



Catching up with  
actor, author *and* podcast host  
**Robin Hopkins**

INSIDE:

- AUTHOR & SINGLE MOM, ISSA M. MAS
- SUPPORT GROUPS & PRIDE EVENTS

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Cover photo courtesy of Robin Hopkins. Photo credits this page top to bottom: photo courtesy of Leon Shih, Issa Mas, Angeline Acain, and Robin Hopkins.



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## SUPPORT GROUPS

### Virtual

• **Virtual Support Group for LGBTQIA+ parents**, Every Monday from 7:15 PM - 8:30 PM is a free, drop-in group on Zoom for LGBTQIA+ parents. No commitment necessary. The group is open to expecting, adopting, and/or current parents. The group is facilitated by Meg Ryan, a nurse and PMHNP student. For more information phone 929-367-7419, email [info@brooklynparentsupport.com](mailto:info@brooklynparentsupport.com) or visit [@brooklyn\\_parent\\_support](https://www.brooklynparentsupport.org).

### Connecticut

• **Queer Parents of Connecticut**. Private Facebook group at [facebook.com/groups/ctqueermamas/](https://facebook.com/groups/ctqueermamas/)

### New Jersey

• **NJ Queer Parents**. Private Facebook group at <https://bit.ly/3xGNlVl>

• **Rainbow Families of New Jersey**, <https://bit.ly/3W8OupF>

### New York

• **The Center**, check out programs for families at the LGBTQ Community Center, 208 West 13th St., <https://gaycenter.org/community/center-families/>. Phone 212-620-7310. The Center provides counseling for LGBTQ couples and individuals, support and education for intended parents, and monthly play days for LGBTQ parents with young children.

• **Pride and Joy Families**, previously a support group for LGBTQ families living in upstate New York, the group lost their funding and closed in 2019. However, they've maintained this referral list: <https://bit.ly/3JPXUMW> and have a Facebook group at <https://bit.ly/43MBesU>.

• **LOFT Families**. A social support group for LGBTQ+ headed families in Westchester County and surrounding areas. This group is hosted by The LOFT LGBTQ+ Community Center in White Plains, NY. To find out about their events please email [info@loftgaycenter.org](mailto:info@loftgaycenter.org) or visit [https://www.loftgaycenter.org/loft\\_families](https://www.loftgaycenter.org/loft_families)

• **The LGBT Network's LGBT Family Program** supports LGBT people building and strengthening families. Services provided include: LGBT family potlucks, dad meet ups, mom meet ups, parenthood planning workshops, and networking opportunities. You can also download a LGBT Families Coloring Book from their website as well as a list of the top 25 LGBTQ-affirming children's books. For more information visit <https://lgbt-network.org/family/>

• **Long Island Adoption Support Group**  
Email Chemene for info at [liadoptivefamilies@gmail.com](mailto:liadoptivefamilies@gmail.com) or visit our website at [www.LIAdoptiveFamilies.org](http://www.LIAdoptiveFamilies.org). Free peer-led support group for members at any stage of the adoption and foster care process. We offer a friendly and confident



*Play Day at The Center.  
Photo by Richard Mitchell*

tial environment for all to share their journey with others who understand.

### • PFLAG Long Island

PFLAG Long Island is a part of a national organization of parents, families, friends and allies united with the LGBTQ community to move equality forward. Our meetings include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning persons, as well as parents, allies and friends who all share their experiences. We provide an opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender orientation, in a friendly, confidential and supportive environment. Visit <https://pflagli.org/>.

**COLAGE - People with a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Queer Parent**. A national organization operated by and supporting children of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender parents. Provides support, social events, education, and advocacy. Email: [colage@colage.org](mailto:colage@colage.org), visit [www.colage.org](http://www.colage.org).

• **Queer Parents\* NYC**. Private Facebook group at, <https://bit.ly/3J5NZFq>

## EVENTS

**May 4, 2025 - 12th International Family Equality Day**. LGBTQ family organizations from around the world will join forces to increase the international visibility of LGBTQ families. Visit <https://bit.ly/42CrEbP> or <http://internationalfamilyequalityday.org/>

**May 31, 2025 - Staten Island Pride Festival**, 12:00 PM - 5:00 PM, location is the Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden, 1000 Richmond Terrace, Staten Island, NY 10301. Usually includes activities for the whole family. Come celebrate with live music, artists, craft vendors, food, activities, and performers. Shuttle Buses available to and from Snug Harbor and St. George Ferry Terminal. PrideFest is a production of the Pride Center of Staten Island. Visit <https://bit.ly/43VDi3M> or <https://www.pridecentersi.org/pride-festival-opportunities>

**June 1, 2025 - Westchester Pride 2025**, hosted by The LOFT LGBTQ+ Community Center. Located in downtown White Plains. All-day event features live per-





*Adopted baby of a gay father in LGBT Network families program. Photo courtesy of LGBT Network.*

performances, local vendors, family-friendly activities, and more. This year's theme, "Unbreakable: Protecting Our Pride." Visit, <https://bit.ly/3U9fToZ>

**June 1, 2025 - NJ's 33rd Annual LGBTQ+ Pride Celebration**, Noon-7:00 PM, rain or shine, Asbury Park. This event is family friendly and includes rides in their Family Zone. Admission \$10. Visit, <https://jerseypride.org/>

**June 1, 2025 - The New Queens Pride and Festival**. 12 - 6 PM. Founded in 1993, it is the second oldest and second largest pride parade in NYC. Usually held the first Sunday in June in Jackson Heights. Produced by LGBT Network. Visit <https://newqueenspride.org/>.

