



# The Half-Jewish Book: A Celebration

*Daniel Klein, Freke Vuijst*

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It's happening fast: The population of half-Jews in America is well on its way to surpassing the population of full Jews. And with this population shift has come a revolutionary transformation of what it means to be half-Jewish. Sure, some people say that you are either Jewish or not, that there's nothing in between--but the authors emphatically disagree. They say half-Jews are a unique subculture of people who draw from both sides of their heritage and synthesize their cultural halves into a remarkable new identity.

The Half-Jewish Book celebrates this unique identity that until now has been ignored, maligned, and misunderstood. There's half-Jewish humor. Half-Jewish/half-Catholic Bill Maher: "I come from a mixed religious background--when I went to confession, I brought a lawyer with me." And there's half-Jewish beauty--Gwyneth Paltrow, Joan Collins, and Jane Seymour, just for starters. There are half-Jewish writers (Proust, Salinger), and half-Jewish characters in fiction by authors ranging from Philip Roth to Salman Rushdie. There's even that half-Jewish cartoon phenomenon Tommy Pickles, in Rugrats. There are half-Jewish politicians--Fiorello La Guardia, Barry Goldwater, Dianne Feinstein. And there are the extraordinary number of people, like General Wesley Clark, who discovered as adults that they were half-Jewish and then embraced their newfound double heritage.

This book includes an eye-opening essay on half-Jewish identity and looks into the often misunderstood history of half-Jews in the Holocaust. There are original interviews with half-Jews, as well as holiday cards and menus, poetry and song lyrics, and paintings and photographs. Intelligent, exuberant, entertaining, and thought-provoking, The Half-Jewish Book is a fascinating celebration of a cultural mix that is far greater than the sum of its parts.

The premise of The Half-Jewish Book is simple if somewhat controversial: Being half-Jewish is a quality unto itself, *sui generis*. Half-Jewishness is a cultural, intellectual, and aesthetic mix that is, in a variety of ways, greater than the sum of its parts.

To take this position--and to revel in the celebration that follows from it--we stand in clear opposition to those who insist: "You are either Jewish or you are not; there's nothing in between." And we compound this blasphemy by suggesting that there is something unique, remarkable, and downright dazzling about the half-Jewish mind and the half-Jewish face, about the art and wit created by half-Jewish sensibilities, and in the ethical, literary, and political ideas produced from the half-Jewish perspective.

Enough already about the "half-Jewish problem" as the tragic product of intermarriage. It is time to explore the unique and fascinating world of the half-Jew.

--from the Introduction

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