



All the Single Ladies: Unmarried Women and the Rise of an Independent Nation

By Rebecca Traister



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*** NEW YORK TIMES NOTABLE BOOKS OF 2016 SELECTION * BEST BOOKS OF 2016 SELECTION BY THE BOSTON GLOBE * ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY * NPR * CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY ***

The *New York Times* bestselling investigation into the sexual, economic, and emotional lives of women is “an informative and thought-provoking book for anyone—not just the single ladies—who want to gain a greater understanding of this pivotal moment in the history of the United States” (*The New York Times Book Review*).

In 2009, award-winning journalist Rebecca Traister started *All the Single Ladies* about the twenty-first century phenomenon of the American single woman. It was the year the proportion of American women who were married dropped below fifty percent; and the median age of first marriages, which had remained between twenty and twenty-two years old for nearly a century (1890–1980), had risen dramatically to twenty-seven.

But over the course of her vast research and more than a hundred interviews with academics and social scientists and prominent single women, Traister discovered a startling truth: the phenomenon of the single woman in America is not a new one. And historically, when women were given options beyond early heterosexual marriage, the results were massive social change—temperance, abolition, secondary education, and more. Today, only twenty percent of Americans are married by age twenty-nine, compared to nearly sixty percent in 1960.

“An informative and thought-provoking book for anyone—not just single ladies” (*The New York Times Book Review*), *All the Single Ladies* is a remarkable portrait of contemporary American life and how we got here, through the lens of the unmarried American woman. Covering class, race, sexual orientation, and filled with vivid anecdotes from fascinating contemporary and historical figures, “we’re better off reading Rebecca Traister on women, politics, and America than pretty much anyone else” (*The Boston Globe*).

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

In 1960, more than half of Americans were married to heterosexual partners before reaching the age of 30. That statistic has dramatically reversed in the years that followed, with only 20 percent reaching that same milestone in the present decade. Traister traces the roots of this phenomenon much further back, from 1960, and demonstrates how single women have typically made the decision to marry later or not marry at all when given advantages such as education and career options. The understanding of how single women affect politics and social change is startling to say the least, and young women will find clarification and confirmation in this read. Being single is not a failure, nor is it a death sentence. Media outlets and politicians are often the source of urging women toward heterosexual marriage. Even though this push is typically intended to subjugate women, the book does not condemn the institution of marriage; in fact, the author makes the opposite case. Marriage should be an informed choice, Traister argues, and it should not mean giving up on dreams or aspirations. By weaving anecdotes with detailed research (source information as well as updates on the profiled women are provided), this volume will draw in young adults and help them comprehend the quiet and steady evolution that women have been spearheading for quite some time. VERDICT A stand-out, empowering selection providing substantive research; for general readers as well as those with an interest in feminism and social justice issues.—April Sanders, Spring Hill College, Mobile, AL

Review

PRAISE FOR ALL THE SINGLE LADIES

***** A Best Books of 2016 So Far select by *Entertainment Weekly* *****

“Fascinating, entertaining, surprising—and heartening. A brilliant book that is also warm, funny, and a pleasure to read.”

—**Katha Pollitt**

"Traister is a triple threat--essayist, journalist, and polemicist--bringing a seismic shift to light, hunting down its implications, and showing how it changes politics, and how policy needs to change to reflect it. Her book demands not just reading but discussion and debate.

—**Boris Kachka, *Vulture***

“A singularly triumphant work of women presented in beautiful formation... Keenly mindful of race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status...[Traister] is both deliberate and conversant in her language of inclusion...As impressively well researched as *All the Single Ladies* is...it's the personal narratives drawn from more than 100 interviews she conducted with all manner of women that make the book not just an informative read but also an entirely engaging one.”

—**Los Angeles Times**

“A well-researched, deeply informative examination of women’s bids for independence, spanning centuries...Traister provides a thoughtful culling of history to help bridge the gap between, on the one hand, glib depictions of single womanhood largely focused on sexual escapades and, on the other, grave warnings that female independence will unravel the very fabric of the country...[she] brings a welcome balance of critique and personal reflection to a conversation that is often characterized more by advocacy and moral policing than honest discovery...*All The Single Ladies* is arriving just in time. This is an informative and

thought-provoking book for anyone – not just the single ladies – who wants to gain a great understanding of this pivotal moment in the history of the United States.”

