



# The Lost Children of Wilder: The Epic Struggle to Change Foster Care

*Nina Bernstein*

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In 1973, a young ACLU attorney filed a controversial class-action lawsuit that challenged New York City's operation of its foster-care system. The plaintiff was an abused runaway named Shirley Wilder who had suffered from the system's inequities. *Wilder*, as the case came to be known, was waged for two and a half decades, becoming a battleground for the conflicts of race, religion, and politics that shape America's child-welfare system.

**The Lost Children of Wilder** gives us the galvanizing history of this landmark case and the personal story at its core. Nina Bernstein takes us behind the scenes of far-reaching legal and legislative battles, but she also traces the life of Shirley Wilder and her son, Lamont, born when Shirley was only fourteen and relinquished to the very system being challenged in her name. Bernstein's account of Shirley and Lamont's struggles captures the heartbreaking consequences of the child welfare system's best intentions and deepest flaws. In the tradition of *There Are No Children Here*, this is a major achievement of investigative journalism and a tour de force of social observation, a gripping book that will haunt every reader who cares about the needs of children.

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