



JUNE 12, 2023 | BY LUCIE FROST · FAMILY

I Want to Be Excited for My Transgender Daughter, But . . .

As much as Lucie Frost loves her daughter, she wasn't ready to let go of the son she'd raised for 24 years. Here's how she came to terms.

Editor's note: For Gay Pride Month, we're republishing this impactful, poignant look at adjusting to a child's new identity.

“Mom, guess what! The State Department announced that you can self-identify gender on your passport,” my daughter Mackenzie said as soon as I answered the call from her.

“Wow!” I said, because *wow!* is what I always say when I don’t know what to say. *Wow!* acknowledged that Mackenzie found the news exciting, but it neither agreed nor disagreed that the news was excitement-worthy. *Wow!* was a placeholder for, “I know you’re elated, but I have no idea how to process this information.”

I hung up, hoping my voice hadn’t betrayed my lack of enthusiasm. As a liberal, I supported the *theory* of Mackenzie’s changing her gender marker. But as a mother, the *reality* of it gut-punched me. As much as I loved my daughter

““

As a mother, the
reality of the
gender change
gut-punched me.

Mackenzie, I wasn’t yet ready to let go of Marshall, the son I’ve raised for the past 24 years. I just wasn’t.

Of course, I knew this was coming. Mackenzie started transitioning about 18 months ago, and she had told me she wanted to start the process of changing her name and gender marker. But she’d need to get a lawyer to help her figure out the process, and I knew that would take a while. Mackenzie could file for the name change in Virginia, where she lives, which would be simple enough. But updating her gender on her Texas birth certificate would require a trans-friendly judge, and those can be hard to come by in Texas. I

~~k~~ew Texas had hurdles that could make the change of gender marker take just about forever.

But with the streamlined passport process, Mackenzie can now get a passport with her updated gender marker and use the passport for employment and other purposes. She won't need to mess with Texas.

I told my husband, Rich, the news. "I guess that's the end of Marshall," I said.

Read More: Your Gender Fluidity Guide: What You Need to Know about Our Brave New Non-Binary World

The End of Marshall?

With one mark on an application form, Mackenzie would erase the name I gave my newborn just after he was placed on my chest in the operating room. She would erase the 4-year-old boy who spent his days in kindergarten writing a series of books (stapled papers, really) he titled *Inch Boy and Ruler*. She would deny the 6-year-old boy who staged puppet shows for the family, the 10-year-old boy who in his high voice proclaimed he would one day be a *basso buffo* in the opera, and the 15-year-old boy who wore statement bow ties. All of those Marshalls gone, with one short streak of blue ink.

She would be a woman named Mackenzie—a name that I thought cute enough, but one that doesn't carry the weight of her birth name.

Marshall was named after my mother's father, John Marshall "Jack" Toomey, who himself was named after Chief Justice John Marshall, the longest-serving Supreme

““

She would be a woman named

~~C~~urt Chief Justice. Jack had planned to go into law himself, but during his last semester of law school, he enlisted in the Air Force as a fighter pilot in World War II. In 1943, his plane was shot down by German fighter planes, and it crashed into the Tyrrhenian Sea off the coast of Sicily. His body was never recovered.

Mackenzie.

My grandfather is memorialized on the Wall of the Missing at the North Africa American Cemetery and Memorial in Tunisia. My Marshall, back when she was still called Marshall, traveled to Tunisia to visit the memorial. She used FaceTime to call my mother, allowing Mama to see her father's memorial plaque for the first and likely only time. They stayed on the phone together for almost an hour, crying.

A Supreme Court Justice, a father missing-in-action, my beautiful child, all to be replaced with Mackenzie, a name pulled from the air (or more likely the internet), without any sense of family or history.

How to Name a New Identity?

I wondered what her middle name would be. What even goes with Mackenzie? Elizabeth maybe, but that's awfully long. Anne? But that's not much in style anymore.

I texted Mackenzie, "What's your middle name going to be?"

"Marshall."

I teared up. Marshall would not be erased, but would be kept safe, tucked in the

““

A Supreme Court
Justice, a father

~~m~~iddle of Mackenzie's
name.

missing-in-action,
my beautiful
child, all to be
replaced with
Mackenzie.

Yesterday, Mackenzie told me she submitted the name change application. Once the name change is granted, she'll apply for a passport in her new name and for the first time identify herself officially as female.

I asked how she picked the name Mackenzie, a question I hadn't thought to ask before.

She said, "I was attached to the letter M."

"Because you want the same monogram?"

"Not that. M is just *my* letter. It means a lot."

She explained how she searched through a list of names starting with an M. She looked for names that were the same level of popularity as Marshall in 1997, the year she was born. She wanted a name that was easy to pronounce and one that was shared by an important judge, since she hopes to go to law school and be involved in the judicial system someday.

I had thought she flipped through some baby name websites.

Googled haphazardly.

Honoring the Gift

"The name Marshall was a gift you gave me—one you put a lot of thought and love into choosing. I wanted to give myself the same

s✘t of gift, with the same level of profound love.”

My eyes filled with tears.

Then Mackenzie told me about the judge who shares her new name — *Kael McKenzie*, Canada’s first transgender judge.


Now I was crying. Mackenzie wasn’t out to erase the many Marshalls. She was honoring them all. I was the one doing the erasing, denying the one Mackenzie before me.

“Sweetie?” I said.

“Yes.”

“You chose the most perfect name.”

Read More: Hey, Over-Invested Moms: Your Grown Child’s Romance Is None of Your Business

 About the author: *Lucie Frost*

Tell us something about yourself.

CATEGORIES: FAMILY

TAGS: *protected*

RECENT ARTICLES

What a Mess: My Fiance’s Kids Don’t Approve of Our Marriage

The 39 Best Shoes for Travel: Handpicked by an Expert

NextTribe Founder Jeannie Ralston has led trips all over the world.