

DADDY & PAPA

SYNOPSIS

Daddy & Papa is a one hour documentary exploring the personal, cultural, and political impact of gay men who are making a decision that is at once traditional and revolutionary: to raise children themselves. Taking us inside four gay male families, *Daddy & Papa* traces the critical issues that inevitably intersect their private lives—the ambiguous place of interracial families in America, the wonder and precariousness of surrogacy and adoption, the complexities of marriage and divorce within the gay community, and the legality of their own parenthood.

As fathers, these men must take on numerous challengers: from conservatives who regard them the very antithesis of family; to average Americans who believe mothers are essential to a child's development; to the gay community, where hard-won independence and sexual freedoms often clash with the demands of parenting. The legal hurdles alone can be daunting—last year, Utah and Mississippi joined Florida in banning gay adoption. And with similar legislation pending in other states, the attack on gay parental rights is steadily growing.

Daddy & Papa director/producer Johnny Symons and his partner William Rogers are a Bay Area interracial couple who adopt an African-American baby named Zachary. Their path to fatherhood is an intimate portrait of what it takes to create a family—and complicated by a devout Christian foster mother who is reluctant to let go of the child she has raised from birth, especially when her friends tell her that these men want to “do things to him” and that they will undoubtedly “make him gay.”

Kelly Wallace is a 38-year-old single white gay man living in San Francisco's Castro District. We follow his process of adopting two brothers, ages 2 and 3, from foster care. As Kelly and his sons struggle to adjust to their radically changed lives, we see first hand the challenges of single parenting, the difficulties of raising hard-to-place children, and the isolation of being a family in a virtually childless neighborhood.

The story of Fanny Ballantine-Himberg, a precocious 9-year-old, starts with the generous act of a surrogate mother. The film recounts how her fathers Philip Himberg and Jim Ballantine arranged with a friend to bear their child. A decade later, they have split up, and each has a new partner. Their daughter's biggest problem now is not that her fathers are gay, but that they are divorced.

Since his homeless father abandoned him five years ago, 8-year old Oscar Williams has been cared for by Doug Houghton, his legal guardian. Florida law categorically denies Doug, a gay man, the right to formally adopt Oscar. At the invitation of the ACLU, he joins a lawsuit to sue the state and legally establish his parental rights.

Through interviews, on-location shooting around the country, archival footage and photos, and the personal narrative of the filmmaker's own journey to fatherhood, the film provides a rare view of this growing phenomenon. From the schoolyard to the courtroom, *Daddy & Papa* uncovers the struggles, challenges, and triumphs of gay fathers and their children—bringing to light a new kind of American family.