**June 7, 2025 - Oneonta Pridefest 2025 - A Celebration of Queer Love**, usually held on the first Saturday in June. Parade lineup: 1 PM, Parade: 1:30 PM, Festival: 2 - 8 PM. Sign up to participate in their first-ever Collective Celebration of Love Ceremony to be held at Pridefest in Oneonta on June 7, 2025! The ceremony is open to anyone who chooses. The ceremony is open to anyone; couples, triads, polycoles, queerplatonic folks, ethically non-monogamous folks, vow renewals and re-commitments, etc. Already married? That's okay too, join the ceremony and celebrate with us again, the more people, the bigger display of queer love! If you choose to be legally married you must bring your marriage license with you. All participants must be over 18. Sign up on their website. All day Block Party on Main Street in Oneonta. With performers and vendors, bring your own lawn chair. Free and family friendly. For more information visit <https://bit.ly/3GfT1AK> or <https://www.otsegopridealliance.org/pridefest/pridefest-2025>

**June 7, 2025 - Middletown PrideFEST 2025**, 12:00 PM-10:00 PM. Connecticut's largest pride event held in downtown Middletown, first Saturday of June. PrideFEST is an all afternoon street festival that includes family friendly fun and activities for all ages. Consists of the Middletown Pride March, Pride Rally, Pride Showcase Concert, and a Tea Dance. Vendors and food trucks. Visit <https://www.middletownpride.org/>

**June 7, 2025. - Kingston Pride 2025**, 12 - 6 PM. At

Held in conjunction with the Hudson Valley LGBTQ+ Community Center. Visit <https://lgbtqcenter.org/>.

**June 8, 2025 - Capital Pride Parade & Festival**, in Albany's historic Washington Park. Presented by the Pride Center of the Capital Region. Parade kicks off at 11:30 AM starting down State St. onto Lark St. then Madison Ave. Visit, <https://www.518capitalpride.com/>.

**June 8, 2025 - 35th Long Island Pride**, Huntington Village. Last year the event was 12 PM - 5 PM and featured a parade, concert, festival, dancing, and a family zone area. Parade kicked off at 12 noon at the intersection of Clinton Ave. and Main St. and moved down Main Street to the intersection of Main and Prime Ave. where a festival and concert followed. Visit <https://lipride.org/>.

**June 13, 2025 - Pride Night at Citifield, 7:10 PM**. Produced by LGBT Network. Celebrate Pride Night with The New York Mets. Fireworks after the game. \$40, buy tickets at <https://lgbtnetwork.org/mets/>

**June 14, 2025 - 29th Anniversary Brooklyn Pride**. The only twilight parade in NYC, Brooklyn Pride Parade starts at 7:30, along 5th Ave. from Lincoln Pl. to 8th St. In past years, the Brooklyn Pride Festival featured a Family Fun Zone of family activities, including music, face painting, arts & crafts, story-time and more. Visit <https://brooklynpride.org/> for updates.

**June, 14, 2025 (rain date June 15, 2025) - Fairfield County's Pride in the Park**, 2:00 PM - 8:00 PM, Veter-



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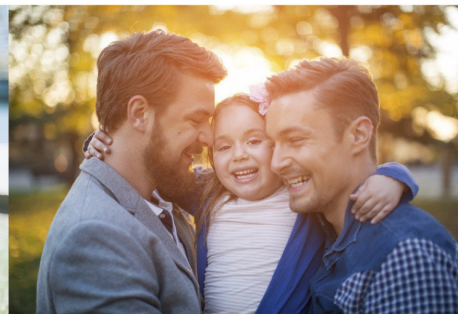
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ans Memorial Park, 42 Seaview Ave., Norwalk, CT. Free admission. Hosted by Triangle Community Center. For more information visit <https://bit.ly/3YFBg4d> or <https://ctpridecenter.org/pride-in-the-park/>.

**June 14, 2025 - 7th Annual Toms River Pride Festival**, 11 AM - 5 PM, Washington St. in Downtown Toms River. This festival welcomes all including families. Enjoy food, vendors, performances, shopping, and festivities. Visit <https://www.exit82theatre.com/tr-pride>.

**June 20 - 22, 2025 - Seaside Pride 2025**, 2nd Annual LGBTQ+ Pride Festival. Weekend long programming, and family friendly. Visit <https://bit.ly/3RnMEhh> or <https://www.exit82theatre.com/seaside-pride>

**June 21, 2025 - Central New York Pride Festival & Parade**, 12 PM - 5 PM, the parade will process along Inner Harbor in Syracuse on Solar St. and turn right onto West Kirkpatrick St. Visit <https://www.cnypride.org/pride2025>.

**June 22, 2025 - North Fork Pride**, 12 PM - 5 PM, Greenport. Produced by LGBT Network. Parade and festival. Visit <https://northforkpride.org/>

**June 27 - 29, 2025 - Heritage of Pride/NYC Pride**. This year's theme is "Rise Up: Pride in Protest." Once again offering multiple events, during the last week of June and ending with the March and PrideFest on June 29th. Visit <https://www.nycpride.org/>.

**June 28, 2025 - 16th Annual Harlem Pride 2025**, 12 PM - 6 PM, 12th Ave. This year they announced a pageant for their Harlem Pride Kween and Qing. Apply through their website. Usually offers multiple events during the month of June (check their website for events), ending with their celebration on June 28th. Harlem Pride features celeb-



**Family in the New York City Pride March**

Photo by Angeline Acaín/Gay Parent Magazine

ity hosts on their main stage, DJs and live entertainment. Also, food vendors, medical testing and health screening, community organizations and city service providers, and a vendor marketplace. In previous years for families there was face painting and Drag Queen Story Hour. For updates visit <https://harlempride.org/>.

