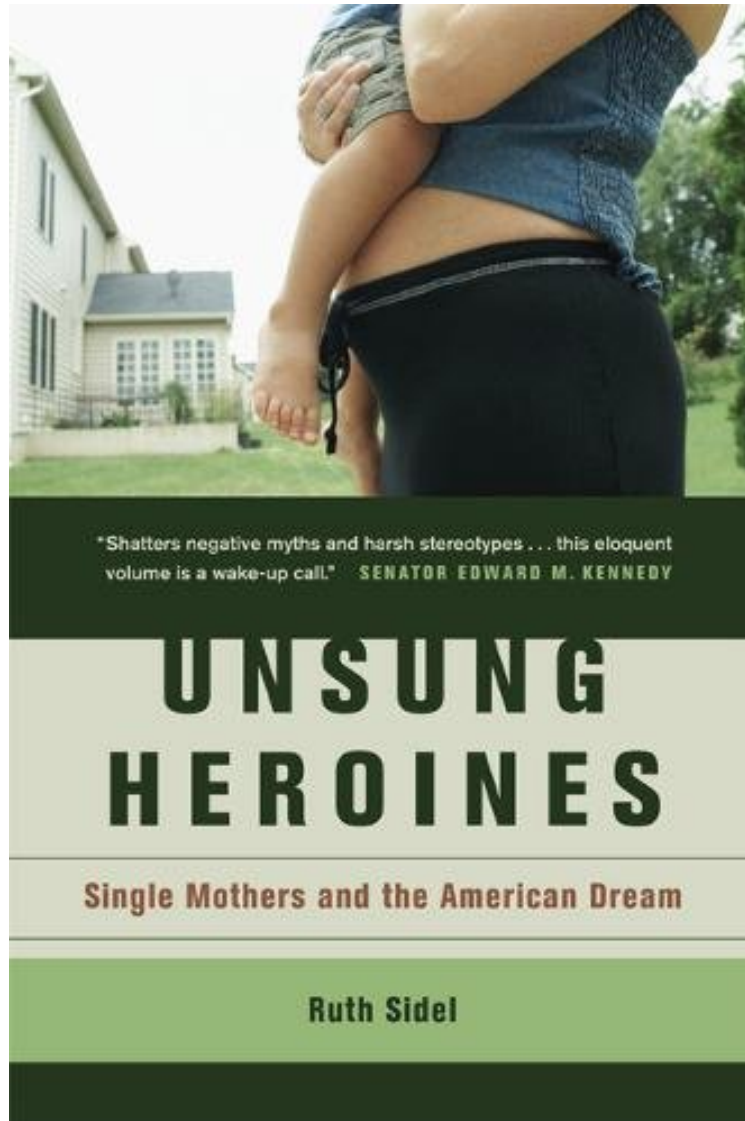


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Unsung Heroines: Single Mothers and the American Dream

Ruth Sidel

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Ruth Sidel : *Unsung Heroines: Single Mothers and the American Dream* before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Unsung Heroines: Single Mothers and the American Dream*:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Good read, not exactly good representative of single mothers as a whole. By tara This book gives a bird's eye view of what it's like to be a single mother. The book is pertaining to a study that Sidel did where she interviewed single mothers in the NYC area. All ages, ethnicities, and Socio-economic status' were interviewed. Excerpts from some of these interviews form the backbones of each chapter's theme. The first half to

two-thirds of the book use excerpts that do not appear to be representative of single mothers as a whole. Almost every single one of the mothers goes on to graduate school (and finishes). In my opinion, this implies that single mothers that go on to grad school are the "unsung heroines" and that the mothers struggling to survive in dead-end jobs or even government assistance are anything but. The last third or so of the book includes some more "real-life" single mothers' excerpts and the book becomes less biased. I really liked how Sidel made it a point to show that single mothers DO come from all socio-economic statuses. Some were upper middle class (or higher) and ended up at complete rock bottom with no money and a few hungry kids to feed as a result of a divorce, but some were part of the stereotypical young and urban type. All in all, a pretty good book. Definitely not bedtime reading but definitely worth your while! 0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. *Unsung Heroines* ~ Old Lib. BookBy justash3 This book came as described. It took a bit longer than expected to get here, but that was fine. It does have barcode stickers on it because it was an old library book, but that was in the description and was therefore expected. I would gladly do business again :)

