

# Heather Has Two Mommies

## A Note from Author Lesléa Newman

I wrote *Heather Has Two Mommies* in 1988 and sent it to about fifty publishers, to no avail. Finally, Tzivia Gover, a lesbian mother who owned a desktop publishing business called In Other Words, decided to copublish the book with me. We raised the bulk of the needed money with donations, most of which came in ten-dollar increments, and found an illustrator. I contributed the rest of the money, and in December 1989, four thousand copies arrived on my doorstep. Six months later, Sasha Alyson, who had just published *Daddy's Roommate*, saw the book in New Words Bookstore in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and offered to become its publisher.

I never dreamed that a book I wrote that came from such humble beginnings would be noticed, let alone banned, burned, defecated upon, read into the Congressional Record, written up in the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, and *Newsweek*, parodied by Jon Stewart and many others, and finally republished by a well-established and respected children's book press.

More important than all the controversies that have swirled around the book are the reactions of children, who, after all, are the book's intended audience. A six-year-old girl named Tasha wrote to me and said, "Thank you for writing *Heather Has Two Mommies*. I know that you wrote it just for me." Tasha is an African-American child; in the edition of the book she read, Heather was white and blond. Yet Tasha saw beyond racial lines and was convinced that

the book was written especially for her. A lesbian mom told me that her son Nick crossed out the word *Heather* every time it appeared in the book and wrote his name instead. Nick saw across gender lines and literally inserted himself into the story. Another lesbian mom chuckled as she told me that her child's reaction was simply "Why can't I have a dog and a cat like Heather?" Clearly the fact that Heather had two pets was a much bigger deal than the fact that she had two moms. I was told that a child with a mom and a dad read the book and asked his parents with great disappointment, "Why do I only get to have one mom?" And once after I gave a reading at the Lesbian and Gay Community Center in New York City, a pair of lesbian moms brought their daughter up to meet me. "This is the woman who wrote your favorite book," they said. The little girl asked me very seriously, "How did you get your letters so straight?"

I have never met a child who had a problem with the notion that Heather has two mommies and that, as Heather's teacher explains, "The most important thing about a family is that all the people in it love each other." However some adults (who forgot the wisdom they had as children) have felt differently. I hope that now, two and a half decades after publication, *Heather Has Two Mommies* will not be seen as controversial and can continue to delight children and adults alike with its portrayal of the many different types of families that exist in our society today.



*Lesléa Newman*



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