**July 26 - August 2, 2025 - Family Week**, Provincetown, Massachusetts. This is the largest annual gathering of hundreds of LGBTQ families from all over the country, sponsored by Family Equality Council ([www.familyequality.org](http://www.familyequality.org)) and COLAGE ([www.colage.org](http://www.colage.org)). Visit <https://www.ptownfamilyweek.com> for updates and to register.

**August 23, 2025 - 25th Annual Jersey City LGBTQ+ Pride Festival**, 1 PM - 9 PM, Grove Street Path Plaza and Newark Avenue between Grove St. and Jersey Ave. This year's theme is Speak Up! Stand Firm! Stay Strong! as well as marking their Silver Jubilee. Previously their month long celebration included, great tasting food, fantastic entertainers, fun for families, young adults, elders and more leading up to their Pride celebration on August 23rd. Visit <https://jerseycitypride.com/>.

**September 13, 2025 - Annual Hartford Pride Fest and Concert**, Trumbull St., Hartford, Connecticut. Presented by Connecticut Latinos Achieving Rights & Opportunities (CLARO). Takes place on the second Saturday in September. The annual Hartford Pride Fest and Concert is a family-centered event showcasing entertainment, food, local businesses, giveaways, activities, and numerous community organizations. Visit <https://bit.ly/3JxWdpU> or <https://www.facebook.com/hartfordpride/>.

▼ *Want your New York, New Jersey, or Connecticut Pride or LGBTQ family event listed here? Email us at [gayparentmag@gmail.com](mailto:gayparentmag@gmail.com).*

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# Author and single parent, Issa M. Mas

By Deadra Albrecht-Frasch

Issa M. Mas describes herself as a “born and bred New Yorker who grew up in Hell’s Kitchen Manhattan.” In fact, she shared that she still lives in the exact same building that she’s lived in since she was ten years old, and she’s fifty-one now. Issa is a single mother and has a son named Theo who is seventeen years old. Issa also identifies as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community as a pansexual woman. She explained “I’ve been attracted to both masculine and feminine people my whole life, and I don’t think there was a time when I didn’t know that I was queer. I don’t have a ‘coming out story’ per se, instead, I let people know as I meet them that I am queer. It’s a continual “coming out,” I guess one might say.”

Issa said she’s been a writer all her life, with her first piece of writing even winning an award at the age of seven, that she received from the then New York City Mayor, Mayor Koch. Throughout Issa’s writing career, she said she’s been a “...blogger, a writer for corporate jobs, a freelance copywriter and editor, as well as author.” Her book *Grief Thoughts: Brief Anecdotes About Profound Loss* was published in 2022. Issa explained that losing her “...father was a painful journey through grief, one that I shared with my community via my old blog, social media posts, and personal conversations. I realized that my journey was helpful to others, so I decided to compile it into a book so that the entire journey could be laid out in one

**Issa Mas (right) with her son Theo  
at Issa's niece's Sweet Sixteen party.**



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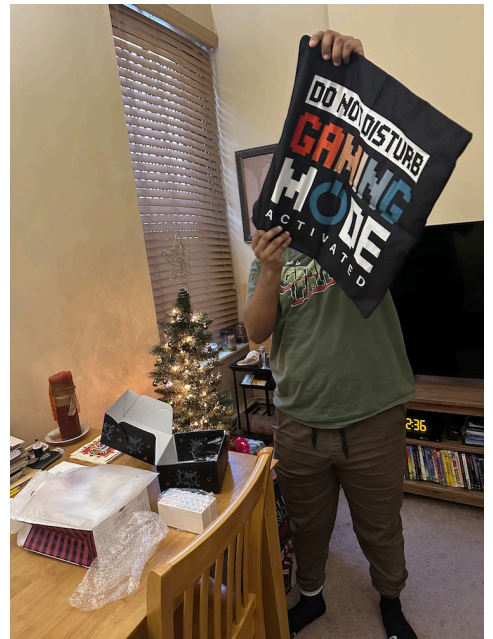


place.” Issa also expressed that publishing “is a very difficult landscape”, so she “created my own media company and published my book under an imprint of that company, Theolenn Media.” This no doubt shows a very creative and innovative way to problem-solving her publishing needs.

As a practicing Buddhist, Issa’s views on grief offer a unique perspective, evident after learning of Issa’s religious journey through life. Issa explained that she was “raised in a Catholic home in a very Catholic family and was a deeply spiritual young adult.” She further elaborated that in her “.... late 20s, however, Christianity no longer allowed me to connect with my deep sense of spirituality, so I began to look into other religions — Baha’i, Hinduism, and Buddhism, especially. It was Buddhism that felt the most organic to me, so in 2001 I began to study in earnest through an elder in faith, and in 2002 I officially converted to Buddhism. It has been unfailingly supportive of me and the life I have led thus far.”

GPM asked Issa about her perspective on grief and

death given her varied religious background and if her religion has influenced her writings. Issa replied “Buddhism has absolutely influenced my writings — all of my writings — but certainly my writings on death and bereavement. Having been born into Catholicism, I truly feel that had I



***Photos from last Christmas. Above left photo, Issa with mother. Above right photo, Theo opening his Christmas gift.***



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only that framework alone, I would've been in much worse emotional shape that I was after my father died. Buddhism gave me a different understanding of the eternal nature of the spirit and also allowed me to delve deeper into practicing mindfulness, a practice that enabled me to sit with heavy, painful emotions instead of running from them. It has been my seemingly-paradoxical experience that the only way one gets to healing and feeling less pain is by sitting with pain and allowing it to exist. Grief isn't something that 'goes away,' or gets smaller. With full presence, I've learned that one grows bigger, thereby lessening the immensity of the weight of bereavement."

