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COLLEGIAN TIMES
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Los Angeles City College

ITALIANS SILENCED

HOW AMERICA FORGOT THE LARGEST
MASS LYNCHING IN ITS HISTORY.

STUDENTS, FACULTY

DECRY SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

L.A. DOGS

THAT MAKE IT IN HOLLYWOOD

PAWS FOR FULL COLOR

AS CUTE AS THEY COME

Los Angeles City College Journalism Program **COLLEGIAN TIMES** SUMMER-FALL 2026

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MEMOIR REVEALS LESS TRAVELED ROAD TO ADOPTION

A PROFESSOR SHARES
HIS STORY OF MIGRATION,
EDUCATION AND THE SEARCH
FOR FAMILY AND HOME.

BY ERIKA RAMIREZ

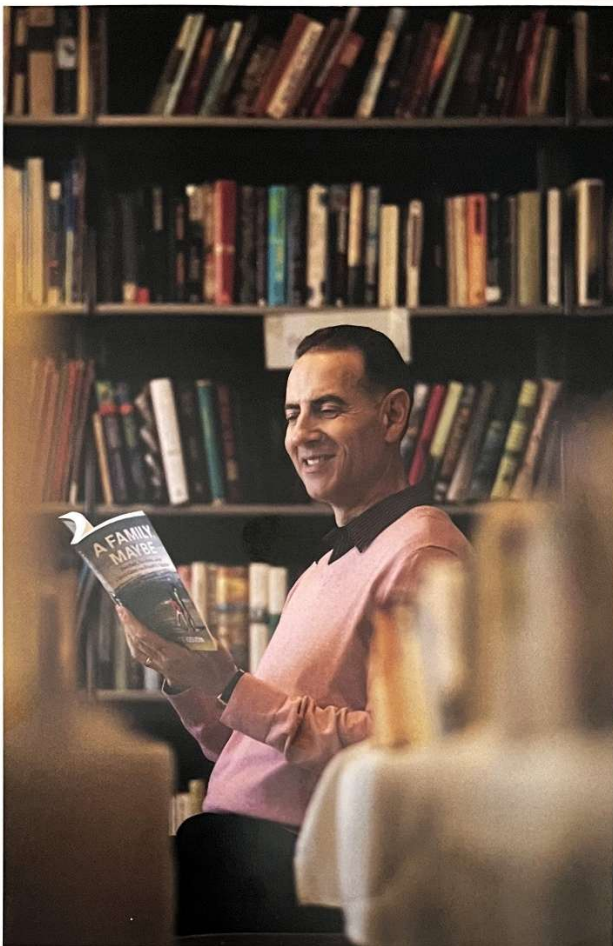


PHOTO BY SEBASTIAN ROMERO
Professor Igoudin reads from
his book, "A Family, Maybe,"
in his office.

Lane Igoudin has led many lives. He carved out a new one when he came to the United States with his family as a refugee from the former Soviet Union.

Today, he is a full-time professor of English and linguistics, a best-selling author and a father of two girls.

Igoudin's life as an educator is a driving force in the community, as he has helped students who struggle with English as their second language for 20 years at LACC. The professor speaks five languages, including Russian, French, Spanish and Hebrew.

"I've been teaching in a variety of modalities," he says. "While my ESL courses could be in-person on campus or on Zoom, my linguistic courses now, all of them are asynchronous. ...

The challenge, I would say, with asynchronous courses, is to find that sort of direct one-on-one interaction ... find a way to connect with an individual student that you actually never get to meet in person."

Igoudin smiles and his eyes brighten when he talks about work. He is influenced by his early life as a refugee and now his experience as a professor. Many students have come to this country with similar experiences of their own. City College educates students from 70 to 80 different countries.

"I can relate firsthand to what my students are going through because I went through that, many years ago," Igoudin said. "So, as a non-native speaker of English and an immigrant, I understand them. I think I have a pretty good idea as to what they need and about the sequence of skills that they need to develop in their writing, their grammar and their reading."

From Uncertainty to Parenthood

Igoudin has always seen himself as a father figure because he helped raise his sister, who is nine years his junior. However, he never thought he would be a husband.

"I thought I knew I was gay, but I kind of thought that maybe I'm not. I didn't know if I'll be able to handle a long-term relationship," he said. "But, you know, 28 years later, I think we're doing okay."

Igoudin's husband, Jonathan, comes from a family of 10. He has nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews but was not so sure he wanted a family of his own. Igoudin told Jonathan that he wanted to have a family, and Jonathan began to warm up to the idea. They decided to pursue fatherhood, and they were "clear-eyed" about it.

"Things started to go pretty crazy," Igoudin said. "And I would say pretty wrong, almost from the very beginning. And I realized this is something I've never read about, something that really isn't out there that's been covered — what it's like to go into the system and try to adopt a

child or two."

