



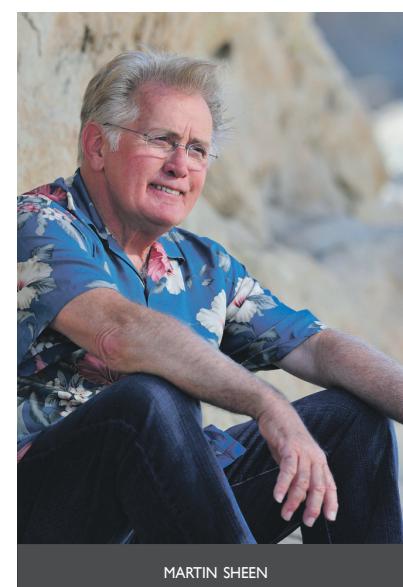
## Milestones in LGBT Parenting History

By Dana Rudolph

October is LGBT History Month, so I want to celebrate with a look at some of the historical milestones—of laws, visibility, and community—related to LGBT parents. This is not meant to be a comprehensive look at the 40-year history of out LGBT parents, but simply a brief list of a few LGBT parenting “firsts.” These items may show only part of the story, but I hope they will give readers a sense of the rich history of which we are part.

(I have compiled these items from a number of sources; special recognition goes to Carlos Ball’s *The Right to Be Parents* and Jaime Campbell Naidoo’s *Rainbow Family Collections*. Any errors remain my own.)

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian ([www.mombian.com](http://www.mombian.com)), an award-winning blog and resource directory for LGBT parents.



**1972:** *That Certain Summer*, the first television movie to depict a gay dad, airs on ABC, starring Martin Sheen as a dad who comes out to his teenage son, and Hal Holbrook as his partner. Scott Jacoby, who played the son, won a Best Supporting Actor Emmy.



**1973:** Sandy and Madeleine’s Family becomes the first U.S. documentary about a lesbian-headed family.

A Colorado court issues the country’s first known opinion involving a transgender parent, upholding his right to retain child custody.

**1979:** A gay couple in California becomes the first in the country known to have jointly adopted a child.

The Gay Fathers Coalition forms—a precursor to the Family Equality Council, the national organization for LGBT parents and their children.

Jane Severance’s *When Megan Went Away* becomes the first picture book in the U.S. to show a lesbian relationship.

**1977:** Lawyers Donna Hitchens and Roberta Achtenberg in San Francisco form the Lesbian Rights Project (LRP), which evolves into the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), still helping LGBT parents (and others) today.

**1976:** Washington, D.C. becomes first jurisdiction in the country to prohibit judges from making custody decisions based solely on sexual orientation.

**1978:** The Washington Supreme Court issues the country’s first custody ruling in favor of a lesbian couple (Sandy Schuster and Madeleine Isaacson of the 1973 film above).

New York becomes the first state to say it will not reject adoption applicants solely because of “homosexuality.”

**1974:** A New Jersey superior court judge rules that a father’s sexual orientation is not in itself a reason to deny him child visitation, the first time a U.S. court has acknowledged the constitutional rights of gay fathers.

Several lesbian mothers and friends in Seattle form the Lesbian Mothers National Defense Fund to help lesbian mothers in custody disputes.

**1982:** The Sperm Bank of California begins operations, the first in the country to serve lesbian couples and single women.

**1994:** The San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Parents Association produces *Both of My Moms Names Are Judy: Children of Lesbians and Gays Speak Out*, the first educational film for elementary school teachers about LGBT families.

**1988:** A group of youth with LGBT parents meets at a conference organized by a precursor to the Family Equality Council, and begins the organizing that in 1999 leads to Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE) as an independent national organization.

**1995:** A state’s highest court rules for the first time that a nonbiological mother may try and show that it would be in the best interests of her child for her to remain in the child’s life after parental separation.

**1989:** Author Lesléa Newman self-publishes *Heather Has Two Mommies*, the first children’s book in the U.S. to show a lesbian couple planning and raising a child together.

**1997:** New Jersey becomes the first state to allow same-sex couples to adopt jointly.

**1990:** LGBT publisher Alyson Publications launches the Alyson Wonderland imprint for children’s titles. It publishes *Daddy’s Roommate*, by Michael Willhoite, the first children’s book to depict gay male parents, and mass produces *Heather Has Two Mommies*.

**1985:** A court for the first time allows a non-biological mother to adopt the biological child of her female partner. The ruling, in Alaska, also allows the biological father to maintain a relationship with the child.

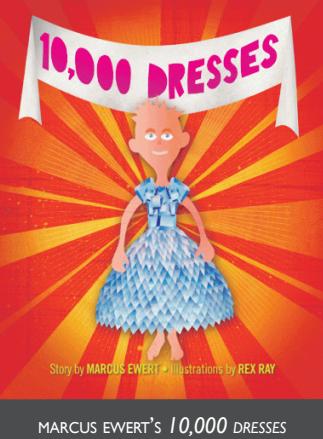
**2008:** Marcus Ewert publishes *10,000 Dresses*, the first children’s book to show a clearly transgender child.

**2009:** First explicit mention of same-sex parents in a presidential proclamation. In announcing September 28 as Family Day, President Obama says, “Whether children are raised by two parents, a single parent, grandparents, a same-sex couple, or a guardian, families encourage us to do our best and enable us to accomplish great things.”

**2011:** The U.S. State Department updates passport applications to say “Mother or Parent 1” and “Father or Parent 2” instead of just “Mother” and “Father.”

**2010:** The Kids Are All Right, starring Annette Bening and Julianne Moore, becomes the first major feature film to focus on an LGBT couple and their children. It wins Golden Globe Awards for Best Motion Picture and Best Actress (Bening), and four Academy Award nominations, including Best Picture.

President Obama revises hospital visitation rules so patients may designate their own visitors, including same-sex partners. He was motivated in part by the story of Janice Langbehn and her three children, who in 2007 were denied access to her dying partner and the children’s other mother, Lisa Pond. Langbehn in 2011 receives the Presidential Citizens Medal, the nation’s second-highest civilian honor.



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