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Kurt Kuenne Succeeds with 'Dear Zachary' - Canadian Bill Becomes Law

By [Monika Bartyzel](#) (Subscribe to Monika Bartyzel's posts)

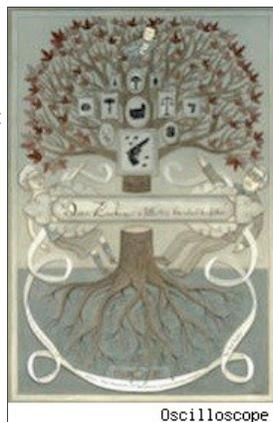
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It might seem strange to kick off with a quote from 'Pump Up the Volume,' but we're living in a "why bother?" generation." There are so many people that need help, slices of life that need to be improved, that it seems like too much -- a massive whirlwind where one person cannot make a difference. It often seems pointless to try, especially when it's a long and ongoing struggle, like 'The Cove's' attempt to stop the Taiji dolphin hunt.



But if there's any reminder for us to stop sitting on our collective behinds and do something -- anything, it's [Kurt Kuenne](#) and his documentary '[Dear Zachary, A Letter to a Son About His Father.](#)' After experiencing a tragic loss that could have been avoided, he made a film and pushed not only for audiences to see it, but also the governmental powers that could make an important and powerful change.

After gaining [unanimous support](#) over months and years of effort, we're very happy to report that Zachary's Bill has been passed by Canadian Senate, and in the words of the filmmaker himself: "Governor General David Johnston gave Royal Assent to our bail bill, Bill C-464, making it law in Canada."

Before anything else, I plead with you to seek out the film (Netflix has it streaming in both the [US](#) and [Canada](#)). The rest of this piece will discuss spoiler aspects of the documentary, and it's best to go in blind.

Bill C-464 is "An Act to Amend the Criminal Code: Justification for Detention in Custody" and has added a clause to section 515(10)(b) of Canada's criminal code. It gives the courts the power to deny bail to someone accused of a serious crime who



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is deemed a potential danger to children under the age of 18.

As the film outlines, Kuenne's life-long best friend Andrew Bagby was murdered by his girlfriend, Shirley Jane Turner. After his passing, the filmmaker started learning things about his fallen friend, and decided to make one last movie to remember -- and learn -- about Andrew. He traveled across the US, as well as Europe and Canada, to talk to the people he'd touched.

But then came a twist -- Turner was pregnant with Andrew's child. She fled the US, had young Zachary, and lived freely as extradition was pending. So Kuenne repositioned the film as a letter to the young boy about his fallen father. But the story did not end simply.

After it was found that there was enough evidence to try her, Turner was taken into custody, but then she appealed to a judge and was released. Turner regained custody of Zachary, and on August 18, 2003, she took her young son and jumped into the Atlantic Ocean, killing them both. What was once a letter to a son about his father became a highly personal, passionate and inspiring documentary about a flawed justice system.

Though the nature in which the documentary was crafted evokes a visceral experience, the film triumphed because of the dedication and drive of those involved. Kuenne didn't mourn his friend and then quietly close the scrapbook of memories. He set out to connect and learn every last thing he could about Andrew. And when Zachary was murdered as well, Kuenne strove to fix the injustice. Likewise, Andrew's parents, Kate and David, dropped everything and showed the most monumental example of strength and determination -- facing their son's murderer every day to be in their grandson's life. And when he was cruelly taken from the world, they worked with Kuenne every step of the way to get their story out and get Canadian law changed.

We're lucky to have 'Dear Zachary,' and as much as cinema might lather us in the most lazy and cliched stories, it can also bring us inspirational hope to not only spark our own passions and causes, but also improve the world for the better.

Congratulations to Kuenne and the Bagby's for their tireless efforts and strength.

Tags: [Andrew Bagby](#), [Bill C-464](#), [Cinematical](#), [Dear Zachary](#), [Dear Zachary A Letter To A Son About His Father](#), [Kurt Kuenne](#)



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