

Inquiring Minds: HOPE IN THE DARK REVISITED

#63 Sept 2021 "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." — *A Tale of Two Cities* [More quotes on hope and despair](#)

[Intro](#). [Past Issues 2011-20: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13, 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62](#)

SOLNIT'S 100 PAGE BOOK: GOOD ADVICE FOR FOR ACTIVISTS AT ALL LEVELS

At first I found the first 50 pages of [Rebecca Solnit's](#) 152 page book, *Hope in the Dark*, a bit overwhelming. It seemed crammed with so much information about protest organizations all over the world, and her involvement in some of them. I certainly wasn't going to march the streets in the middle of a pandemic. I was tempted to quit reading and to brand her as a professional activist who built her life around saving the world, maybe to assuage my guilt at not doing more. I was, and am a left-leaning moderate, realizing that some change is the best we can expect. Still I read on and was impressed the following ideas:



- 1) The sheer number of successful and ongoing world-wide protests against all sorts of injustices, exacerbated by the perfect storm of pandemic, climate change, wars, weapons, greed, corruption, etc., and revealed and coordinated by the use of smart phones using social media apps.
- 2) Effective protest should be peaceful *a la* Gandhi so as to keep the public focused on the issue at hand and not giving police and the public a reason to miss the message.
- 3) Progressives must learn how to compromise, aim high as a start but be able to give and take, and never quit, burn oneself out, or lose hope.
- 4) Know that change comes in unexpected ways. Who would have thought LBJ's creation of [Medicaid](#) for the poor would give him the power to change 2000 segregated hospitals in the south by withholding that much needed funding. (1)
- 5) Think globally, and act locally. There are billions, not thousands "points of light" of people doing important jobs well, such as raising their families, taking pride in their work, helping their neighbors, attending meetings, voting, and so on.
- 6) Realize that there will always be injustice, and that there will always be protests, and there must always be vigilance, lest the Dark Ages descend

on us once more, or we literally destroy all that humanity has accomplished over its existence.

- 7) Seek a higher source of hope, be it prayer, social interaction, learning, creating, having fun, and having a life outside of one's activism; JC himself went into the desert to recharge his spiritual batteries. [Music and the arts can also lift and inspire the soul](#), prevent burnout, and give hope. *

Below are a few examples of the principles listed above which I have experienced directly this month.

THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY, LIVE LIFE

Last month as we were walking around the block Patricia tripped over a gap in the sidewalk. She went down hard, hitting her head, knees, and injuring her wrists. Fortunately nothing was broken, but after seeing the doctor she emailed the Redwood City Public Works Officer and told him about her fall and asked for either repair or markings so others wouldn't do the same. Then she reported her story to Nextdoor, telling about her exchange with the man in charge who said he was doing his best to take care of the 310 miles of sidewalks in the city, but that it might take some time. Her detailed story went viral, having some 85-100 favorable responses. More surprisingly, we started seeing immediate results, at least in sidewalks around our neighborhood. It was an example of talking softly and having the big stick of public media at one's disposal. a good example case of civic action at work.

Meanwhile, after some thoughtful planning, our neighborhood was safely able to have its much needed Labor Day Block



Party, our 37th. Present were our newest [couple who have made dragons](#) out of silk to the delight of all. *[view a fun video above](#) Joe