

EDIE WINDSOR

b. June 20, 1929

MARRIAGE EQUALITY HERO

“I trust the Constitution. Sometimes there’s a mistake but mostly we move forward. I think justice will prevail.”

She was the lead plaintiff in a landmark legal victory for marriage equality.

Edith “Edie” Windsor was the lead plaintiff in the Supreme Court case *United States v. Windsor*, a landmark legal victory for marriage equality.

Windsor is a former top-ranking technology manager at IBM, where she began her employment in 1958. In 1987 the National Computing Conference honored her as a Pioneer in Operating Systems.

In 1963 Windsor met Thea Spyer, a psychologist, in New York. The two began a lifelong relationship, which they hid from their employers for many years. The couple were engaged for 42 years.

When Spyer was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, Windsor became her caregiver, eventually entering a domestic partnership with her in New York in 1993. Because the state did not yet offer same-sex marriage rights, the couple wed in Canada in 2007, two years before Spyer’s death.

The couple’s inability to legally marry prompted Windsor to publicly advocate for marriage equality and to take her case to court. No stranger to LGBT activism, Windsor provided leadership in numerous LGBT organizations and regularly participated with Spyer in history-making LGBT rights events.

In New York, Windsor volunteered for East End gay organizations, the LGBT Community Center, and the 1994 Gay Games. She helped form Old Queens Acting Up, an improv group that uses comedy to address social issues, and she served on the board of the Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE).

Windsor’s court battle propelled her into the national spotlight. When she filed a lawsuit in 2010, she sought to claim the federal estate tax exemption for surviving spouses. Although she and her partner were legally wed in Canada, the U.S. Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) limited the federal definition of “spouse” to heterosexual unions only. In 2013 the Supreme Court ruled in Windsor’s favor, overturning Section 3 of DOMA and setting a precedent that laid the groundwork for national marriage equality in 2015.

Windsor’s story is featured in the 2009 documentary “Edie and Thea: A Very Long Engagement.”



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