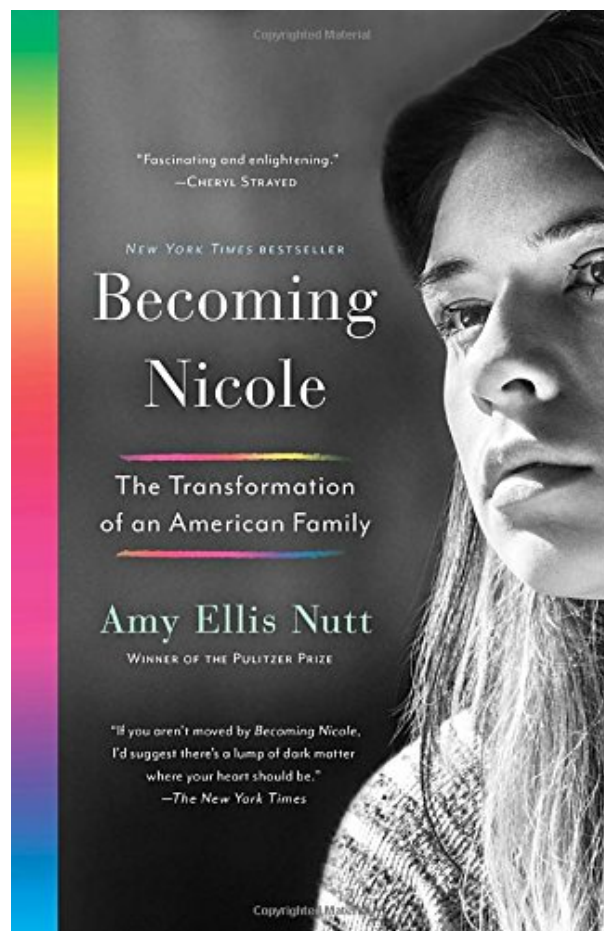
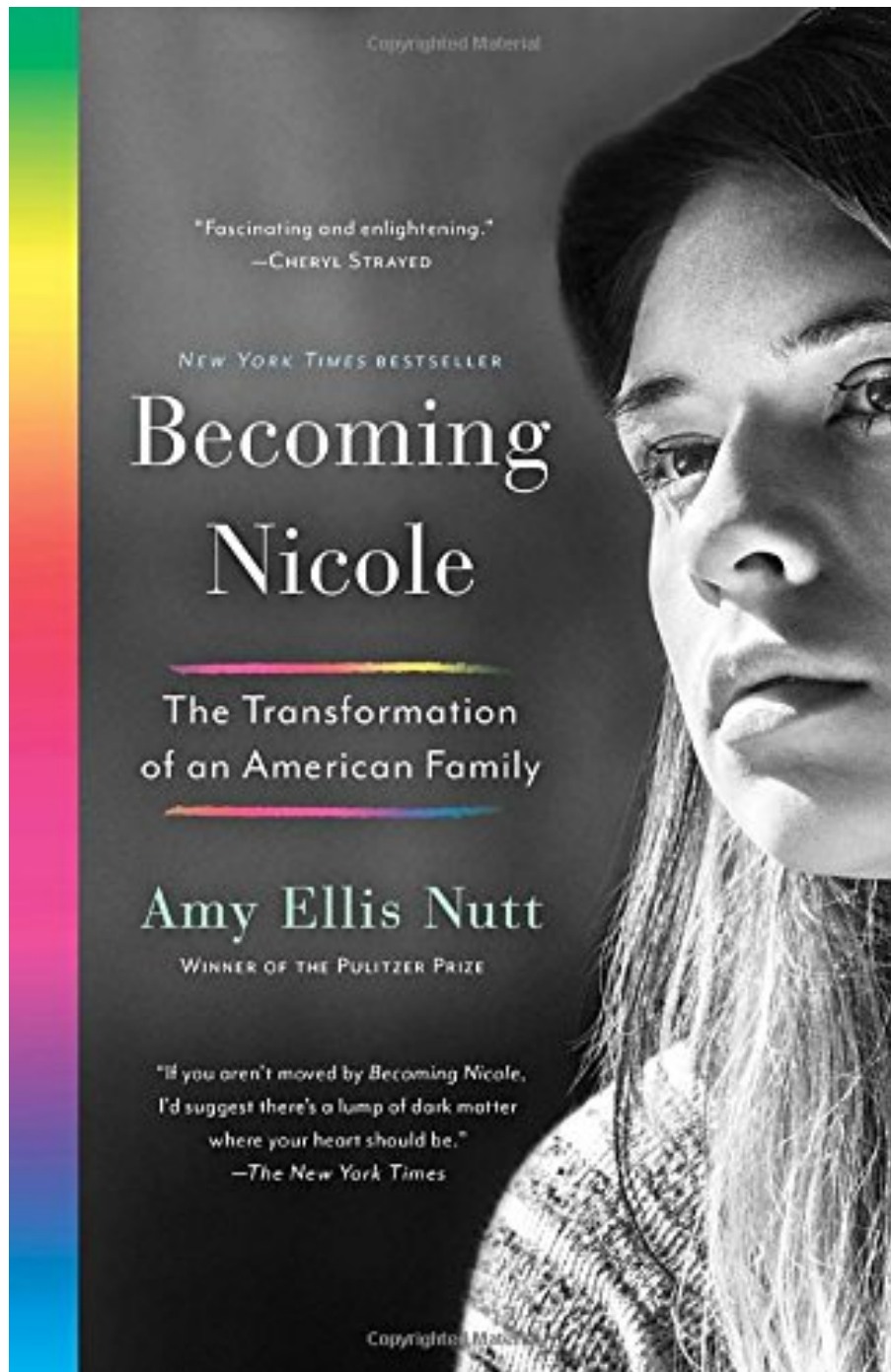