—*New York Times Book Review* (Editor’s Choice)

“Powerful and convincing...we’re better off reading Rebecca Traister on women, politics, and America than pretty much anyone else. [Traister is] one of the nation’s smartest and most provocative feminist voices.”

—*The Boston Globe*

“The enormous accomplishment of Traister’s book is to show that the ranks of women electing for nontraditional lives...have also improved the lots of women who make traditional choices, blowing open the institutions of marriage and parenthood...This rich portrait of our most quietly explosive social force makes it clear that the ladies still have plenty of work to do.”

—*Slate*

“A monumental study of the political, economic, social, and sexual consequences of the rise of unmarried women.”

—*New Republic*

“Lucid and well-researched...[Traister] vividly illustrates the collective power of single women in guiding legal, economic, and social progress and in ‘asserting themselves as citizens—full citizens—in ways that American men have for generations.’ A chapter on female friendships satisfyingly conveys the complexity of a significant, and often dismissed, relationship.”

—*The New Yorker*

“Personal and relatable...[Traister’s] assessment of single women’s sex lives is so balanced and ordinary-sounding that it becomes extraordinary in a world where Tinder is supposedly bringing a dating apocalypse...I’ll swipe right on that message any day.”

—*Washington Post*

“Though Traister is no longer one of us, she retains her memories and her empathy, as well as her feminist commitments...Drawing on, historical and contemporary sources, as well as her own reporting, she has produced a wide-ranging, insistently optimistic analysis of the role of single women in American society.”

—*Chicago Tribune*

“I can’t begin to count the number of conversations I’ve had in my adult life about my lack of enthusiasm to marry... Thankfully, with the publication of Rebecca Traister’s *All the Single Ladies: Unmarried Women and the Rise of an Independent Nation*, I can stop explaining and buy her book for all the busybodies in my happily unmarried life. Traister blends history, reportage and personal memoir to propose that the notion of marriage in American life has been and will be written by unmarried women.”

—*The Guardian* (US)

“Traister’s illuminating history of women who haven’t put a ring on it, whether by choice or by chance, is smartly placed in a larger historical context and enriched by compelling personal narratives.”

—*Entertainment Weekly*, Best Books of 2016 So Far select

“Traister is one of the sharpest journalists writing about feminism today, and her look into the link between eras with large numbers of unmarried women and periods of drastic social change is absolutely riveting... It turns out the history of unmarried women in this country is a fascinating one, which Traister recounts in compulsively readable detail, combining facts with personal stories from single ladies across racial and

financial spectrums. What's left after she joyfully dismantles conservative arguments about the death of wifely servitude is hope: 'Ring on it' or not, the paths open to women today are varied and bright."

—*Entertainment Weekly*

In this intelligent book, Traister looks at the many reasons for choosing a patch that would have been cultural and economic suicide 50 years ago. She wants single women to recognize themselves as a political force and to celebrate unmarried life for what it can be: an excellent option."

—*People Magazine*

"Wonderfully inclusive, examining single women from all walks of life—working-, middle-, and upper-class women; women of color and white women; queer and straight ones...With *All the Single Ladies*, [Traister] brings her trademark intelligence and wit to bear, interspersing her own experiences and observations with dozens of interviews with women all over the country, plus historical context, from so-called Boston marriages (the nineteenth-century name for women who lived together) and the Brontë sisters to Murphy Brown and *Sex and the City*."

—*Elle Magazine*

"No husband, NP...In *All The Single Ladies*, an exhaustive examination of independent women and how they shaped the world we live (and date) in today, Rebecca Traister explodes the centuries-old notion that mirage is compulsory to living a happy, fulfilled life and reveals the inestimable power of being blissfully unattached."

—*Cosmopolitan*

"*All The Single Ladies* is essential, careful, bold, and rigorous; it's a warning and a celebration, and I loved it."

