



You Reunited Families

Looking Back and Looking Forward: Five Years After Zero Tolerance

It has been five years since thousands of children were wrenched from their parents' arms and forcibly separated under the barbaric Zero Tolerance Policy—resulting in more than 5,400 child separations that lasted weeks, months, years, and for some, to this very day.

KIND has been at the forefront of helping separated families since then—reuniting more than 490 separated individuals and their family members—and serving more than 2,700 people whose lives have been affected by family separation in the United States and in Central America.

Continues on page 6

KIND will not rest until all separated families are reunited and provided with the legal assistance, social services, and counseling support that they need to help rebuild their lives.

A young KIND client reunited with her father in Los Angeles in January 2020 after almost 2 years separated due to the Zero Tolerance Policy.

Keeping Kids Safe

KIND launched a 10-year initiative, Keeping Kids Safe, in February of this year. By engaging a broad spectrum of policymakers and the public, we intend to transform the way the U.S. government responds to unaccompanied children searching for protection. It is time policy makers reform our systems to ensure the United States immigration system addresses the unique needs of children and offers them a safe pathway to protection.

Too many of the world's children are at risk.

The number of children under 18 who are traveling to the United States on their own increased from 16,067 in 2011 to 152,057 in 2022. It is a staggering increase that demands a new approach.

U.S. laws and policies governing the treatment of unaccompanied children on the move are inflexible, outdated, and unable to protect these vulnerable children adequately. Children are forced to go alone through a rigid, adversarial system designed principally with adults in mind. This system neither prioritizes their best interests nor considers their limited capacity to navigate complex procedures without appropriate, child-centered support.

It is time to turn the page. The United States pledged to resume its leadership in the protection of human rights; we can begin by reimagining the process for protecting unaccompanied children.



An unaccompanied Guatemalan child immigrant Oscar (12), who arrived across the Rio Grande river from Mexico, stands after disembarking from a boat near the U.S. border city of Roma. Photo: Ed Jones/Getty Images

It is time to turn the page. We can begin by re-imagining the process for protecting unaccompanied children.



KIND staff work with children on the U.S.-Mexico border in 2022. Photo: Brett Gundlock, 2022

The number of children under 18 who come on their own to seek safety in the United States increased from **16,067 in 2011** to **152,057 in 2022**.

2011

16,067

946%

increase
from 2011
to 2022

2022

152,057

**It's time to
turn the page.**

The Campaign Leadership Council

A deeply knowledgeable, bipartisan group of expert advisors and visionary leaders will inform the change to come. This Leadership Council will advise on children-first, pragmatic policy solutions and recommendations, as well as help KIND build broad support for our vision of how best to protect unaccompanied children by engaging the public and policy makers. Please visit the campaign webpage at supportkind.org/keeping-kids-safe to read short biographies and personal statements of the council members.



*KIND's Leadership Council members, Bri Stensrud (L) and Judge Ramona A. Gonzalez (R) visit Capitol Hill in September 2023 for meetings advancing the protection of children alone.
Photo: Kyle Niekrasz, 2023*

Campaign Priority: **Specialized Children's Dockets in Immigration Court**

KIND supports establishing a children's court or children's division of an independent immigration court to adjudicate children's cases. Designed to address the vulnerabilities of children, and like juvenile courts in other U.S. domestic court systems, these dockets would employ a trauma-informed approach to efficiently and fairly adjudicate children's protection claims.

Until Congress establishes such a court, KIND urges the Executive Office for Immigration Review within the Department of Justice to use its authority to renew and expand specialized children's dockets within each immigration court so that these dockets solely focus on handling unaccompanied children's claims. These dockets would focus on expanding child-friendly court practices, streamlining applications for legal relief, and expanding access to counsel for unaccompanied children.

Newsweek

Unaccompanied Children Deserve Protection, Not Partisan Politics

Opinion | Newsweek, May 2, 2023

**KIND Leadership Council member
Judge Ramona Gonzalez is a state
circuit court judge from Wisconsin.**

Judge Gonzalez penned an op-ed calling for increased funding to ensure unaccompanied children have access to legal counsel. The piece came as Congress considered the Secure the Border Act of 2023, passed by the House of Representatives in May. The bill contains a provision that would eliminate funding for immigration attorneys for children—forcing children as young as 3 and 4 years old to face the legal system alone. Eliminating legal support for these children leaves these children more susceptible to harm, including human trafficking and sexual exploitation, when they are returned to their home countries.

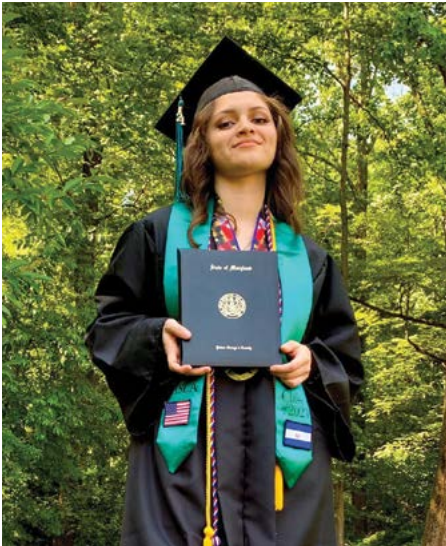
Judge Gonzalez notes that in debates on how to secure the border, it is important to remember that all children, regardless of their status and how they arrived in the United States, are worthy of protection. She emphasizes that children's well-being and safety should not be part of a partisan debate and urges Congress to reject the Secure the Border Act.