BECOMING NICOLE: THE TRANSFORMATION OF AN AMERICAN FAMILY BY AMY ELLIS NUTT



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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

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From the Hardcover edition.

Most helpful customer reviews

126 of 129 people found the following review helpful.

Great Introduction to Transgender Issues and Families

By Amazon Customer

I really enjoyed this book, and it made a day of travel pass very quickly.

Two things in this book really struck me. First, I think it’s easy to view those who actively defend LGBTQ rights as crusaders and zealots. The truth is that they are a patchwork of people who – by and large – have been forced to examine their own viewpoints and carefully consider the status quo when it comes to opportunities for and treatment of the LGBT community. Many have not done this simply because it interested them, but because they were faced with the reality of being or loving someone who does not conform to the rigid gender norms that have been laid out for us culturally. Though I have long identified as someone on the left of the political spectrum, I struggled mightily when my child began identifying as the opposite gender, and it has been a continual learning process. And while Nicole’s father Wayne and I began on opposing ends of the political spectrum, I identified with him in so many ways throughout this book, and his journey felt very familiar to me. I am immensely thankful to books like this and the plethora of organizations and media attention this issue has garnered over the past 5-10 years, as they are truly invaluable to families like ours trying to better understand our children and learn how to stand up for them at school and in society.

Second, I am continually amazed by children and their unquestioning acceptance of people who differ than them, but at the same time saddened and frustrated by some groups’ stubborn insistence on labeling transgender individuals as sexual deviants. This abominable behavior was on full display throughout the second half of this book and I find it infuriating. As a reminder, these are children we are talking about – many as young as 3, 5, 7, 10 years old. They are not predators. They are not a danger to others. They are children and they deserve to be loved and cherished. Please stand up against the perversion of religion to preach hate about children – the day that is achieved cannot come fast enough.

I am very lucky to have a partner in my life similar to Nicole’s mom Kelly, who has strongly supported my child every step of the way, and was a rock before I could be. They once said to me “Just think: this experience will make us stronger, will make us better.”

I couldn’t agree more.

49 of 50 people found the following review helpful.

Outstanding

By J F Fitzpatrick

This is a touching, sensitive, and caring story of the journey of a young woman growing up and her remarkable family. While the author reviews the substantial medical research on transgender people, she never lets the technical details get in the way of the story of Nicole, her identical twin brother Jonas, and her

supportive parents as they come to terms with Nicole's gender and the discrimination that they faced.

The author is careful to depict all parties fairly and shows their good and not so good points instead of taking the easy way out and painting cardboard cut-outs of good and evil. While you may feel, as I do, that some of the school officials and certain others acted callously and ignorantly, it is important to remember, as the author does, that these people often acted on deeply held sincere beliefs.

I hope every school administrator in the country reads this book and takes to heart Nicole's eloquent story of how she and her classmates had no problems until adults jumped in with their rigid, pre-conceived notions and the pain she suffered as a result.

Even people who have no interest in transgender issues will enjoy the story of determination and of a close-knit family's love and support for each other.

Highest recommendation.

36 of 38 people found the following review helpful.

An engrossing look at how a family is transformed when their child is transgender.

By Robert Carnevali

I read a story about this book on the Washington Post, along with excerpts, and it sounded both heartbreaking and heartening. Reading it, I have to say it's indispensable reading material if you wish to understand the gender spectrum and its effect on individuals and families.

The writing is very accessible. It's obviously very sympathetic to the family members, but also doesn't shy away too much from displaying their own faults. The story begins with the upbringing of the parents, and follows through the growth of their family until the twins finally head off to college. It's very encompassing in very many ways. It follows the family closely, but then has whole chapters that detail political, social, and medical events that affect transgender individuals. For example, while it may seem puzzling how one of two identical twins can be transgender, enough information is given that the reader understands how gender is formed in the fetus/infant, and how it becomes not a question of genetics, but of epigenetics (which is likewise explained). By the end, you come away with a working knowledge of how gender develops in individuals, the different types of genders, how genetics and epigenetics play a role, social and political changes that affected how transgender individuals are viewed, and an intimate look at not only a transgender child and how she felt growing up, but how it affected the family.

Our knowledge of gender and sexuality has come a long way in the last fifty years. Since more and more people are aware of the differences in gender, it's become a very important social issue. I heartily recommend this book to everyone so they can further understand this topic and not only understand it better, but see how it directly affects not only the transgender person, but the people around him/her.

See all 367 customer reviews...

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