



Becoming Nicole: The Transformation of an American Family

By Amy Ellis Nutt



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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • A NEW YORK TIMES NOTABLE BOOK • NAMED ONE OF THE TEN BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY PEOPLE AND ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY MEN'S JOURNAL • A STONEWALL HONOR BOOK IN NONFICTION • FINALIST FOR THE LAMBDA LITERARY AWARD FOR TRANSGENDER NONFICTION

The inspiring true story of a transgender girl, her identical twin brother, and an ordinary American family's extraordinary journey to understand, nurture, and celebrate the uniqueness in us all, from the Pulitzer Prize-winning science reporter for *The Washington Post*

When Wayne and Kelly Maines adopted identical twin boys, they thought their lives were complete. But it wasn't long before they noticed a marked difference between Jonas and his brother, Wyatt. Jonas preferred sports and trucks and many of the things little boys were "supposed" to like; but Wyatt liked princess dolls and dress-up and playing Little Mermaid. By the time the twins were toddlers, confusion over Wyatt's insistence that he was female began to tear the family apart. In the years that followed, the Maineses came to question their long-held views on gender and identity, to accept and embrace Wyatt's transition to Nicole, and to undergo an emotionally wrenching transformation of their own that would change all their lives forever.

Becoming Nicole chronicles a journey that could have destroyed a family but instead brought it closer together. It's the story of a mother whose instincts told her that her child needed love and acceptance, not ostracism and disapproval; of a Republican, Air Force veteran father who overcame his deepest fears to become a vocal advocate for trans rights; of a loving brother who bravely stuck up for his twin sister; and of a town forced to confront its prejudices, a school compelled to rewrite its rules, and a courageous community of transgender activists determined to make their voices heard. Ultimately, *Becoming Nicole* is the story of an extraordinary girl who fought for the right to be herself.

Granted wide-ranging access to personal diaries, home videos, clinical journals, legal documents, medical records, and the Maineses themselves, Amy Ellis Nutt

spent almost four years reporting this immersive account of an American family confronting an issue that is at the center of today’s cultural debate. *Becoming Nicole* will resonate with anyone who’s ever raised a child, felt at odds with society’s conventions and norms, or had to embrace life when it plays out unexpectedly. It’s a story of standing up for your beliefs and yourself—and it will inspire all of us to do the same.

Praise for *Becoming Nicole*

“A profoundly moving true story about one remarkable family’s evolution.”—*People*

“Fascinating and enlightening.”—**Cheryl Strayed**

“Exceptional . . . ‘Stories move the walls that need to be moved,’ Nicole told her father last year. In telling Nicole’s story and those of her brother and parents luminously, and with great compassion and intelligence, that is exactly what Amy Ellis Nutt has done.”—*The Washington Post*

“If you aren’t moved by *Becoming Nicole*, I’d suggest there’s a lump of dark matter where your heart should be.”—**Jennifer Senior, *The New York Times***

“Extraordinary . . . a wonderful and inspiring story.”—*Minneapolis Star Tribune*

“A downright necessary book—and a remarkable act of generosity by the Maines family.”—*BuzzFeed*

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Granted wide-ranging access to personal diaries, home videos, clinical journals, legal documents, medical records, and the Maineses themselves, Amy Ellis Nutt spent almost four years reporting this immersive account of an American family confronting an issue that is at the center of today's cultural debate. *Becoming Nicole* will resonate with anyone who's ever raised a child, felt at odds with society's conventions and norms, or had to embrace life when it plays out unexpectedly. It's a story of standing up for your beliefs and yourself—and it will inspire all of us to do the same.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

An Amazon Best Book of October 2015: “Why IS it such a big deal to everyone what somebody has in their pants?” Excellent question, posed by an unusually astute transgender girl, the subject of Amy Ellis Nutt’s emotional and illuminating *Becoming Nicole*. It’s also a little ironic, since Nicole’s story makes a bit of a deal of it, but in a much different way than other stories we’ve been hearing lately, from celebrities like Caitlyn Jenner and television shows like *Transparent*. Nicole, her twin brother Jonas, mom Kelly, and dad Wayne, are your typical middle class American family. They live next door to you--are shuttling from work, to Cub Scouts, to softball practice.... They’re also coming to terms with the fact that one of their own has Gender Dysphoria, a medical condition whereby a person does not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. And so Wayne and Kelly Maines discover that they don’t have two sons at all, but a son and a daughter. This is a particularly hard pill for Republican, Air Force veteran, Wayne, to swallow, and his journey from denial to accepting and championing his daughter, is one of the more powerful and moving side narratives in a book chock full of them. That is why I really struggled to write this review, because *Becoming Nicole* is an important book that imparts important lessons, and the ones that resonate most have nothing to do with what’s in anyone’s pants: Be true to yourself, live an authentic life, exercise compassion. —*Erin Kodicek*

