging case that we knew if we said yes to the client that case would become Aaron's responsibility, but Aaron never hesitates to say yes if he knows there is an LGBT asylum seeker who is truly in need.

Additionally, Aaron has been an exceptional supervisor and mentor within our office. He has worked tirelessly with law graduates, young attorneys, volunteers, and law students to teach them both the substance of immigration law and the cultural competency to work with LGBT and HIV-positive clients. Aaron also frequently speaks on LGBT immigration issues and asylum issues, at Lavender Law, the City Bar Association, and other community events, again happily sharing his expertise with the broader legal community.

I can think of no more deserving candidate for this award. Aaron has devoted his legal career to assisting some of the most vulnerable members of the LGBT community, both directly and by training other lawyers to work in this area. He is a true asset to the LGBT legal community and I would love to see his work recognized.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria F. Neilson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Victoria" and last name "Neilson" clearly distinguishable.

Victoria F. Neilson,
Legal Director

KIRKLAND & ELLIS LLP

AND AFFILIATED PARTNERSHIPS

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June 3, 2013

Via E-mail

National LGBT Bar Association
1301 K Street NW, Ste 1100 East Tower
Washington, DC 20005

Re: Nomination of Aaron Morris for Best LGBT Lawyers Under 40

Dear Best Lawyers under 40 Committee Members:

I write to support strongly Aaron Morris's recommendation to be among the National LGBT Bar Association's 2013 "Best LGBT Lawyers under 40" honorees. Aaron and I became acquainted nearly 10 years ago when I began working on a *pro bono* asylum case in conjunction with Immigration Equality. Through our discussions about the case, I recognized immediately that Aaron has a passion for advancing LGBT rights, particularly LGBT immigrant rights. As a young, inexperienced lawyer, I had many questions about the procedures and practices of the immigration system and, in particular, how to advocate on behalf of LGBT and HIV+ refugees. All along Aaron has been ready and willing to provide guidance.

Since our initial case together, Aaron has helped me and other members of my law firm institutionalize an LGBT Asylum Project as a joint venture with Immigration Equality. I have attached a pamphlet that describes this work. Although Aaron's name is not mentioned explicitly, he has personally worked on every one of the cases we have taken on by providing unfailing and enthusiastic support and advice to the teams of lawyers and summer associates that work on the cases.

As just one example, a team of Kirkland attorneys working with Aaron recently won asylum for Mr. M, a gay HIV-positive Peruvian man. Mr. M suffered severe physical, sexual, and verbal abuse in Peru on account of his actual and perceived sexual orientation, beginning as a child. He survived life-threatening physical attacks because of his status as a gay man and a cross-dresser. Because the Peruvian police did not offer protection to Mr. M, he fled to the United States in fear for his life. Aaron played a large part in saving his life.

Since 2009, when we inaugurated the LGBT Asylum Project, we have represented over 20 LGBT and HIV+ asylum seekers fleeing persecution—all with the assistance of Aaron

KIRKLAND & ELLIS LLP

National LGBT Bar Association

June 3, 201

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Morris. Accordingly, there are few people I can think of that are as deserving as Aaron of the National LGBT Bar Association's 2013 "Best LGBT Lawyers under 40" award.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions about Aaron's candidacy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph A. Loy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joseph" and last name "Loy" being clearly legible.

Joseph A. Loy

LGBT Asylum Project

About the project...

The Kirkland & Ellis LLP LGBT Asylum Project was formalized as a Firmwide program in December 2009 under the leadership of Kirkland partner Joseph Loy. Kirkland attorneys had previously won a number of pro bono Immigration Equality asylum cases, and the formalization of the LGBT Asylum Project in partnership with Immigration Equality allowed for much greater coordination of experience and resources, which, in turn, allowed the Firm to take on more cases in more offices. Kirkland has worked on asylum cases for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and HIV-positive clients from Benin, Ecuador, Mexico, Grenada, Ghana, Colombia, Jamaica, Panama, Peru, Egypt, Dominica, Russia and Mauritania — with successful outcomes on all completed cases.

“Working with refugees is especially gratifying because the legal services we provide can literally save our clients’ lives.”

— Partner Joseph A. Loy, *Intellectual Property Litigation, Project Coordinator*



Recent achievements...

A team from Kirkland’s Los Angeles office achieved a successful outcome on an application for asylum and for withholding of removal for Ms. A, a 22-year-old lesbian from Ghana. Ms. A now resides in Los Angeles and attends community college, where she is studying for a degree in Chemistry.

Homosexuality is illegal in Ghana, and Ms. A had been expelled from her university in 2008 when it was discovered she was a lesbian. The police took her from her dorm room in handcuffs, jailed her and sexually assaulted her. After her family provided bribes to get her out of jail, she was sent to a “prayer camp” where she was chained to a block and starved over a period of weeks in order to weaken her internal “demons”. This client’s story was difficult to document, as she fled Ghana with little paperwork and no official record of her prison or prayer camp stays exists. Fortunately, Kirkland attorneys were able to obtain the letter expelling Ms. A from university. The letter stated explicitly that her homosexuality was the reason for her expulsion, which, in turn, established government persecution.



“It was incredibly exciting for our team — in a matter of weeks — to make a lasting change in the life of our client.”

— Partner Edward H. Sadtler, *Intellectual Property Transactions*

In 2010 & 2012, the LGBT Asylum Project was honored with Immigration Equality's Safe Haven Pro Bono Award, which recognizes law firms that have gone above and beyond to win refuge for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and HIV-positive immigrants.

A New York Kirkland team won asylum for Mr. B, a gay man from Grenada. Since early childhood, Mr. B's peers, teachers, school principal and even his own family members abused him because of his perceived sexuality. As Mr. B grew older, the violence directed toward him became more life threatening, and Mr. B sought refuge in the United States.

Developing the written record for this case was a challenge because homophobia is not well documented in Grenada. Despite impending filing deadlines, Mr. B's family members also delayed sending original documents and affidavits, which forced the Kirkland team to seek a last minute adjournment. Despite these challenges, Mr. B seemed to have fate on his side when the asylum officer introduced herself as "Ms. Kirkland." Mr. B intends to pursue legal studies in the United States and to one day become a lawyer.

“Our clients have endured so much suffering, so it is both tremendously rewarding and humbling to be able to assist them in getting a fresh start at life.”

— Partner Lisa LeCointe-Cephas, Litigation



Asylum was granted to Ms. A, a lesbian from Colombia on an affirmative asylum application. Ms. A sought asylum based on past persecution as a result of her sexual orientation, as well as fear of future persecution. She had been beaten on two occasions by a group of men she believed to be part of the Aguillas Negras (Black Eagles). This group is a paramilitary organization whose agenda calls for them to cleanse the country of those viewed as “undesirables,” including homosexuals. Group members told Ms. A they never wanted to see her again, and in the last attack left her with a scar that Ms. A believed to be a signal to others in the group to kill her if she crossed paths with them again. Ms. A is a native Spanish speaker with little fluency in English, which posed challenges, but the Kirkland team fortunately was able to enlist the help of a case assistant who is fluent in Spanish and served as the team's interpreter and document translator.

If you have any questions about the matters described above or would like more information about the LGBT Asylum Project, please contact the following Kirkland attorneys or your regular Kirkland contact.

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