

FAMILY ROUTES



A Monthly Newsletter by International Social Service, USA

FAMILY SEPARATION: THE PAST IS STILL PRESENT

As February and Black History Month has turned into March, Women's History and Social Work Month and we are upon the four year anniversary of the deliberate and cruel separation of children from their families at our southern border, I find myself asking the question, "is history repeating itself inevitable?" There is an undeniable parallel between the exclusion and separation of African Americans and families at the border. Forced family separation is deeply rooted in America's history. The cruelty that comes with the outcries of those separated from their loved ones, sometimes without an option for reunification has left a permanent scar of intergenerational trauma in black and Latino families. Who do these children become? Ties are not only cut from family, but culture, history and self-identification. Families separated by borders endure lasting hardships of trying to heal from a choice that was never theirs to make.

Maybe they became E. Franklin Frazier or Dorothy Height, social workers of color in the 1900s. Maybe they became Women of the International Social Service, who back in the 1900s while doing their essential global case management heavily influenced international law or a brave 15 year old girl escaping abuse. Regardless, their efforts and endurance deserve to be supported and celebrated all year long.



Antinia Joiner

Contact Us!
 International Social Service, USA
 443.451.1219
 question@iss-usa.org
www.iss-usa.org

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A BRAVE ESCAPE

15-year-old Grace McCarthy* was staying with relatives in China who she reported were abusing her, and arranging a marriage she did not want. She believed her parents back in the U.S. were aware of the abuse and the arranged marriage; therefore, she was afraid to return to their care in the United States.

Grace, who was destitute and out of options as to where to go, wanted to return to the U.S., but was terrified that she would be forced to return to her family there. Grace was only willing to return to the U.S. if she could be protected by the child welfare system and taken into foster care.

Grace secretly requested the help of the U.S. embassy in China who arranged for Grace to escape her home in China and be safely transported back to the U.S.. While planning Grace's emergency departure, The Department of State (DOS) enlisted ISS-USA and ISS-USA engaged the local Children Protective Services (CPS) in the planning, so that by the time Grace arrived to the United States, there would be a way to protect her safety.

ISS worked closely with the Health and Human Services in Florida, where Grace previously lived before going to China. The local CPS immediately opened an investigation. Shortly after, CPS agreed on the plan and set a date to meet Grace at the airport. Arrangements were made for Grace to travel to the U.S. All COVID requirements were followed including testing prior to departure. ISS sought the assistance of contacts in the Atlanta airport (Grace's port of entry into the U.S.) to help her during her layover and to ensure she safely boarded her flight to Florida.

As planned, when Grace arrived in Florida, she was met at the airport and taken into custody by the local CPS and placed in the temporary care of a foster family. Grace was relieved that she did not have to reunite with her family at this time.

The International Social Service (ISS) prioritizes the best interest of the child in all return and reintegration situations. Grace, a U.S. citizen unaccompanied minor, returned from China through the U.S. Repatriation Program.

To learn more about our services for children, [click here.](#)

*names and places and all identifying details have been completely sanitized to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the people served by ISS-USA and the people we work with.



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The Role of the ISS in the History of Private International Law

The ISS has been hiding in plain sight in the history of private international law since the 1920s. Anyone lucky enough to visit ISS-USA's archives at the University of Minnesota would be astonished by ISS's extensive engagement with virtually every aspect of transnational family law. During the first half of the 20th century the ISS left no stone untouched in an effort to devise an international socio-legal framework for cross-border family maintenance claims. It lobbied scholars, consuls, employers, national legislators and international organizations; its global network of social workers worked together to inform women living abroad when their husbands attempted to file divorce proceedings in the U.S.; it experimented with entirely new and imaginative legal arguments to convince U.S. courts to assume jurisdiction over foreign women's maintenance claims against their husbands living in the U.S.; and it submitted expert evidence to the Child Welfare Committee of the League of Nations.

Read the full article [here!](#)

About the author:

Roxana Banu is a Lecturer in Private International Law at Queen Mary University of London, Faculty of Law. Roxana researches on legal history and feminist perspectives on private international law. She is the author of *Nineteenth Century Perspectives on Private International Law* (OUP, 2018) and "A Relational Feminist Perspective on Private International Law," awarded the ASIL Prize for the best paper in Private International Law in 2016. She is currently writing a book on a gendered history of private international law, which includes a more detailed discussion of the role of the ISS in the history of private international law. She offers a brief portrait of the women of the ISS in Roxana Banu, "Forgotten Female Actors in the History of Private International Law. The Women of the International Social Service 1920-1960," in Immi Tallgren ed., *Portraits of Women in International Law* (forthcoming with OUP, 2021).



Roxana Banu

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Join Our Team!



**Help Unite
International
Families!**

ISS-USA is seeking licensed social workers to work on a contractual, fee-for-service basis, providing home studies for international kinship and adoption placements.

[Join the ISS-USA family today!](#)

**We are seeking bilingual,
licensed social workers in
the following states:**

Massachusetts

Ohio

Rhode Island

Alaska

South Carolina

Virginia



Rewarding Internship Opportunity Available!

ISS-USA is seeking a student in business or international affairs interested in assisting cross-border families in need through communications, marketing and development/fundraising projects.
[apply here!](#)



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