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Argentina: Bitter-Sweet Victory— Argentinian Trans Leader Maria Belen Correa Granted Asylum in the United States (<https://www.outrightinternational.org/content/argentina-bitter-sweet-victory%E2%80%94argentinian-trans-leader-maria-belen-correa-granted-asylum>)

Contact info:

Alejandra Sarda, asarda@iglhrc.org (<mailto:asarda@iglhrc.org>) / coordamlac@yahoo.com.mx (<mailto:coordamlac@yahoo.com.mx>)

Susana Fried, +1 212 216 1281

(December 15, 2004) Transgender activist Maria Belen Correa has been granted asylum today in the United States. A native of Argentina, Correa is one of the founders of ATTA (Argentinean Association of Transvestites and Transsexuals), and a leader of what is today the very dynamic transgender movement in Argentina. The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) congratulates Correa and the US Justice Department for granting the asylum request.

IGLHRC has worked closely with Maria Belen Correa when she was a local activist in Buenos Aires in denouncing human rights violations against trans people at the national, regional and international levels. Correa was one of those activists present at the meeting that IGLHRC organized in Buenos Aires (2001) with the then UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, Mr. Abid Hussain, and local trans activists. She also attended the IGLHRC facilitated training on fund-raising and organizational development for trans activists (2001) that took place in Buenos Aires.

We also supported her asylum claim. The staff of the Latin America and the Caribbean program sent copious documentation to subtain her claim, wrote affidavits on her behalf and were always available on the phone to provide her with the emotional support that the difficult process of asylum seeking requires.

IGLHRC celebrates Maria Belen Correa's successful asylum claim: it will allow her to fully enjoy her human rights and to grow as an individual and as a social justice activist in ways that were not possible for her in Argentina. Successful claims such as Correa's reinforce the idea that persecution on the basis of gender expression continues a human rights violation and those subjected to such persecution are entitled to the right of claiming asylum in a country where they can feel safer. IGLHRC condemns all forms of discrimination based on a persons real or perceived gender identity or expression wherever they occur, but in particular in Argentina, where the group ALITT (Association for the Fight for Transvestite and Transsexual Identity), continues to be denied legal registry by local officials, and trans activists Diana Sacayan and Jorge Nieves are arbitrarily imprisoned.

From 1995 to 2001, Correa was one of the leaders in the fight of Argentinean transgender persons against police brutality and for the full enjoyment of their human rights. In return, local policearrested and abused her, subjected her to death threats, forced her to leave her place of work and prevented her from traveling.

Feeling that such constraints were damaging her possibility to lead a productive and enjoyable life, as well as placing her physical, emotional and mental integrity at risk, Correa left Argentina for the USA in 2001. And then other fights started: to learn a new language, to survive in a culture that was deeply foreign to her and to have her right to asylum recognized by the US

government. Three years later, Correa has been successful in all those struggles. She is fluent in English, has made many friends and is working on HIV/AIDS prevention with the Latino/a transgender community in Queens, NY.

Published on December 20, 2004 | OutRight Action International an LGBT human rights organization

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- **CONTACT US**
(<https://www.outrightinternational.org/content/contact-us>)
- OutRight Action International
- Formerly known as IGLHRC
- 80 Maiden Lane, Suite 1505
- New York, NY 10038 U.S.A.
- P: +1 (212) 430.6054
- F: +1 (212) 430.6060
- hello@outrightinternational.org
(<mailto:hello@outrightinternational.org>)
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