Issa said that her book would not have been written if she had not lost her father. In reference to her book, Issa said, "It is entirely about losing someone who is the biggest part of you, and how you recover from that kind of loss. It was extremely cathartic to write it, but what has been most beautiful about my book, are the readers who have reached out to me to tell me that my book helped them in some way. I've been told that my book is healing, and that is so extremely gratifying. I wrote my book so that others in their own grief journeys would feel less alone, and to know that I achieved that goal makes my book a huge success in my eyes." Though Issa admitted she doesn't have any immediate plans for another book, she did say "I know there is at least one more in me, so we shall see when it comes up and out of me."

GPM asked Issa to share a little about her family including son Theo, and their dog Jake. Issa said she's raised seventeen-year-old Theo on her own his entire life, and they are very close. She did mention that they are a family of three though, "...because we have a 14-lb. Yorkshire terrier mix, Jake, who thinks he's a 100-lb Pitbull. He's 12 years old but you wouldn't be able to tell because he still runs around managing everyone like the tiny boss that he is." One interesting fact about their family is that when Theo was having a difficult time after 6th grade, Issa made the decision to homeschool him instead. Issa explained that "Theo is an extremely bright alternative learner whose educational needs were not being met. [Issa decided she would] pull him from traditional schooling and



*Jacob Houdini Mas*

homeschool him instead. It was the right decision for him as he is thriving in a way I highly doubt he would've in a brick-and-mortar school." Amazing that Issa was able to recognize that Theo's needs weren't being met and changed the situation to fit his needs.

A typical day for them, Issa acknowledged, is very structured. "I do write from home, and it can be a challenge, but we have a very structured day, which helps us get everything done. We wake up at the same time we would've had he been going to a brick-and-mortar school, he has the same schedule he would've had in traditional High School, he just gets to do it at home with either my help or the help of his tutor, and without the myriad distractions of overcrowded classrooms. He socializes outside of class time and gets



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exercise, guitar instruction, and free time in to round it all out.” It definitely sounds like they’ve developed a routine that works well for them and allows Theo to thrive.

Issa said that “Being queer is such an important part of who I am, and I am immeasurably proud of it. My sweetheart is a beautiful woman who is loving, supportive, and deeply caring. I can’t imagine my life without her. During these increasingly fractious times, I feel it extremely important for queer folx to be — when safe to do so, of course — out and proud about who they are and who they love.” After 16 years, Issa made the decision to stop her blog, but said that she recently started “a Substack where readers can find my latest musings:

<https://issammas.substack.com/>” ▼

*Deadra Albrecht-Frasch lives in the Chicagoland area with her wife Alice and twin daughters Shay and Devlin. Deadra has a degree in Psychology from UNC-Charlotte and works in the healthcare field. In her free time she enjoys writing, and playing the piano and trumpet. She has also written a Children’s book that delves into child anxiety surrounding moving to a new home. Available for order on Amazon via ebook or paperback, Stretch City: Moving Day, <https://amzn.to/3zAOQKz>*

Photos courtesy of Issa Mas



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# Two (Irish) Men and a Surrogacy

By Gary Hurtubise

What do you get when you mix two Irishmen and two baby girls? No – this isn't the start of a cheesy dad joke; rather, it's the beautiful story of Mark O'Looney, Eoin Cannon, and their daughters Aria and Nala.

Mark was born in Dublin, Ireland, the youngest of six (five boys and one girl). His parents were both from Clare County – it was here that he and his siblings spent their summers as kids.

"Mam was a stay-at-home mom; Dad was a builder," Mark says, of his parents.

Asked about when he knew he was gay, Mark says, "I probably always knew but I denied it for the longest time."

"I was bullied pretty horrifically in school. I was also super-Catholic growing up," he retells, adding that he was the head altar server in his church, leading many people around him to think he'd become a priest.

"But as I got older," Mark continues, "I realized the church wasn't as accepting as I once thought so I moved away from it."

When Mark chose to start coming out, it was his mother, more than himself, that he was most worried about. "I never would have cared what the neighbours thought, but my mother did! It's a very Irish thing. Everyone knows everyone's business."

"I think that her biggest worry was that my life would be so much harder," he explains, of his mother's concerns. "But once she realized that no one who mattered cared, her fears were eased."

Leaving the bullying and nosy neighbours behind for college, Mark quickly learned that, "it really does get better!"

Studying computer science at the Dublin Institute of Technology, Mark then got a job with Mastercard as a software engineer, where he still works to this day.

While he was working in Ireland, Mastercard named Mark one of their innovation scholars, sending him to Cornell Tech in New York City to complete his MBA. Presently, he works as a product manager in the company's NYC Tech Hub.

Eoin Cannon was also born in Dublin, the youngest of four boys. He spent his summers between Kilkenny and Donegal ("Mam is from Kilkenny; Dad from Donegal", he explains).

Eoin's mom stayed at home to raise the boys while his dad was a traveling salesman. "He sold Aran knitwear sweaters to the stores around Ireland."



*Left to right, Mark O'Looney, Aria, and Eoin holding Nala.*

While growing up, Eoin recalls, "never really knowing if I wanted to look *like* a guy or if I wanted to be *with* him."

"When I was nineteen, I was watching a repeat of *Queer as Folk* up in my room and it just hit me. I went straight downstairs and told my parents I was gay. They were worried at first, only knowing what they had seen on the news or movies but now they are huge supporters."

