

Heather has a message

"Heather Has Two Mommies" is a children's book about a lesbian couple having a child through artificial insemination. It is one of many books listed in the first-grade teachers' guide for New York City public schools. So is "Daddy's Roommate," which features a happy youngster with two male parents who concludes that "being gay is just one more kind of love."

New York Newsday had some sensible things to say about "Heather": It is "almost a parody of political correctness," but it shouldn't be used to discredit the city's entire multicultural curriculum, and no children should be made to feel ashamed because they come from non-traditional families. All true. So is the argument that gay-bashing is a serious problem in the schools. Surely the schools must do something about that situation.

Still, this does not explain why the curriculum is pushing stories like "Heather Has Two Mommies" and "Daddy's Roommate." These are not books about tolerance—letting people alone and not picking on others because of sexual orientation or family structure. They are books that celebrate the wonders of double-mommy and double-daddy households. But surely schools can generate respect for Catholic children, let's say, without putting "Heather Finds Peace as a Nun" on the reading list. Schools can promote respect for all children without endorsing all the different beliefs, lifestyles or orientations found in their homes.

So how did these books make it onto the reading list? The answer is tucked away on Page 145 of the city's "Children of the Rainbow"—first-grade curriculum: Teachers must "be aware of varied family structures, including . . . gay or lesbian parents," and "Children must be taught to acknowledge the positive aspects of each type of household." A line is being crossed here; in fact, a brand new ethic is descending upon the city's public school system. The traditional civic virtue of tolerance (if gays want to live together, it's their own business) has been replaced with a new ethic requiring approval and endorsement (if gays want to live together, we must "acknowledge the positive aspects" of their way of life).

Emotional tide. Four of the city's 32 school districts erupted over the issue and rejected the offending passage on Page 145. With emotions running high, many people on both sides pumped out dubious arguments. The New York Civil Liberties Union, always the most eccentric of the ACLU chapters, professed to see censorship in the rejection of Heather's two-mommy book. Some protesters hid behind age-appropriateness, arguing that 5- and 6-year-olds are too young to learn about lesbian arti-

ficial insemination (which is surely true, but a side issue).

The key question goes something like this: Schools have a duty to promote decent behavior toward gays, but on what basis can a public school system insist that homosexuality must be approved? Under the traditional pluralism that New York City schools have now decided to reject, questions like this do not come up. The system has always been agnostic, asking diverse groups to park their conflicting value systems at the door so education can proceed with some degree of peace.

A letter writer to *Newsday* said: "If my wife and I choose to believe in what the Holy Scriptures say about homosexuality, it is not up to teachers, or any municipal or political group, public or private to refute these teachings." His letter amounts to a case for traditional pluralism. He approves of banning religion from the schools; that is, he is willing to park his values at the schoolhouse door, but he wants the gays to park theirs outside too. However, under the new city school curriculum,

this sort of tolerance is gone. The letter writer's beliefs are not just ignored by a value-neutral curriculum. They are overridden by newly imposed values. This touches off a destructive battle over public norms at a time when the schools desperately need to focus on aca-

demics, not intergroup warfare.

Journalist Richard Vigilante, writing in *The City Journal*, a conservative New York quarterly, says that "to ask people to accept in their own children's schools a curriculum that undermines or contradicts their own deeply held moral beliefs is to ask of them an enormous sacrifice. If Americans do not have the right to maintain, for themselves and their families, moral beliefs taught for millennia by the religions to which between 70 and 90 percent of the population subscribe, then a lot of us are living in the wrong country." To slough off the distress of parents who learn that their 6-year-olds "are to be taught the positive side of homosexuality," he says, "is not tolerance but moral and intellectual imperialism."

This is only one skirmish in the cultural war. The new multicultural ethic, shown clearly in doctrinal writings both inside and outside the school systems, is contemptuous of tolerance and "information dominant" (i.e. neutral) teaching. The key words, "positive teaching" and "appreciating diversity," mean that certain sets of ideas are about to be "infused" as valuable, whether parents think so or not. If that happens, home schooling and the school-choice movement will empty out many schools. Mary Cummins, president of a Queens school district that strongly resisted Page 145, said, "If they try to impose it on us, they won't have any kids in the public schools." ■



WT 9/21/96 #2

Gay agency probed for child abuse

California caregivers said to molest homosexual teens

By K.L. Hillingsley
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

LOS ANGELES - The California Department of Social Services has charged staffers and volunteers at a private agency for homosexual teenagers with engaging in inappropriate sexual conduct with children.

Two of the children testified here Thursday before administrative law Judge Samuel D. Reyes in a case involving Gordon Murray Hagen, a former staffer with Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services (GLASS).

Children accused Mr. Hagen of fondling them and asking them to perform sexual acts. GLASS is currently on probation as a result of sexual misconduct accusations against other staffers and managers.

"We deny all allegations," said Teresa DeCrescenzo, founder of GLASS, whose supporters have accused the Department of Social Services (DSS) of a "witch hunt" motivated by homophobia. State officials deny the accusation.

"It doesn't matter if they are homosexual or heterosexual," said DSS attorney Jay Dayvault. "We have one standard. This is a simple case of a staff person in a facility to provide care and supervision to a needy and vulnerable population, and he took advantage of the children."

The West Hollywood-based

The group's license was put on probation for five years.

GLASS, founded in 1984, describes itself as a "nondiscriminatory non-judgmental state-licensed agency" serving "self-identified gay, lesbian and bisexual youth, but also youth at risk for abuse and exploitation, those confused about their psychosexual orientation, and those who are at risk for HIV infection."

Miss DeCrescenzo is a lesbian social worker who worked in juvenile placement with Los Angeles County. She perceived homosexuals as being underserved and decided to open a group home in 1984. "It is the only one in the country," she told The Washington Times. "We gave them a sense of pride."

GLASS operates five group homes that currently house 30 children as old as 17. The organization includes the Pride Foster Family Agency, operating three offices serving more than 70 families. Foster parents include homosexual couples and single men and women. The idea initially drew resistance from county officials.

"It was one thing to have queer kids and queer staff, but another to have queer foster parents," Miss

DeCrescenzo said.

In March, after a lengthy investigation, the DSS moved to revoke GLASS' license. The original complaint charged that "on numerous occasions," staff members, members of the GLASS board of directors, and volunteers sexually abused or molested children.

A night supervisor was accused of sodomy and threatening children, while a volunteer gave children dildos and male pornographic magazines. The DSS complaint also accused GLASS President Stan Ziegler of removing children from the group homes and taking them to his mountain cabin for the weekend. GLASS management failed to report the misconduct, the DSS charged.

When the complaint was filed, Los Angeles County removed 17 children it had placed with GLASS and sent them to other homes.

In late June, GLASS signed a waiver with the DSS agreeing that its staff and volunteers had engaged in inappropriate sexual conduct and failed to take action to protect the children. The group's license was put on probation for five years, and staffers accused in the original complaint have been barred from working for any state-licensed child care facility.

No criminal charges have been filed in the case, which has not yet come to the attention of the state Attorney General's Office.

THE ADVOCATE

long advertised for GLASS (Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services).

Ads showing pretty young girls and handsome young boys have been a staple in THE ADVOCATE, offering allegedly safe harbors for youngsters who thought they might be homosexual or bisexual, etc. Yet, the sexual abuse of these children who sought safety instead were further "emancipated" from their parents and "on numerous occasions" were abused by representatives at all levels of this agency.