This compelling book destroys the derogatory images of single mothers that too often prevail in the media and in politics by creating a rich, moving, multidimensional picture of who these women really are. Ruth Sidel interviewed mothers from diverse races, ethnicities, religions, and social classes who became single through divorce, separation, widowhood, or who never married; none had planned to raise children on their own. Weaving together these women's voices with an accessible, cutting-edge sociological and political analysis of single motherhood today, *Unsung Heroines* introduces a resilient, resourceful, and courageous population of women committed to their families, holding fast to quintessential American values, and creating positive new lives for themselves and their children. What emerges from this penetrating study is a clear message about what all families—two-parent as well as single parent—must have to succeed: decent jobs at a living wage, comprehensive health care, and preschool and after-school care. In a final chapter, Sidel gives a broad political-economic analysis that provides historical background on the way American social policy has evolved and compares the situation in the U.S. to the social policies and ideologies of other countries.

From Publishers Weekly: Observing that single mothers embody the best American values—"courage, determination, commitment to others, and independence of spirit"—sociologist Sidel contends that "rather than being stigmatized, they should be celebrated and indeed applauded." Sidel's 50 subjects are diverse in age, class, race, ethnicity and marital status (including unmarried by departure, divorce or death). They recount the different paths that led them to single motherhood, their struggles to provide for their children, and their own feelings of loss (of income, self-esteem, emotional and social support, youth, etc.). They describe the steps they took to turn their lives around and recall the forces (people, institutions and faith) that aided and sometimes thwarted them. Sidel looks back at the different male and female responses "to intimate heterosexual relationships and to the enormous responsibility of caring for children" and forward to an agenda that would recognize that "the well-being of children and their families is the responsibility not only of the families themselves but of government at all levels and of civil society as well." Sidel's mothers tell individual tales, but the effect is cumulative, allowing the author to sound an alarm about the real needs of American families in all their varieties. (Apr.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "Ruth Sidel's dramatic life histories of single mothers make a revealing point: These mothers, especially the poor ones among them, work far harder and act more responsibly than some two parent families. They have to, because their and their children's survival depends on it. Perhaps they are America's true Supermoms." - Herbert J. Gans, author of *Making Sense of America* "From the Inside Flap" This pioneering new study by Ruth Sidel is an education for the nation. Sidel shatters all the old familiar negative myths and harsh stereotypes about single mothers, and gives us instead the unvarnished truth about their diverse lives, their courageous struggles to raise their children, and their genuine family values they share with millions of other Americans. Many of the larger patterns Sidel identifies—the constant search for a fair balance between work and family, the endless quest for decent jobs and fair pay and good schools and affordable health care—apply to all families as well. Hopefully, this excellent and eloquent volume will act as a wake-up call, and wiser federal, state, and local policies will enable many, many more of these hard-working mothers to find light at the end of the tunnel. This book offers a unique opportunity for every reader to walk in the shoes of single mothers and help find that light. "Senator Edward M. Kennedy" Ruth Sidel's dramatic life histories of single mothers make a revealing point: These mothers, especially the poor ones among them, work far harder and act more responsibly than some two parent families. They have to, because their and their children's survival depends on it. Perhaps they are America's true Supermoms." Herbert J. Gans, author of *Making Sense of America* "This is a beautiful work of narrative, interwoven with mature reflections, on the courage and resilience of single mothers and the dangerous stereotypes and structural injustices by which their lives are made so difficult in our society. Ruth Sidel is a sensitive listener, and it is this gift which brings forth so much eloquence and piercing honesty from those who share their stories in this strong and stirring book." Jonathan Kozol, author of *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America* "Few readers will be untouched by the pain, loss and disrupted lives, but also the enormous strengths Sidel uncovers as these women struggle to rise above the debilitating

stigma and mean-spirited penalties meted out to single mothers, especially those without means. Thoughtful, sympathetic and well-researched, *Unsung Heroines* is absolutely required reading for anyone working with single mothers and especially for the nation's leaders who shape public policy." Mimi Abramovitz, author of *Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy From Colonial Times to the Present*