

President of Angelina Jolie's foundation has seen 5 year olds deported alone



Rigoberto Ramos from Seaford, Del., originally from Guatemala, rallies for immigration reform in front of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, in April. On Thursday, the head of the country's immigration court system and his wife, an advocate for immigrant children, will be speaking on immigration reform in Syracuse. (AP Photo/Charles Dharapak)

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on January 15, 2014 at 12:15 PM, updated January 15, 2014 at 1:04 PM

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This year, 60,000 children will arrive in the U.S. illegally and alone.

They leave places like Guatemala, Nicaragua and Mexico, seeking safety from gang recruitment and drug violence, said Wendy Young, president of [Kids in Need of Defense](#), in Washington D.C.

The children are apprehended by Border Patrol agents, often at the southern border of the U.S., and end up in the immigration court system, facing deportation.

In immigration court, you are allowed to have a lawyer, but not required to have one. There is no burden on the government to provide immigration detainees with a lawyer.

This results in children, often very small and unable to speak English, in front of immigration judges without anyone to argue their case, said Young, who will be speaking Thursday in Syracuse.

"You have a kid sitting there with no one to help," she said.

KIND, started by Angelina Jolie and Microsoft, trains lawyers to work with children in the immigration court system. The lawyers do the work for free.

Young said since 2009, 6,300 lawyers have been trained and 6,000 children have received free legal help.

"The results are significant," Young said. Kids who have attorneys during deportation proceedings are three times more likely to be allowed to stay in the U.S.

On Thursday, Young, who grew up in Saranac Lake, will be speaking about her work and the plight of children in the immigration system in Syracuse at the [Onondaga Historical Association](#).

She will be accompanied by her more-famous husband, [Juan Osuna](#), who will also be speaking about the need for immigration reform. Osuna is the head of the country's immigration court system.

The two, both lawyers, met while in law school at American University.

On the face of it, it might seem like a unlikely union of people on opposite sides of a thorny issue. But that's not the case, Young said.

"This is a process and the system is very complicated," she said. They are speaking in Syracuse because Young's sister, Karen Cooney, is the support services administrator at OHA.

Osuna was unable to be interviewed for this story. The two are coming to speak at OHA against the backdrop of the group's newest exhibit, "There's No Place Like Home: Immigration and Refugee Resettlement in Onondaga County."

The talk is from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at OHA, 321 Montgomery St., in Syracuse.

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