

## Children cont'd from pg 1

down ended in June, but hundreds of children remain in detention, shelters or foster care and U.S. officials say more than 200 are not eligible for reunification or release.

Federal officials insist they are reuniting families and will continue to do so. But an Associ-

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ated Press investigation drawing on hundreds of court documents, immigration records and interviews in the U.S. and Central America identified holes in the system that allow state court judges to grant custody of migrant children to American families — without notifying their parents.

And today, with hundreds of those mothers and fathers deported thousands of miles away, the risk has grown exponentially.

States usually seal child custody cases, and the federal agencies overseeing the migrant children don't track how often state court judges allow these kids to be given up for adoption. But by providing a child's name and birthdate to the specific district, probate or circuit court involved, the AP found that it's sometimes possible to track these children.

Alexa's case began in November 2015 under the Obama administration, years before Trump's family-separation policy rolled out. Her 15-month separation from her mother exposes the fragile legal standing of children under the care of the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement and a flawed, piecemeal system that can change the course of a child's life.

It took 28 minutes for a judge in a rural courthouse near Lake Michigan to grant Alexa's foster parents, Sherri and

Kory Barr, temporary guardianship. Alexa's mother and the little girl's immigration attorney were not even notified about the proceedings.

Based on their experiences with Alexa, the Barrs had become convinced that Alexa's mom was a bad mother and that the little girl would be abused if she were reunited with her.

“My wife and I are sick over this,” Kory Barr told the judge, who wished him good luck as he granted the foster parents' request two days after Christmas.

The federal system that had custody of Alexa says the state courts never should have allowed foster parents to get that far, no matter how good their intentions.

But each state court system, from New York to California, runs wardship and adoption proceedings differently — and sometimes there are even variations between counties.

In Missouri, an American couple managed to permanently adopt a baby whose Guatemalan mother had been picked up in an immigration raid.

That seven-year legal battle terminating the mother's parental rights ended in 2014.

In Nebraska, another Guatemalan mother prevailed and got her kids back, but it took five years and over \$1 million in donated legal work.

The Office of Refugee Resettlement and Bethany Christian Services, the agency that placed Alexa in foster care, would not comment on her case.

But Bethany said foster parents are informed they're not allowed to adopt migrant children.

Since the 1980s, however, Bethany acknowledged that nine of the 500 migrant children assigned to its foster program have been adopted by American families.

Read the rest of this story at [TheSkanner.com](http://TheSkanner.com)



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

## Indigenous Peoples Day

About hundred people marched from Westlake Park after a brief blessing and rally to Seattle City Hall to celebrate Indigenous People's Day Oct. 8. The fourth annual celebration continued at City Hall with speeches and traditional dances and singing.

## Holocaust cont'd from pg 1

freely, and sleep on a mattress. The latter was realized when the war ended and he found his way to the United States. Unfortunately, Wiener was the only surviving member of his family.

His moving testimony came from the Oregon State Capitol last week, when he joined Sen. Rob Wagner (D-Lake Oswego) in proposing a new bill that would require all schools in the state to teach students about the Holocaust and genocide.

Since moving to Oregon in 2000, Wiener has given close to 1,000 community talks about surviving the war, during which six million Jews were exterminated.

“For me, the horrific memories of the Holocaust are still fresh, the ashes from which I rose are still smoldering,” said Wiener during the bill's informal hearing in the senate education committee. “I'm tormented by memories even as I try to carry on with my life, I'm crying in silence.”

Sen. Wagner, too, told personal stories of swastikas recently appearing on the bathroom walls of his local schools.

What's more, young people are moving further away from their understanding of genocide, explained Wagner, who is also a board member of the Lake Oswego school district.

“Across the country, students who are graduating from high

schools are now twice as likely as a generation ago to not be able to identify the Holocaust or another genocidal incident,” he told the committee. “We are losing our history.”

A 2018 survey from The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany found that 70 percent of Americans “say fewer people seem to care about the Holocaust than they used to and a majority (58 percent) believe something like the Holocaust could happen again.”

In his testimony to the committee, Wiener said it's imperative at this time to “divert the rivers of hatred so that another Holocaust will never happen again... Learning about the Holocaust is not just a chapter in recent history, but a divine lesson on how to be more tolerant, more loving, and that hatred is eventually self-destructive. Be better rather than bitter.”

Yet it's not only the inhumanity of the Holocaust that bears weight on history, Wagner reminded the hearing's attendees.

More recent atrocities in Rwanda, Kosovo, Sudan, Myanmar and at the hands of ISIS are essential lessons in genocide too, though students are struggling to identify them.

Fifteen-year-old Lakeridge High School freshman Claire Samowski also joined the panel in support of the education bill. She

cited the 2018 conference survey with a troubling statistic that two-thirds (66 percent) of millennials cannot identify what Auschwitz was. Moreover, 22 percent of that generation “haven't heard” or “are not sure if they have heard of the Holocaust.”

Samowski first met Wiener during a talk he gave when she was in fourth grade. Since then, she's looked to him as both a friend and mentor.

“As a student, I see bullying, prejudice and stereotyping both inside and outside the classroom every day,” said Samowski, while fighting back tears. “Learning about genocide teaches students the ramifications that come with prejudice of any kind in society.”

If passed, Oregon would join 10 other states — among them, California, Florida, Kentucky, Michigan, and New York — that require some attention to the Holocaust and genocide education in their classrooms.

“I trust teachers,” said Wagner, adding that his bill will not write a set curriculum for teachers. Rather, the legislation would rely on educators to partner with community organizations in developing social studies lessons that are relevant and age appropriate.

Wagner said he has made this bill one of his priorities for the 2019 legislative session, which begins in January.

## BUF cont'd from pg 1

starting at \$1,500. For more information on scholarships, applications and deadlines, visit <https://www.bufor.org/empower-scholarships/>.

She also said she's hoping to increase the organization's volunteer corps and is mulling ways the organization can make use of its building, which is one of the few remaining Black-owned structures on Northeast Alberta.

Foster also said she's stepped into BUF at a time when it's in a growth period, as opposed to a crisis-management period, so there's room to envision

BUF's future as opposed to focusing on trying to keep it alive.

“Alaiyo brings with her to BUF an

“Alaiyo brings with her to BUF an in-depth understanding of the Black Community in Oregon

in-depth understanding of the Black Community in Oregon, and the issues

that exists for students of color and low-income students within our learning system,” wrote outgoing executive director Kimberlee Sheng in an email announcing her departure and Foster's hiring to BUF supporters. (In June the American Leadership Forum announced Sheng had been hired as its executive director.)

Symone Sparrow, education programs specialist for BUF, said BUF hired a consultant to recruit a new executive director, but that the team was able to sit in on interviews. It was ulti-

mately Foster's presence and passion that made her stand out, Sparrow said.

When she's not working, Foster said, she participates in Crossfit and loves to travel and read and visit spas, as well as connect with family. Her commitment to her work is driven in part by a desire for her son, who is almost 16, to see his community as a place where he can grow and thrive.

“Stay tuned. Definitely stay tuned,” Foster said of BUF's near future. “I'm looking forward to the next couple of years.”