

Ursula Lesic

“There is no joy, no celebration, and no relief.

The difference between the legal system and justice is something many families only come to understand through painful experience.

We often assume they are the same. We are taught that if rules are followed and procedures are satisfied, justice will naturally result. But for many families, that assumption collapses the moment they enter systems that hold enormous power over their lives.

The distinction matters, because too often families enter institutions seeking justice and leave having received only process.

The legal system is designed to manage risk, enforce rules, and bring matters to closure. It prioritizes efficiency, compliance, and finality. Justice, however, asks different and more difficult questions. It asks whether harm was prevented or repaired. Whether power was exercised responsibly. Whether children and families were actually protected, not simply processed.

This gap becomes especially visible in systems that govern children and families. An education system can exercise sweeping authority while providing 180 days of education that fail to adequately meet the needs of all learners. A judicial system can govern families in ways that create fear among parents, children, and the legal professionals serving them rather than confidence in fairness, protection, and due process.

When outcomes are lawful but still deeply harmful, we need to be honest about what’s happening. Lawfulness and justice are not the same thing. Process does not equal healing. And closure does not mean accountability.

Naming this reality is not cynicism it is clarity. It helps explain why people can follow every rule, comply with every requirement, and still leave wounded. It explains why silence is often chosen over truth, and why agreements can be signed without relief, without celebration, without joy.

My work is not finished as advocacy begins when we stop confusing what is legal with what is right. If justice cannot reliably be found within our current systems, then we have a responsibility to examine them, reform them, and re-center the needs of those most affected especially children.

The question before us is not whether systems are functioning as designed, but whether they are serving the people they are meant to protect. Until those answers align, the work is not finished, my work is not finished.”