

Justice in Motion

Discrimination, Detention, and Deportation: Immigration & Refugees

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LOS ANGELES, CA Last night, nine parents who had been separated and deported without their children at the Mexico-U.S. border returned to the United States to reunite with their children and pursue their asylum claims as a result of advocacy efforts by **Al Otro Lado (AOL)**, **Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP)**, **De Anda Law**, **Kids In Need of Defense (KIND)**, **Justice in Motion**, **Milbank LLP**, and **Womens Refugee Commission**.

As part of the Ms. L class action lawsuit filed by the **American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)**, U.S. District Court Judge Dana Sabraw [found](#) that these parents had been coerced into unknowingly signing their own deportation papers, given inaccurate or misleading information by immigration officials, or otherwise unlawfully deported, and ordered the Trump Administration to grant the parents entry back to the U.S.

The parents arrived by plane to Los Angeles late last night, where the parents were welcomed at the airport by advocates, government officials, faith leaders, and community members. They have been supported by the migrant rights group **Justice in Motion** and are represented by immigration advocacy and legal aid non-profit organizations **AOL** and **ASAP**, human rights and litigation firm **De Anda Law** and **Milbank LLP**, an international law firm.

This is a profoundly joyous moment in a long journey the first time that our six clients have touched U.S. soil since their children were taken from them nearly two years ago. But the journey is not over, says **Carol Anne Donohoe, managing attorney for Al Otro Lados Family Reunification Team**. It will take years to try to undo the damage that's been done to these fathers and their children. They will also be making their asylum claims in a legal atmosphere that has grown increasingly hostile to those seeking safety in our country. There is much work yet to be done but, for now, we celebrate in knowing these parents will soon be able to hold their children again.

We are excited to welcome our client, Leticia, back to the United States, after having been separated from her son for more than two years, said **Conchita Cruz, Co-Executive Director of the Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project**. Despite enormous obstacles, Leticia has never stopped fighting to be reunited with her son and to have a chance to raise him in safety. We are proud to continue to represent Leticia as she fights for her son, for asylum, and for justice for her family.

When the Trump administration began ripping apart migrant families who were seeking safety in the United States, there was no plan to reunite children with their parents, especially those deported without due process. Justice in Motion's network of on-the-ground human rights defenders in Mexico and Central America has spent the last 18 months finding parents deported without their children, rebuilding trust, translating to and from indigenous languages, and facilitating connections with the U.S. lawyers now representing them. It has taken an immense effort to arrive at this point, but the return of these nine parents is an unprecedented opportunity to reverse one of the most horrific immigration policies ever implemented. We celebrate this victory and continue to pursue justice for all separated migrant families, says **Nan Schivone, Legal Director at Justice in Motion**.

My client's nine-year-old son has not seen his father in the nearly two years since he was pulled from his father's arms by Customs and Border Protection. In that time, this child has suffered immeasurable pain. My client is a born-again Christian, persecuted in his country because of his faith. He is now placing his faith on the U.S. government and its citizens. We are relieved that the government will allow my client and his son to be reunited once again immediately upon my client's return, and spared the unnecessary trauma of further

imprisonment. However, the long and hard struggle for this family to heal from the trauma of forced separation is just beginning, says **Ricardo De Anda, Founder and Managing Attorney of De Anda Law Firm.**

As Judge Sabraw definitively decided in his September ruling, the deportation of these asylum-seeking parents was unlawful and unjust, and we are thrilled that these parents now have some relief with this turn of events, added **Milbank senior consulting partner Linda Dakin-Grimm.** Our client Fernando was cruelly ripped from his family at the U.S. border almost two years ago, exacerbating his anguish and grief over the horrific murder of his 17-year old son as he sat on his grandmothers front porch. After the Guatemalan police failed to provide protection against persistent threats, the family fled the country for asylum in the U.S., hoping to find safety. Fernandos heart-wrenching experience has dragged on for far too long, and words cannot express how grateful he is to be safe and reunited with his wife and three daughters.

Last night we saw a big step forward toward justice, said **Michelle Bran, Senior Director for Migrant Rights and Justice at the Womens Refugee Commission.** Since January of 2017, the Trump administration has placed a bullseye on the backs of families seeking safety at the U.S. border with Mexico. It has ripped families apart and denied access to asylum for parents trying to keep their children safe. The reunification of nine families was the result of unyielding advocacy and legal battles waged by organizations with which WRC is proud to partner. It was also the result of the amazing bravery of asylum-seeking families of which we are honored to serve. We will continue to advocate for justice and expect that these families will be permitted to stay together and not be detained or separated again. Let this send a clear message to the administration: we will never stop fighting for these families and for justice.

KIND is thrilled by this first, small step in righting the wrong that was done to thousands of families by the Trump Administration through its deeply flawed and inhumane Zero Tolerance policy. These families have waited a long time for their loved ones to return, and we are pleased that they can now take the next step toward seeking safety in the United States, said **Kids In Need of Defense President Wendy Young.**

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Al Otro Lado (AOL) is a bi-national non-profit providing direct legal aid and representation to deportees, asylum seekers, detained migrants and separated families. AOL also employs impact litigation and policy advocacy to promote lasting and systemic changes that protect immigrants rights. Learn more at alotrolado.org and follow us on social media for updates: [Al Otro Lado](#) on Facebook, and [@alotrolado_org](#) on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

The Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP) is a non-profit immigrants rights organization that represents individuals who have arrived at the Mexico-U.S. border to seek asylum, regardless of where they are currently located. ASAPs model has three components: online community support, emergency legal aid, and nationwide systemic reform. Learn more at asylumadvocacy.org and follow us on social media: Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project on [Facebook](#) and on Twitter [@asylumadvocacy](#).

Justice in Motion protects migrant rights by ensuring justice across borders. Justice in Motions unique network of on-the-ground human rights defenders in Mexico and Central America partner with U.S. advocates to make sure that wherever migrants go, their rights will follow. To learn more, visit justiceinmotion.org and follow us on social media: [Justice in Motion](#) on Facebook, and [@justiceinmotion](#) on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

De Anda Law Firm is an asylum and litigation firm with offices in Laredo and San Antonio. For more information, visit deandalawfirm.com and follow on Twitter: [@ricardo_de_anda](#).

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The Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) improves the lives and protects the rights of women, children and youth displaced by conflict and crisis. We research their needs, identify solutions and advocate for programs and policies to strengthen their resilience and drive change in humanitarian practice. Since our founding in 1989, we have been a leading expert on the needs of refugee women and children, and the policies that can protect and empower them. For more information on WRC visit womensrefugeecommission.org and follow on social media: On Twitter [@wrcommission](#) and Instagram [@womensrefugeecommission](#).

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