Eoin attended St. Patrick's College in Dublin to become a primary school teacher. After teaching for a while, he moved to England to study at the Guildford School of Acting, just outside of London.

After performing around the UK and Europe in shows such as 'Beauty and the Beast' and 'Angela's Ashes - The Musical', Eoin got his Masters in acting. This led to a teaching position in the American College Dublin's Musical



Theatre program.

The two men first met when Mark auditioned for a musical in front of Eoin for a local musical society. “It was the worst audition anyone ever gave, as I melted as soon as I saw him.”

“I didn’t do the show,” Mark admits, “but went to see it a couple of months later and we got talking after the show.”

The two of them found they had loads in common, but Mark would wait almost one full year for Eoin to finally ask him out.

When Mark moved to New York for work, Eoin took a year’s sabbatical to join him there. Six years later, the ‘sabbatical’ continues! The couple just celebrated ten years together this June.

It was Mark who moved their relationship forward in November of 2018, when he popped the question at their NYC apartment.

“I decorated the apartment from floor to ceiling in fairy lights. We went for a meal and when we got home there were rose petals on the floor leading to a book of our relationship entitled ‘The Last Five Years’, which was the name of the first show we saw together.”

The final page of the book said, ‘will you marry me?’ Upon reading this, Eoin turned back to Mark, finding his boyfriend on one knee, ring in hand.

The couple’s wedding plans were changed repeatedly due to the pandemic; as a result, they ended up having two weddings: the first in Central Park in April of 2021 with just the two of them; and the second on New Year’s Eve of 2023 with over two hundred of their closest friends and family.

“Both weddings were incredibly special to us for different reasons,”



**Left to right, Mark, Nala, and Aria.**

Mark explains, “but there is nothing like being surrounded by two hundred people who love you and want the best for you – it was truly incredible.”

The couple followed up their weddings with a ‘mini-moon’ at the luxurious Wineport Lodge in Athlone, Ireland.

“We are planning to do a large trip when the kids are older (maybe Bora Bora),” Mark says, “but in the meantime we decided to do a five-night Virgin Voyages cruise – *highly recommended!* – just before our oldest daughter’s first birthday. It really was magical and a nice short break from being a parent.”

Speaking of kids, Eoin and Mark always knew they wanted to be parents, and felt they were well-prepared for it, having had plenty of babysitting practice with the twenty nieces and nephews be-

tween them back in Ireland.

They started moving forward with growing their family during the pandemic, regardless of the delays to their wedding plans.

Eoin had investigated adoption in a previous relationship in Ireland, but

## **CHECK OUT “MY LIFE AND LETTING GO”, A NEW SUBSTACK BLOG FROM THE MOM BEHIND GAY PARENT MAGAZINE.**



Angeline Acain with her family in 1998

Angeline Acain first published Gay Parent Magazine in 1998. Recently she launched a new personal blog titled, *My life and letting go*. Part memoir, Angeline blogs from the perspective of being a young queer woman of color living in New York City in the 1980s. She also blogs about life in Hawaii where she was born and raised as well as her current life of living in New York City as an empty nester.

*My life and letting go* is a reader supported blog. Subscribe for free and have it emailed to you, scan my QR code, or read on the app at, <https://angelineacain.substack.com/>



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*Mark (left)  
holding Nala and  
Eoin holding Aria.*

it had left a bad taste with him, “They basically told us it could take over seven years, and that gay couples were the last on the list,” he retells.

That left surrogacy as their option of choice. As he prepares to launch into the story of their trip through domestic gestational surrogacy, Mark prefaces with, “it starts with research; there is so much information out there that you think it would be easy... unfortunately, it's not!”

“I've seen many intended parents finding themselves stuck overseas with a newborn, abandoned by their agency, wondering what went wrong. If you don't have all the information and understand the legal landscape of where

you live and where your surrogate lives you are setting yourself up for failure.”

Armed with this understanding, the two men took things slowly. After coming across the organization Men Having Babies ([menhavingbabies.org](http://menhavingbabies.org)) and meeting other parents who had been through their own journeys, Mark and Eoin decided an independent journey was right for them.

According to the website, [TheBump.com](http://TheBump.com), an ‘independent journey’ is when intended parents decide not to use a surrogacy agency, but instead “manage everything themselves, including finding their gestational carrier and IVF



clinic, working directly with their own fertility lawyer and helping the surrogate through the course of the pregnancy process.”

The two men first found their clinic, having narrowed it down to American Fertility Services in California. “From the agencies we had met with, they were the best at communicating, and had their own database of egg donors.

They then found their solicitor, and finally met their surrogate, Haley, through the Facebook group ‘Texas Surrogacy’.

“We had met with many other surrogates but as soon as we met Haley, we knew it was the perfect match. She had already done two surrogacies, so she was able to guide us through the journey, which was great.”

Eoin and Mark created embryos with their clinic, taking time to save up some funds before planning the transfer.

“We agreed with Haley to transfer two embryos – one boy and one girl.” Being a twin pregnancy, Haley underwent regular scans, and everything looked great... until week seventeen, when they lost the boy embryo.

The girl embryo continued to be healthy, and several weeks before the birth, Mark and Eoin travelled to Texas to be closer to Haley.

A doctor’s appointment before the birth determined that their daughter was facing the wrong way, so the decision was made to perform an external cephalic version (ECV) to turn the baby, then induce her birth.

“The birth was pretty rough,” Mark recalls, “but that was due to the hospital and how they handled everything. The main thing is we came out of it with our daughter, Aria.