**“Unaccompanied children
are entitled to due
process and protection,
as all children do.”**

- Judge Gonzalez

Our Graduating Clients: Defined by Unyielding Focus and Motivation

We are proud as we can be! The end of the last academic year presented an opportunity again to mark our clients' education milestones, including high school and college graduations. We have the distinct honor of celebrating some of our clients' academic achievements, accomplishments that mark an important next step in their journey. It is our privilege to showcase their determination and progress and to share their inspiring stories with the world.



Xenia

“Graduating from high school is a great achievement for a young migrant like myself since in my country, I wouldn’t have been able to achieve this huge goal. Now, my hard work has been reflected in this diploma, and I know the university one will as well.”

After arriving in the United States in 2018, Xenia worked hard to achieve her dreams. Not only did she graduate with honors, but she was also a member of the National Honor Society in high school. Xenia never let all that she experienced break her will to succeed.

**You can read
the full post
about Xenia**



Jerson

Jerson’s success was not without challenges, but with the guidance of his father and the support of his teachers, he remained determined to overcome every obstacle.

Jerson’s science teacher provided invaluable support as he learned English. The teacher’s encouraging words, “I am going to learn Spanish with you, and you’re going to learn English with me,” sparked Jerson’s passion for science. He found joy in exploring subjects like the environment and the solar system.

He aspires to continue his studies and pursue a military career. With his unwavering belief that anything is possible in life, Jerson is ready for the next step in his journey.

**You can read
the full post
about Jerson**





Geovany

Geovany found strength in the friendships he made, and he is grateful for the teachers who went the extra mile by learning Spanish to help him understand his assignments.

His passion lies in biology, especially anything related to animals or marine life—it ignited his curiosity and shaped his dreams for the future. Along the way, he found unwavering support from his friends, father, and teachers. His father’s constant encouragement to work hard has been a driving force in his success.

Geovany sums up his experience with three powerful words: “I did it.” He takes immense pride in his accomplishments and looks forward to what lies ahead.

**You can read
the full post
about Geovany**



Daniel and Catarina

Daniel’s involvement in track and the chess club gave him the feeling of belonging and friendship that erased the loneliness he once felt. Winning first place in a chess tournament brought him so much joy, and his dedication to mastering the game led him to become the head of his chess team. His education has had a profound impact on his life, especially in improving his English language skills. With the help of his teachers, he was able to understand, speak, and write in English. He plans to pursue his passion by studying computer technology and coding. For Daniel, graduating high school holds great significance. It symbolizes the beginning of a new chapter filled with limitless possibilities.

Arriving in the United States without knowing the language—or anyone—Catarina faced immense challenges. Her determination and the support of her mother played a crucial role in her success. Her mother’s wisdom—urging her to seize every educational opportunity—became a guiding light, propelling her forward even in moments of doubt. To those who questioned her capabilities, Catarina sends a resounding message: never judge a book by its cover. Despite grappling with a new language, she defied expectations and is now fluent in five languages. Her success is a testament to her intelligence and perseverance. Armed with her hard-earned diploma, she secured a role as a caregiver in a nursing home, where she finds joy in helping and communicating with residents.

**You can read
the full post
about Daniel
and Catarina**



You Reunited Families

continued from page 1

KIND is committed to ensuring no child ever experiences such horrors again.

Young KIND client reunited with her mother in Washington, D.C. in September 2018 after being separated for about 5 months.

The Zero Tolerance Policy was an abhorrent practice enacted by the previous Administration as an astonishingly cruel deterrence effort. To this day, families are separated based on various rationales and without appropriate safeguards to protect the rights of children, parents, and caregivers. Such safeguards help ensure that separations are limited to rare cases in which it is necessary for the child's safety and best interests.

KIND is using the expertise we gleaned from the last five years to address continued family separation. At the U.S.-Mexico border, we work directly with children and families every day to prevent the separation of children from their parents and caregivers.

For example, when thousands of Ukrainian families sought entry through the U.S.-Mexico border in late winter 2022, some children were separated from their caregivers because of a lack of paperwork establishing the caretakers' relationship to the child. To prevent such separations, KIND provides legal information on U.S. processes to families who arrive at the border from around the world in search of safety.

During the fall of Afghanistan in August 2021 when thousands of children were separated from their families amid the chaos at Kabul airport, KIND provided guidance to the U.S. government and the European Union on processes and child safeguarding procedures to facilitate reuniting families and protecting children.

“It felt like ... the beginning of a new life. A new stage. It's time that we'll never get back, but now we're here and the only thing to do is to move forward.”