Foster care and the adoption system were unfamiliar turf. Igoudin leaned into his education and prior experience in business communication and as a writer, and he chose to document the journey, no matter the outcome. He wanted to share the information with other prospective parents and to create a record for society.

He focused on a part of American life that is invisible to most people: the children's courts, foster care and foster adoption.

At any given time, there are about 400,000 children in the foster care system, according to the U.S. Department of Education. As the most populous state, California typically has the largest share of those children.

"People have some very general ideas, but they really don't know what's happening. And I thought, this will be my job, to explain what's really happening," Igoudin said of the motivation for his memoir, "A Family, Maybe."

His book chronicles the path the pair traveled to adopt two siblings in foster care that they had raised since birth. It describes the trial and error the couple experienced and their transformative journey through foster adoptions to parenthood.

"It's a warm and funny experience because there are two men who have no experience raising babies, and, suddenly, they are trying to learn how to become dads," Igoudin said. "It's not fantasy. In that sense, it's fun. It's interesting. It's warm, but it's also a core drama because overlaying all this ... are the court proceedings. There's one court hearing after another, after another ... and there's no end in sight."

Igoudin says the process can be "intrusive and disempowering." In many ways, it has marginalized them as an adoptive family, but also as an LGBTQ+ family. At the time their story unfolded between 2005 and 2008, the LGBTQ+ community was fighting for equal rights. Igoudin and Jonathan were involved parents.

"So, being part of the gay dad club, demonstrating, pushing the stroller in pride parades, reaching out to the right officials," Igoudin says of their early parenting days. "Writing letters, testifying, as far as the U.S. Senate, the Judiciary Committee of the Senate, where we testified in support of equality."

Igoudin documents the way society treated the first generation of gay families. There were major social and political repercussions to being a gay parent back then, as well as to being in a family led by a same-sex couple.

Further complicating matters, their marriage was not recognized in the eyes of the federal government even though they married in June of 2008. California's Proposition 8 outlawed same-sex marriage five months after they wed. They wound up in legal limbo, which meant that they were sometimes perceived as two unrelated adults who wanted to adopt and raise two children.

Perfect Children Do Not Exist

Children who are in the foster care system may have experienced trauma, so both adopting and raising them requires patience. It is important to be prepared.

In "A Family, Maybe," Igoudin discusses a county worksheet that he and Jonathan completed. It asked prospective parents about the race and gender of children they would be willing to adopt. He writes that they both decided they wanted a sibling pair of young children, and later they discussed whether boys or girls might have an easier time with two fathers. They struggled with some of the questions. Igoudin writes:

"Would you be willing to provide care for a child of a different race or ethnic group?"

"If yes, how would he or she be accepted in the neighborhood, in the school, by relatives and friends? How would you help the child maintain connections with his or her own culture?"

"Cultural heritage can be priceless in giving an adopted child a sense of roots. It may also become a source of contention. Whose culture do we honor by continuing?"

"Conversely, whose do we not? How, for instance, would I feel not bringing up my child Jewish, erasing the 4,000 years of my history and traditions? Would such cultural sensitivity align me with the Jew haters of the world who would love to wipe out my heritage?"

"How would John feel raising a child without honoring his African American heritage? ... In the end, we marked all ethnicities with a preference for mixed race."

Older Children Face Delays, Rejection

The couple labored over the next eight and a half pages of the worksheet for several days. Score upon score of debilitating health conditions had to be debated and marked as acceptable, unacceptable or willing to consider.

"We were now in the familiar, quintessential American milieu, the marketplace," Igoudin writes in his memoir. "Walking the aisles. Emotional problems this way, physical handicaps and mental disabilities up against the back wall, stopping at each item, evaluating the options."

One chapter of the memoir covered the L.A. County Adoption Fairs, which were intensely emotional experiences for Jonathan. Children who are up for adoption are trotted out to meet prospects. The kids include sets of siblings and older children. The Fairs would move Jonathan to tears, as he faced children in the system who were waiting to be adopted, especially older children.

"Why is it fair to keep a child in the confines of foster care for years on end," Igoudin said, "and then throw them out on the street at 18 with no support and no one to continue to be there for them? That's the worst. That is the worst option."

The Los Angeles foster care system is the largest in the country, with approximately 12,000

“We were now in the familiar, quintessential American milieu, the marketplace. Walking the aisles. Emotional problems this way, physical handicaps and mental disabilities up against the back wall, stopping at each item, evaluating the options.”

children in its custody, according to the county's Department of Children and Family Services. For adults thinking about fostering or adopting, Igoudin's advice is that a willing parent will find the right child.

"As a person of faith, I'm a believer that you will be sent to the right child who needs you," he said. "They need parents, and you will be that parent. So, I would say, learn about it, set the limits and do it."✽