The men learned a lot from their first surrogacy journey. “Question everyone and everything and follow up to ensure everyone knows the situation. Information is power and the more you have the easier it is to plan.”

Despite the challenges they faced in bringing Aria into their lives, the two men chose to go through it all over again, just this past year. “This time we knew all the possible scenarios; we already had the embryos from our last journey and we had the connection with Haley so we just had to engage the same solicitors and go through the health checks again.”

“Once we got the all-clear it was super smooth sailing.”

Mark and Eoin’s second daughter, Nala, was born in February of this year (2024). “We are thrilled to have two incredible daughters, the couple report, proudly.



**Left to right, Eoin, Nala, and Aria.**

As of writing, Aria is 2 years old and “honestly,” claim her dads, “she is an absolute dream.”

“She has slept through the night from five weeks and is really adaptable. She’s been on 20+ flights going back and forth to Ireland and holidays, so she has kind of had to be,” Mark explains.

“She loves music, dancing, reading and bossing Daddy (Mark) and Papa (Eoin) around.”

Aria and her baby sister share an egg donor, whose family is originally from Nigeria, though the donor was born and raised in New York City. “We have a great relationship with her, and she is always available to Aria and Nala, and any future kids we have.

As for the girls’ surrogate, Haley, who lives in Lubbock Texas, it is clear the two men have a strong bond with her. “She is one of our close friends

and we will always have her as part of the family.”

When Aria arrived, the couple decided that Eoin would be the stay-at-home-dad, while Mark, after taking the generous parental leave provided by Mastercard, returned to work into a promotion.

With Nala’s birth, Mark is once again taking advantage of his leave, though splitting it up a lot more. “There are a lot of 3-day and 2-day weeks here and there; I am using it as needed and spending a lot of it in Ireland with our family.

Given that Mark and Eoin still retain strong roots across the Atlantic, they must deal with the legal challenges that exist with respect to parental recognition over there.

“From a US legal perspective, myself and Eoin are both on the birth certificates,” Mark explains. “In Ireland, however we are not. Our daughters are not recognized as Irish citizens and we are not recognized as the parents.”

Mark goes on to explain two problems with present-day Irish legislation:

“The surrogacy laws that were just in place doesn’t recognise our family, because we started our journey outside of Ireland.”

“Also,” Mark continues, “the Irish government is not consistent in how they validate foreign birth certificates. A straight couple can complete a surrogacy journey in the US and their child’s birth certificate will be recognized with no questions asked, because the government *assumes* the woman gave birth, even if there is no evidence she was ever pregnant.”

“For a gay couple, however, the government recognises the surrogate as the ‘Mother’ and *her husband* as the

*continued bottom of next page*



# My life and letting go, a new personal blog on Substack

By Angeline Acain

**As** the publisher of this magazine, with Gay Parent Magazine's team, we've been featuring a multitude of parenthood stories of people in the LGBTQ community, placing them in the forefront on the magazine's pages, for over twenty years. I've had opportunity to talk about my own family story in this magazine but chose to amplify the voice of others. Now, I've decided to step forward and tell my story, still not on GPM's pages, but in a new personal blog on Substack titled, My life and letting go.

Launched recently in December 2024, at this writing there's only two entries published and I'm diligently working on the third. My aim is to publish two entries a month. This excerpt from my blog describes how I chose the name, "...my idea for this blog—using things I've let go as a jumping off point to talk about parts of my life. I got the idea when I started to feel sorry for whoever will have to go through all my belongings after I pass on. I thought, 'I better get cracking and start getting rid of all my excess stuff.' I've helped my wife Sara empty out her parents' home of 60 years and it was no small task. Then when I decided to write this blog, I thought I'd expand my letting go to include other aspects, including habits, notions, situations, pets, and people."

So far, I've written about my life way back before I ever had the notion of publishing a small magazine (actually I wrote about a period in my life when I was in my 20s and an ex-girlfriend dumped me). I wrote about living in New

York City in the 1980s as a young lesbian. I also mentioned that I published a holistic health magazine in Hawaii prior to publishing Gay Parent Magazine in New York. I'll be writing about living in both Hawaii, where

I was born and raised, and where I currently reside in New York City. I'll touch on my experiences of being a gay Asian American woman now empty nesting with my wife.

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**Angeline Acain (right) with her wife and their daughter in 1998, the year Gay Parent Magazine was first published.**

Photo courtesy of Angeline Acain

'Father'!

To overcome this legislative hurdle, the men are forced to take a genetic test to prove their relationship to the girls; however, the other dad cannot be recognized as anything other than a legal guardian, which is only valid while children are between the ages of 2 and 18.

"Despite the laws, we travel back to Ireland a lot so that Aria and Nala can spend time with their cousins and grandparents."

There's plenty of support for the young family in NYC as well. "We have an incredible circle of friends and family who are always there to lend a hand to help. It really does take a village and we are so blessed to have incredible friends and family around us."

To learn more about Mark, Eoin, their daughters, and their journey through familyhood, follow them on Instagram @TwoMenAndASurrogacy. ▼

Gary Hurtubise lives in Eastern Ontario with his husband Trevor, their two sons Noah & Meo, and their two yellow labs. Gary attended the Royal Military College of Canada and served in the Royal Canadian Navy before becoming a high school physics teacher, and part time Ghostwriter. Gary finds time to write during those odd moments between life: at 4:30 in the morning, on long road-trips with the kids, while back-country camping, and when he should be doing his share of the chores.