Review

“A profoundly moving true story about one remarkable family’s evolution.”—*People*

“Fascinating and enlightening.”—**Cheryl Strayed**

“[*Becoming Nicole*] generously traces the parameters of parental love . . . delving deep into the case of a single family with a transgender child and discovering in its particulars certain universal truths about the ways children arrive in one’s life already themselves.”—*The New York Times Book Review (Editors’ Choice)*

“[An] exceptional chronicle . . . ‘Stories move the walls that need to be moved,’ Nicole told her father last year. In telling Nicole’s story and those of her brother and parents luminously, and with great compassion and intelligence, that is exactly what Amy Ellis Nutt has done here.”—**Sue Halpern, *The Washington Post***

“Reading strictly for plot, *Becoming Nicole* is about a transgender girl who triumphed in a landmark discrimination case. . . . But the real movement in this book happens internally, in the back caverns of each family member’s heart and mind. Four ordinary and imperfect human beings had to reckon with an exceptional situation, and in so doing also became, in their own modest ways, exceptional. . . . If you aren’t moved by *Becoming Nicole*, I’d suggest there’s a lump of dark matter where your heart should be.”—**Jennifer Senior, *The New York Times***

“A transgender girl’s coming-of-age saga, an exploration of the budding science of gender identity, a civil rights time capsule, a tear-jerking legal drama and, perhaps most of all, an education about what can happen when a child doesn’t turn out as his or her parents expected—and they’re forced to either shut their eyes and hearts or see everything differently.”—*Time*

“Extraordinary . . . a wonderful and inspiring story.”—*Minneapolis Star Tribune*

“A downright necessary book—and a remarkable act of generosity by the Maines family—that will surely start hundreds of conversations in living rooms across the country about what ‘transgender’ means. But it’s also a deeply universal book, one that hits the heart of what it means for all of us, no matter how we struggle (or not) to identify, to be ourselves.”—*BuzzFeed*

“Gorgeous . . . a really wonderful story.”—*NBC New York*

“*Becoming Nicole* is a miracle. It’s the story of a family struggling with—and embracing—a transgender child. But more than that, it’s about accepting one another, and ourselves, in all our messy, contradictory glory. The Maines family is as American as they come. In the journey they take toward authenticity and justice, we see a model for the future of our country, a future in which all of us—mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters—somehow find the courage, and the love, to become our best selves.”—**Jennifer Finney Boylan, co-chair of GLAAD and author of *She’s Not There: A Life in Two Genders***

“Gripping . . . a timely, significant examination.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

“This poignant account of a transgender girl’s transition offers a heartfelt snapshot of a family whose only objective is to protect their daughter. Tackling the subject from a biological, social, and psychological viewpoint, Pulitzer-winning reporter Nutt . . . succeeds in placing Nicole’s individual story within the more general narrative of transgender rights in the United States and humanizes the issues currently at play.”—*Publishers Weekly*

“[Shows how one] family took precious steps in order to understand, support, and celebrate differences that make us all unique. If you want to get a look into a family that has made great strides to change the way some people think about the American nuclear family, and accept the beauty of the world around us, definitely buy this book.”—*Philadelphia*

About the Author

Amy Ellis Nutt won the Pulitzer Prize in 2011 for her feature series “The Wreck of the Lady Mary,” about the 2009 sinking of a fishing boat off the New Jersey coast. She is a health and science writer at *The Washington Post*, the author of *Shadows Bright as Glass*, and the co-author of the *New York Times* bestseller *The Teenage Brain*. She was a Nieman Fellow in Journalism at Harvard University, a Ferris Professor of Journalism at Princeton, and an instructor of journalism at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. She lives in Washington, D.C.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lucinda Smith:

Here thing why this specific *Becoming Nicole: The Transformation of an American Family* are different and trustworthy to be yours. First of all reading through a book is good however it depends in the content from it which is the content is as delicious as food or not. *Becoming Nicole: The Transformation of an American Family* giving you information deeper including different ways, you can find any reserve out there but there is no publication that similar with *Becoming Nicole: The Transformation of an American Family*. It gives you thrill studying journey, its open up your personal eyes about the thing that happened in the world which

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John Singletary:

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Jason Wahl:

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