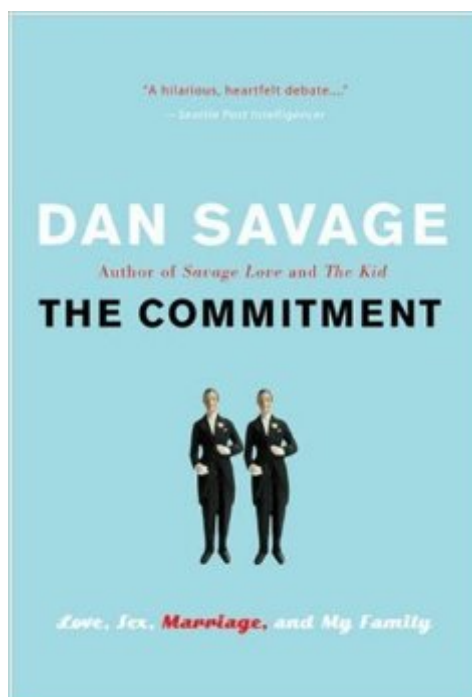


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The Commitment: Love, Sex, Marriage, And My Family



Synopsis

Dan Savage's mother wants him to get married. His boyfriend, Terry, says "no thanks" because he doesn't want to act like a straight person. Their six-year-old son DJ says his two dads aren't "allowed" to get married, but that he'd like to come to the reception and eat cake. Throw into the mix Dan's straight siblings, whose varied choices form a microcosm of how Americans are approaching marriage these days, and you get a rollicking family memoir that will have everyone "gay or straight, right or left, single or married" howling with laughter and rethinking their notions of marriage and all it entails.

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Customer Reviews

Dan Savage's new book examines the notion of gay marriage and whether or not it's a good thing -- not just for the USA, that is, but also for Dan Savage himself and his partner of 10 years, Terry. Part introspective memoir, and part tirade against dinosaur-minded virtuecrats currently behind the wheel in Washington D.C., "The Commitment" is at all times an energetic wake-up call questioning just what it is that drove eleven (mostly) red states to pass "anti-gay marriage" Constitutional amendments last November. Savage is strongly in favor of gay marriage in general, while not sure whether he himself wants to marry. This gives the book the dimensions it needs to succeed. The best chapters are "Blue", in which Savage looks at the current political state of this country, while casting a hopeful eye at nearby Canada; and "Two Moments of Transcendent Bliss". Followers of Savage will know that he and Terry jointly adopted a son who is now a skateboarding metalhead 6 year-old.

In this latter chapter, Savage has to explain to his son what it is to be gay, and what it is to be married. If you can't make it through that chapter without being swayed by the pro-marriage argument, then none of the rest of this book is going to work for you. I'll admit that while I'm something of a left-winger, my views have never swayed as far to the left as the death-to-Israel politics of NYC's alternative weekly "The Village Voice", where I first discovered the "Savage Love" column. I also had no strong opinion on gay marriage until last year, when I took sides during the run-up to the Presidential election. By the end of "The Commitment", I did have to question why I remained undecided on the issue for so long. Savage's writing is 100% partisan and 100% persuasive, and he is most certainly not one of (to quote another recent partisan screed) one of the 100 people ruining America.

How do I effectively convey my feelings after reading this book? First off I am so glad it's been written. So glad that there is something that can be put into other people's hands that examines this ridiculous opposition to gay marriage with a sense of humor, heart, and a little thing called facts. (Something the Christian right likes to forget about in their pursuit of oh so compassionate discrimination.) What I love about the book is he doesn't moralize, and tell anyone what they should do, instead it's simply the journey that he and his boyfriend Terry go through. That process manages to create a myriad of viewpoints that structures much of the book's backbone, from his pressuring Mother, to his brother adopting a somewhat "gay lifestyle" in regards to co-habiting with his girlfriend, and their somewhat open relationship. My son is two and it can be incredibly frustrating and sad listening to these Bible Thumping Red State Imbeciles spouting just plain lies in the name of Jesus to create a political victory. Luckily this book was a reminder that regardless of what careless and nasty things have been said or will continue to be said about gays and their rights to marriage and children, love is ultimately what makes a family. Love makes a commitment, and sometimes that's loud enough to drown out all the other white noise.

Dan Savage is by far at his best and funniest when he sticks to memoir, reporting on the squabbles and crises of his daily life. That's why this book is much better than the last one, "Skipping Towards Gomorrah," which tended to veer into ranting and contrivances, but not quite as good as "The Kid," which had a little more meat to its story. Here, the back-stories of his relatives and their marriages or lack of them are moderately interesting. There are a few anti-religious-right rants that go on too long, but only a few. It's the conversations between Dan and his boyfriend and their son, in all their crankiness and irrationality, that make this book stand out. It really comes into its own in the last

couple of chapters, which had me laughing out loud. It's great to read a book by someone who cares deeply about gay rights, yet can make fun of the part of himself that wants to get married in order to make people take his "Big Gay Love" seriously. He's confident enough to be honest, and that makes his book fresh and entertaining.

Please don't "unhelpful" this review before you read it! I'm a serious Dan Savage fan; a longtime reader and listener. This review is for the AUDIOBOOK version of "The Commitment" only. First, I've already read the book and liked it. Then, I checked out the audiobook from my library, out of curiosity, and it very nearly ruined the book for me altogether. Dan Savage has a distinctive voice and I enjoy listening to him. It's gentle and soft, but coarse and tough in funny, ironic, wry and unexpected ways. On the other hand, reader Paul Michael Garcia sounds nothing like Savage and - sorry - comes across sounding just like a boring old stereotype. I'm not saying he's gay but he sure SOUNDS the way a sitcom would cast a typical gay guy, and the words "my boyfriend" just don't sound the same coming out of his mouth as they do from Savage's. I gave this a good long listen, hoping the voice would grow on me, but it just grew more and more cloying, like some weird kind of identity theft, as this reader tried to relate to the often-bizarre events of Savage's life (his boyfriend's dog's accident, surgery, and later handicaps, for example). I listen to a lot of audiobooks, and the readers are usually excellent and well-matched with their material. In this case, however, I found the combination utterly woeful and ultimately, unlistenable. I suppose Savage had to give his approval to this book at some point, but I'm not sure how when it sounds just like an imposter has appropriated his words. Sorry, but I just didn't like it.

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