Photos courtesy of Mark O'Looney and Eoin Cannon



**Left to right, Mark holding Nala, and Eoin holding Aria.**



# Revisiting Robin Hopkins, actor, author, podcast host, and mom to teens

By Gary Hurtubise

This month, we re-visit actor, author, podcast host, mom and wife Robin Hopkins. First featured by Deadra Albrecht-Frasch in Gay Parent Magazine New York 2019-2020 issue #17, Robin has continued to make a name for herself by sharing the lessons that life has taught her, coupled with her own particular blend of humor.

Robin was born and raised in the small upstate New York town of Homer, “where

it wasn’t uncommon to see tractors taking up space on the road while you tried to pass them,” she says, adding quickly, “cow tipping was not a thing, even though people think it was.”

While Robin grew up, her mom worked as a secretary, “which today would not be called that—but that is what she was.” Her dad managed a used car dealership. “I often attribute much of my pushiness and my *sometimes* ‘working in the gray areas of things’ to my dad’s used-car salesmanship philosophies,” she admits.

Robin’s parents divorced when she was very young, which had a significant impact on her view of life. “We went from kind of this middle class family to me living just with my mom, and she didn’t have money.”

“Sadly, I had to watch her decline, and I think that that really shaped who I am.”

“It became very much like I needed to really hustle or work hard because I didn’t want to end up where my parents were.” It was partly this experience that Robin attributes to one of her current writing projects. “It’s a Substack called, ‘Shit I learn from my crappy childhood,’ and it’s all based on this philosophy of take what works from your childhood, but leave the rest.”

Robin has been with her partner, Mary, since 2003. “We’re married and we live in Brooklyn—I think the same apartment as when you initially interviewed us in 2019.”

The couple met when Robin was performing in her one-woman show ‘In Search of Tulla Berman,’ about her affair with a straight girl.

From her first Gay Parent Magazine profile, we learned that Robin and Mary decided to have children through IUI



Left to right, Maxine, Robin, Henry, and Mary.

(intrauterine insemination). Using an open donor from a sperm bank, they first had their daughter, Maxine; with another donor, they had their son Henry. Today, the kids are 16 and 14 respectively.

What is life like with teenagers? “Ooooh. So, it’s lovely...and the hardest thing I’ve ever done in my whole entire life,” Robin asserts. “They’re so similar, yet so different. I think sometimes it’s hard—

especially when kids are close in age—to remember they’re completely different people. What works for one kid will not necessarily work for the other.”

Robin describes both her kids as go-getters. “They’re both smart and very funny kids. They’re good people.”

“But one of my kids struggles more than the other, in terms of...oh, let’s just say he’s not so much for rules or regulations,” she adds.

Mary and Robin’s daughter embraces being in a non-typical family. “I think she’s a differentiator; she likes that her family is different.” By contrast, their son Henry is the exact opposite.

“I think he would prefer to *not* be different,” Robin says. “I think he would prefer to not be the only male person in our entire household. Like, even our cat is a girl.”

“So, we have to try to look for ways to make sure he has strong male role models in his life,” she continues, “because it’s something that is a missing piece for him. “Sometimes as a parent it’s hard to accept because you don’t want to feel like you did anything that wasn’t enough for them.”

“But the reality is, there’s always going to be something we miss. So, for me, it’s like, ‘what can I put in place to try to help him?’”

When asked about the pandemic years, Robin admits they were a rough experience for them all.

“I’m a little bit—I can admit this—I’m a bit of a controlling person,” Robin reveals, “and I was so worried about how everything was going to impact them that I think I sometimes tried to overschedule things.”

Eventually, everyone in the family (including Robin)



found their stride. While the kids were slightly set back academically, they were able to pick right back up afterwards.

Ultimately, the pandemic resulted in a fundamental shift in how their family operated. “My wife worked in Broadway advertising and that business was gone at the start of COVID.”

Mary ended up with a completely different job, working remotely for an advertising agency out of Detroit. “She works out of our son’s bedroom!”

As for Robin: “I had given up my day job at Spotify right before the pandemic hit. So, now I work out of *our* bedroom.”

Before COVID, both women were working in Manhattan, with someone always needing to be designated to be available for the kids. “Now, with the pandemic changes, the kids being teenagers (with a greater sense of autonomy) and the two of us working from home...our life is completely, totally different!”

The focus of Robin’s work changed somewhat, too, with the pandemic.

At the time of her first Gay Parent Magazine profile, Robin had an award-winning podcast entitled ‘If These Ovaries Could Talk,’ which she produced with fellow podcaster Jaimie Kelton. The website for the podcast described it as, ‘two lesbians chatting about making babies and non-traditional families.’

Robin wrapped up her work with ‘If These Ovaries Could Talk’ (still hosted by Jaimie; renamed, ‘The Queer Family Podcast’), though not before an independent publisher approached the two of them, suggesting they turn the podcast into a book.

“For me, the idea was just there instantly—when we got the call, I could already see the book. I just knew that we had all these rich, amazing stories about LGBTQ families. And it just made sense to lay it out by all the different ways we can create our families.”

The writing project went ahead, and in September of 2020, the book ‘If These Ovaries Could Talk: the things we’ve learned about making an LGBTQ family’ was published.

“It was such an incredible experience to be able to take all those stories from our podcast and build something that became part user-manual, and part history of our fami-



*Left to right, Maxine, Robin, Henry, and Mary.*

lies—because we opened up each chapter with our personal stories.”

While Robin has focused some of her creative energy on writing her Substack ‘Shit I learn from my crappy childhood,’ she has not left the podcast medium behind by any stretch.

“I started a new podcast called ‘Well...adjusting,’ and I have a *perma-lance* (permanent freelance) kind of situation where I work for Headspace, producing and hosting podcasts for them too.”