- Montserrat, a KIND client with her siblings and mother in 2021

Source: CNN, "A mother and her four daughters were separated at the border in 2018. This is what they lost" (September 10, 2021)

Since 2017, KIND has:



represented more than **1,200 individuals** seeking return to the United States through humanitarian parole applications



helped reunify **245 families** (490 individuals) in the United States



provided ongoing legal representation to more than **650 individuals** and their families impacted by family separation, representing them in applications for immigration relief



provided legal assistance and orientation to **over 900 individuals** facing potential separation or seeking reunification at the U.S.-Mexico border



helped more than **300 families** seek justice for harms suffered

A Legacy of Compassion, Commitment, and Success: **KIND's Eleven Founding Partners**



Arnold & Porter

COVINGTON

Holland & Knight

K&L GATES



PAUL
HASTINGS

PERKINS COIE
COUNSEL TO GREAT COMPANIES

Simpson
Thacher

SULLIVAN & CROMWELL LLP

Weil

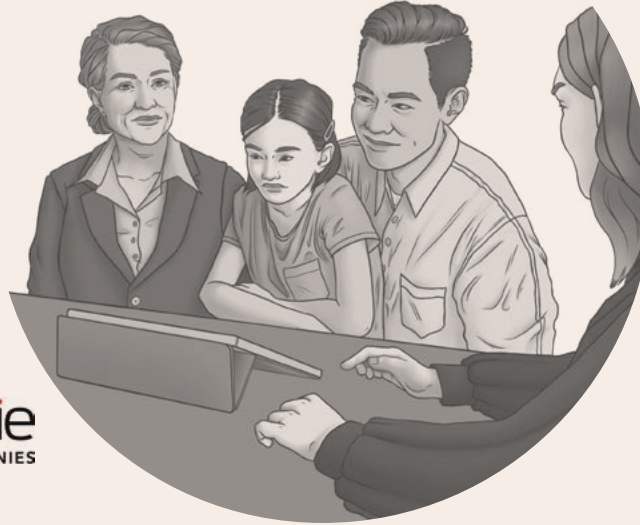


Illustration: AJ King, 2023

Since 2008 our founding partners provided:



1,318 legal professionals

for KIND's U.S. cases



~250K hours

of pro-bono work



Over \$150M

in donated value

KIND's pro bono partnerships are the bedrock of our success. We built KIND on the innovative model that these partnerships would fuel our work, exponentially increase our influence, and ensure that thousands of children each year have access to the best possible legal services.

In 2008, these firms and the Microsoft Corporation provided the infrastructure that enabled KIND to make immediate impact. That partnership has endured for 15 years. In addition to pro bono representation, our partners show their commitment to KIND through financial support, board leadership, advocacy engagement, and counsel.

Our partners make our work possible. We are grateful for their ongoing support and the profound impact they have on the lives of the unaccompanied children we serve and protect as they cross borders alone.

New KIND Staff



Alexander "Sandy" Thomas

Chief Legal Officer

In this new role, Sandy serves as KIND's primary in-house legal counsel, providing legal guidance and oversight for the entire organization. This new position stems from KIND's tremendous growth across the United States and around the world, progress that requires expertise in regulatory compliance, risk management, and navigating the complex municipal, state, national, and international laws governing our work. We are thrilled to add a chief legal officer to our ranks and attract such a highly respected leader, who is also deeply dedicated to advancing KIND's mission.

Prior to joining KIND this past March, Sandy served for ten years as chair and global managing partner at the global law firm of Reed Smith LLP. The firm's thriving pro bono program—with longstanding ties to KIND's pro bono work—grew exponentially while he was in leadership. Before entering private practice, he was an attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice and a special assistant United States attorney in the Office of the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia.



Kirsty Thomson

Senior Director for Europe

Kirsty leads KIND's expanding operations within Europe at a critical juncture as we bring on additional lawyers and policy and advocacy staff to respond to the legal and psychosocial needs of increasing numbers of unaccompanied and separated children arriving in the region, as well as children displaced from Ukraine.

Kirsty is a respected human rights lawyer in the UK, an established social justice leader—co-founding a human rights legal organization—and a recognized expert on child protection within Europe. Her expertise spans child protection and rights, human trafficking, international protection, migration, gender-based violence, and the delivery of legal services. Kirsty also worked alongside KIND in Europe since 2016, serving as an implementing partner, an advisory group member, and consultant. Her leadership greatly expands our ability to develop our pro bono model throughout Europe.



KIND has a long-standing commitment to fiscal responsibility and is proud to receive the highest possible ranking from Charity Navigator for our finance and accountability practices.

Thank you for your investment in our efforts to protect children and reunite families.

KIND is the preeminent U.S.-based nongovernmental organization devoted to protecting unaccompanied and separated children. KIND envisions a world in which every unaccompanied child on the move has access to legal counsel and has their rights and well-being protected as they migrate alone in search of safety.

supportkind.org
[@supportkind](https://twitter.com/supportkind)

1201 L Street NW, Floor 2
Washington, DC 20005