
Campaign to Bring Back to US Boy Abducted to Brazil Gathers Momentum

Contributed by Stephen Wash
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On June 16, 2004, Sean Goldman, born in New Jersey, then at age 4, was abducted by his mother, Bruna Bianchi Goldman, from the United States to Brazil. Ever since the kidnapping, David Goldman, Sean's father, has waged a legal battle to have Sean returned as required by U.S. law and an international treaty signed by both the U.S. and Brazil.

After Bruna's recent death, the man recently married to her was shockingly awarded temporary custody by a Brazilian court.

Through rallies, email campaigns and petitions, supporters of Sean and David Goldman have taken their fight to the public. Leveraging the power of the Internet, they aim to create public awareness and outrage in both the United States and Brazil for the plight of this father and son.

The central point of this effort is their website, <http://bringseanhome.org>. The site serves as the central location for all information and planning to help spread the news of this tragic story.

Visitors can sign the on-line petition, follow links to published news videos and stories, sign up to receive news updates, or leave a comment on the blog. Additionally, there is contact information for U.S. elected and diplomatic officials, Brazilian officials, human rights organizations, media and many, many others.

Over 15% of those who have signed the petition have not been from the United States, and many are from Brazil. Several native Brazilians have contributed to the effort by translating information and news stories into Portuguese. This is evidence that the campaign truly is an international battle against a grave injustice.

On December 12th, many of the supporters gathered in front of the Brazilian consulate in New York city. Beneath banners declaring "Bring Sean Home", they handed out flyers and collected signatures for the petition. This event was covered by local news and included a quote from the Brazilian consul.

The campaign has been quite successful in the United States in raising awareness, and is increasing in momentum in Brazil as well. Tens of thousands of "hits" have been recorded at the website, and national news outlets are beginning to cover the story.

As a result of the increased exposure, David has been able to speak with U.S. and Brazilian officials and has been invited to appear on several upcoming national news programs.

Many Brazilian officials realize that this type of publicity is not good for Brazil, especially given these difficult economic times. Time and again, human rights violations have proven to generate worldwide attention.

Brazil has taken strides in addressing the issues of slave labor and indigenous people's rights, strides that were necessary in order for it to be truly considered an emerging nation. But other issues remain, including the failures of its justice system.

It is yet to be proven that this campaign has been completely effective for one simple reason: Sean remains in Brazil. But it is a certainty that the voice of the people - not the American people, but people from all nations who abhor injustice and human rights violations - is being heard.

The Story

On June 16, 2004, David Goldman said goodbye to his son, Sean, at Newark Airport, in Newark, New Jersey. He didn't know it at the time but his wife, Bruna, was in the process of abducting Sean and taking him to Brazil with no intention of ever returning. In the United States and under international law, this is called kidnapping.

Brazil is a participating member in an international agreement known as the Hague Treaty, which deals with several issues related to international child custody including custodial kidnapping. As per this treaty, Sean should have been returned to the United States for a hearing to determine a custodial agreement.

Instead, Sean's mother retained Brazilian lawyers who successfully sought a Brazilian custodial award for the mother simply on the basis that Brazilian law favors the mother. This was accomplished in spite of the Brazilian Central Authorities stated position that Sean should be returned to the United States.

The case took a bizarre turn when Bruna Goldman divorced David in Brazilian court and preceded to marry her lawyer, João Paulo Lins e Silva, and expert in international family law, including child custody cases. Soon after, Bruna died suddenly during child birth.

Upon hearing of Bruna's passing, David Goldman immediately flew to Brazil to seek custody of Sean. Much to his surprise, "temporary" custody was awarded to Lins e Silva on the basis that during this difficult time, the child needed his familiar surroundings. No mind that these surroundings were familiar because of the fact that he had been illegally kept there for nearly two years.

For four years, David Goldman has fought a desperate and expensive legal battle for custody of his son, first against the

mother Bruna and now against João Paulo Lins e Silva and his father, Paulo Lins e Silva, an internationally known lawyer. During that time he has never been permitted to see Sean.

This legal battle has generated several acts on the part of the Lins e Silva's. They have delayed at every possible step. They have fought to have all information pertaining to this case banned from Brazilian media.

They have defied Federal Judiciary visitation orders. They have counter sued David Goldman, claiming that his public interviews have damaged their international reputations.

Service

People are invited to visit <http://bringseanhome.org> and see what they can do to help.

Stephen Wash is a friend of David Goldman.