



# Cherishing aspiration and optimism

*Rebecca Solnit: "Anything could happen, and whether we act or not has everything to do with it."*

**Even after 40-plus years of living in Reno,** I lose a little hope when our weather shifts to the gloomy frigid days of mid-January, and I realize how much my mood depends on Nevada's big, blue, cloudless sky. This winter seems especially dark as our country sinks deeper into the president's morass, tarnished by his childish and incomprehensible behavior. It's a good time to revisit one of my favorite Rebecca Solnit books, *Hope in the Dark*, published in 2004 but completely relevant in these desperate times.

Solnit challenges us to view our world "not only by such nightmares as global warming and global capital, but by dreams of freedom and of justice—and transformed by things we could not have dreamed of." She encourages us to look at past events and consider their unforeseen impact, noting that to "hope is to gamble.

It's to bet on the future, on your desires, on the possibility that an open heart and uncertainty is better than gloom and safety. To hope is dangerous, and yet it is the opposite of fear, for to live is to risk."

Those words resonated deeply this year as I read the profiles featured in the New York Times Magazine's annual end-of-year edition, "The Lives They Lived," highlighting many who dared to hope they could make a difference.

Consider Devah Pager, a sociologist who conducted field studies to prove that racial discrimination dramatically affected job opportunities for those exiting the criminal justice system. Her research convinced President Bush to allocate \$300 million to assist former inmates and led to the "Ban the Box" initiative, helping those with a criminal record gain employment.

Or consider Ann Hopkins, an accountant who sued Price Waterhouse for sex discrimination after she did not receive a partnership due to her refusal to conform to the femininity standards the

traditionally male firm arbitrarily imposed. She won her fight at the Supreme Court in a landmark case when the Justices ruled against gender stereotyping in the workplace.

Aiko Herzig Yoshinaga suffered the indignity and pain of being confined in the California internment camp of Manzanar in 1942. After the war, she dedicated herself to researching one of our country's darkest moments, eventually discovering a document that proved the "internment was based on race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership." President Ronald Reagan issued an apology and paid restitution to each survivor.

These women all turned darkness into light with their refusal to abandon hope. I see the same determination in many of Nevada's activists, people like former RN&R editor D. Brian Burghart, creator of Fatal Encounters, a comprehensive database of people killed during interactions with law enforcement. Or young Native American activist Autumn Harry,

who has already succeeded in lifting up her heritage in multiple arenas.

Another Nevadan who chooses to act is Sharon Chamberlain, Director of Northern Nevada HOPES. She has greatly expanded behavioral health services for the homeless while also pursuing tiny homes to help them transition from the street.

Solnit mentions Bob Fulkerson, who recently stepped down after 25 years of leading the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada. She recounts a visit to the Nevada Test Site where she was the only person to show up at a workshop on Nevada and the military. She wrote how Fulkerson "was visibly disappointed, but gave it splendidly for me alone" while she sat "in the rocks and dust and creosote bush of the deep desert on a sunny day," being schooled by "the great Nevada organizer Bob Fulkerson."

Solnit reminds us, "Hope is not like a lottery ticket you can sit on the sofa and clutch, feeling lucky. ... Hope should shove you out the door." □

**BUY Local!**

**No Insurance?  
High Deductible?**

**No Appointment Necessary!**

We're Open Monday through Saturday  
Mon.-Fri. 7am-3:30 pm  
Sat. 8am-11am

**cashclinical**  
Lab tests for less.

**CARSON CITY** **RENO**  
775-883-4000 775-852-3422

**We Accept Cash, Checks  
& Credit Cards**  
NV & CLIA Licensed

**SAVE up to 50% on medical laboratory testing**

**SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Are you being sexually harassed at work?  
**You do not have to tolerate sexual harassment.**

**CALL MARK MAUSER**

Experienced Nevada Attorneys who have successfully litigated more than 300 sexual and racial workplace harassment cases. 36 years of experience.  
**Contingent Fee Cases Accepted**

**Mark Mausert & Cody Oldham**  
729 EVANS AVE, RENO | 775-786-5477

**LOCALLY ROASTED**

*at*

**MAGPIE**  
COFFEE ROASTERS

1715 S. WELLS AVE.  
MAGPIEROASTERS.COM