—*Jezebel*

"[*All The Single Ladies*] has the potential to become a seminal text on female identity in the West...Traister expertly paints a modern portrait of American life and how we got here, with an intersectional approach that accounts for class, race, and sexual orientation. Even more impressive is how Traister pushes a feminist agenda without the book ever feeling like it has an agenda, or that it's pointing the finger at the reader to make him or her feel guilty."

—*VICE*

"A well-written and unabashedly feminist analysis of the history and current situation of single women in America."

—*Newsday*

"Exploring all aspects of single life—social, economic, racial, and sexual—Traister's comprehensive volume, sure to be vigorously discussed, is truly impressive in scope and depth while always managing to be eminently readable and thoughtful."

—*Booklist* (starred review)

"[Traister is] a thoughtful journalist...This fast-paced, fascinating book will draw in fans of feminism, social sciences, and U.S. history, similar to Gail Collins's *When Everything Changed*."

—*Library Journal*

"Incorporating a lively slew of perspectives of single ladies past and present, Traister conducts a nuanced investigation into the sexual, economic, and emotional lives of women in America and the opportunities

available when marriage is no longer “the measure of female existence.”...Traister is funny and fair in how she deals with the prevalent stereotypes and remaining stigmas attached to being an unmarried woman in society...an invigorating study of single women in America with refreshing insight into the real life of the so-called spinster.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“Cogent and provocative...a persuasive case for why unmarried women have grown into a potent political and social force...Readers will also appreciate Traister's willingness to recount, with candor and humor, experiences in her own life that fit into the larger national story. This is a fascinating book—and an important one.”

—**Bookmark/Politics & Prose Blog**

“Part social and cultural history, part anthropological and journalistic investigation, part memoir, and total investigation into the phenomenon and political power of single womanhood.”

—**Flavorwire**

“Timely and important...a significant addition to the literature of sociology and women’s studies...Clearly this book belongs right up there with those by Gloria Steinem, Gail Collins, and other feminist writers who shine a light on contemporary life as few others can.”

—**New York Journal of Books**

PRAISE FOR REBECCA TRAISTER

"Visionary."

--*The New York Times Book Review*

"One of the most powerful voices in a new generation of American feminist writers."

--**Walter Russell Mead, *Foreign Affairs***

"The most brilliant voice on feminism in this country."

--**Anne Lamott, author of *Bird by Bird***

"A clear-eyed, whip-smart observer of the political scene."

--**Daphne Merkin, author of *The Fame Lunches***

"Brilliant."

--**Maureen Corrigan, NPR's *Fresh Air***

"Clever, caustic, [and] wickedly funny."

--**Slate.com**

"The heir to the tradition of Mary McCarthy and Joan Didion."

--**Eric Alterman, author of *The Cause***

"Provocative and insightful."

--**Curtis Sittenfeld, author of *American Wife***

About the Author

Rebecca Traister is writer at large for *New York* magazine and a contributing editor at *Elle*. A National

Magazine Award finalist, she has written about women in politics, media, and entertainment from a feminist perspective for *The New Republic* and *Salon* and has also contributed to *The Nation*, *The New York Observer*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Vogue*, *Glamour* and *Marie Claire*. Traister's first book, *Big Girls Don't Cry*, about women and the 2008 election, was a *New York Times* Notable Book of 2010 and the winner of the Ernesta Drinker Ballard Book Prize. She lives in New York with her family.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Donna Miller:

Have you spare time for just a day? What do you do when you have considerably more or little spare time? Yeah, you can choose the suitable activity for spend your time. Any person spent all their spare time to take a wander, shopping, or went to the actual Mall. How about open or maybe read a book eligible All the Single Ladies: Unmarried Women and the Rise of an Independent Nation? Maybe it is to be best activity for you. You realize beside you can spend your time with the favorite's book, you can more intelligent than before. Do you agree with it has the opinion or you have various other opinion?

Melvin Belknap:

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Joe Dix:

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your understanding by that book. Are you hip to spend your spare time to spread out your book? Or just trying to find the All the Single Ladies: Unmarried Women and the Rise of an Independent Nation when you needed it?

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