Robin considers both present projects to be related. “With ‘Shit I learn from my crappy childhood,’ I’m experimenting with writing and building an audience. The podcast ‘Well... adjusting,’ truthfully, is an offshoot of that same idea.”

“The idea is that I had a childhood that was less than

stellar at moments. It was not great.” Robin explains. “But I learned so much from it. I learned things that I had to do because of what I didn’t have. I learned from things I just don’t want to do again. And some of it just was the way that I approached things because of my childhood.”

“And so, I found that over the years,” she continues, “I just became that person who people would come up to and ask questions about dating advice, or should they get the 401k plan at work, or what insurance should they get.”

“And I just became this person who loved talking to younger people about how to make these changes in your life. So we built the podcast ‘Well...adjusting’ and it’s really lovely.”

“Each week a guest comes on with a problem, and myself and producer Steph, we sit with them and we talk about it. We help pull the problem apart to see if there’s a different way to look at it.”

“I love to say I don’t actually have any credentials,” Robin declares. “I just have my life experience. But with that, there’s a lot that I can offer.”

“The beauty of that show is that we do it in a funny way because I really think that healing doesn’t have to be so serious. Healing can be laughing, you can be struggling, you can be in community. So we always love to say we’re going to help you out, but not in an NPR sort of way.”

Robin is as reflective about her parenting as she is about her podcasting and writing. Considering her experiences as an LGBTQ+ parent over the years, she says,



"I love that we are not defined by stereotypes of mom and dad. I love that we get to create the roles and responsibilities per parent, based on who does what best."

"If I'm better at the math, then I should be doing finances. And if I'm also the person who's more spreadsheet-oriented, then I should be booking the family appointments. But we're not like, 'well, you're the mom, so you do that!'"

"I also think about the fact that our families are defined in love—and need to be so thoughtfully created. I think this sets up a very intentional household. We lead with love, and we lead in a very thoughtful way."

On the flip side, she does re-acknowledge that one of her kids has a little harder time with being different and there is just nothing she can do about that. "I can only try to support him and be there for his feelings, but I do think it can be harder on some kids, and I do think that during a certain point of your, development as a kid, you don't want to stand out. That can be hard on some kids."

"But going back to being very intentional and thoughtful in our parenting, we're doing everything we can to try to support our kids through that."

"One of the messages in all this is that sometimes life is hard. There are things that you can do about it, but you just have to do the very best you can. And even that, I think is still an important life lesson."

Robin is also reflective on how the lives of LGBTQ+ families have changed since when she and Mary first became parents.

"We're much more common," she starts. "I think back 15 years ago where people were like, 'how do I do this?' Now there's just so many resources and so many places that support our family creation and it's commonplace to hear: 'Oh, my two dads *this*,' or 'my two moms *that*.'"

"There are still many things that we need to keep growing on and moving on to make sure everybody has equal rights in all states and to make sure our kids feel safe and that they're just part of a family where they're loved," Robin admits.

And here, the conversation inevitably turns to the present—namely, the present *administration*.

"Well, honestly, I have a lot of fear. I have a lot of trepidation."

**The family posing at the base of the Eiffel Tower in Paris.**



"But, I also have made some choices to not be so wildly engaged, because I do think that the news media, as a general rule, is very invested in us coming back day after day to their channel, and therefore the tone is to keep us scared."

Robin goes on to say, "I don't think that me being scared is helpful for the community. So, I have really disengaged from the news media;

I've stepped back and I'm only reading written content that I can then fact-check and look through at a deeper level.:

"That's the only place that I'm getting my news: from written sources, because I don't want to see video of *him* and this administration and the things they're doing."

Already, Robin has found that this philosophy has reaped benefits. "I do feel calmer and I'm in a better place to watch."

"If I'm not wound up or whipped into a frenzy of fear, then I can be ready to take action when and if this administration does stuff against my community and my family."

Robin closes with these somber but affirmative words:

"I hope this administration doesn't do the things that we're scared they're going to do. I hope that people will show up and be better people than I sometimes think they are. I'm in a watching phase. I'm ready to take action, and I'm trying to remain hopeful."

I think we could all use a dose of Robin's hope, her wisdom and her humor.

Find Robin on all social platforms @realrobinhopkins. Visit her website at, [robinhopkins.org](http://robinhopkins.org) and Substack, <https://robinhopkins.substack.com/>, and catch her show 'Well...adjusting' wherever you get your podcasts. ▼

*Gary Hurtubise lives in Eastern Ontario with his husband Trevor, their two sons Noah & Meo, and their two yellow labs. Gary attended the Royal Military College of Canada and served in the Royal Canadian Navy before becoming a high school physics teacher, and part time Ghostwriter. Gary finds time to write during those odd moments between life: at 4:30 in the morning, on long road-trips with the kids, while back-country camping, and when he should be doing his share of the chores.*

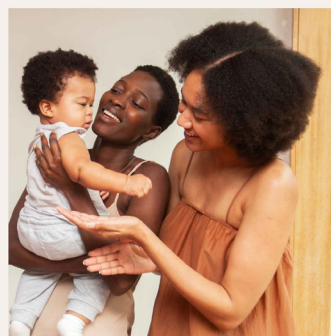
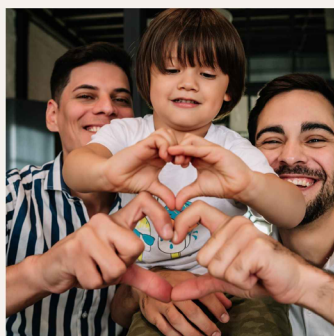
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