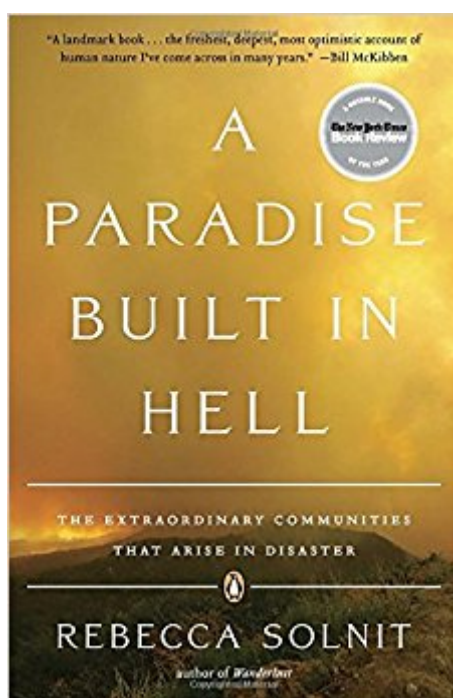


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A Paradise Built In Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise In Disaster



Synopsis

From the author of *Men Explain Things to Me* — “A landmark book that gives impassioned challenge to the social meaning of disasters” (The New York Times Book Review) “The freshest, deepest, most optimistic account of human nature I’ve come across in years.” — Bill McKibben — Chosen as a Best Book of the Year by the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, New Yorker, San Francisco Chronicle, Washington Post, and Chicago Tribune The most startling thing about disasters, according to award-winning author Rebecca Solnit, is not merely that so many people rise to the occasion, but that they do so with joy. That joy reveals an ordinarily unmet yearning for community, purposefulness, and meaningful work that disaster often provides. *A Paradise Built in Hell* is an investigation of the moments of altruism, resourcefulness, and generosity that arise amid disaster’s grief and disruption and considers their implications for everyday life. It points to a new vision of what society could become—one that is less authoritarian and fearful, more collaborative and local.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Natural and man-made disasters can be utopias that showcase human solidarity and point the way to a freer society, according to this stimulating contrarian study. Solnit (*River of Shadows*) reproves civil defense planners, media alarmists and Hollywood directors who insist that disasters produce terrified mobs prone to looting, murder and cannibalism unless controlled by armed force and government expertise. Surveying disasters from the 1906 San Francisco earthquake to 9/11 and

Hurricane Katrina, she shows that the typical response to calamity is spontaneous altruism, self-organization and mutual aid, with neighbors and strangers calmly rescuing, feeding and housing each other. Indeed, the main problem in such emergencies, she contends, is the elite panic of officials who clamp down with National Guardsmen and stifling regulations. Solnit falters when she generalizes her populist brief into an anarchist critique of everyday society that lapses into fuzzy what-ifs and uplifting volunteer testimonials. Still, this vividly written, cogently argued book makes a compelling and timely case for the ability of ordinary people to collectively surmount the direst of challenges. (Sept.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Thought-provoking . . . captivating and compelling . . . there's a hopeful, optimistic, even contagious quality to this superb book." --Los Angeles Times "In her far-reaching and large-spirited new book, Solnit argues that disasters are opportunities as well as oppressions, each one a summons to rediscover the powerful engagement and joy of genuine altruism, civic life, grassroots community, and meaningful work." --San Francisco Chronicle "Stirring . . . fascinating . . . presents a withering critique of modern capitalist society by examining five catastrophes . . . Her account of these events are so stirring that her book is worth reading for its storytelling alone. . . . [An] exciting and important contribution to our understanding of ourselves." --The Washington Post

I strongly recommend reading this. It's interesting and heartening. Lots of good stories in it. It really makes the point that in the aftermath of a disaster, the great majority of people help each other rather than revert to savagery as the myth tries to convince us.

Openly points out (catalogues) human behavior, under conditions of disaster and human struggles.

A well-written and researched bit of optimism, providing an emotional rollercoaster of sorts. Humans suck! Oh look these humans did not suck!

I was really impressed by this book. I'm not usually a fan of nonfiction but this book held my attention. I felt like I understood the world in a new way when I finished reading this. The writing style was a little unusual but still easy to understand. It has really forced me to consider our current political situations differently. It also brings a great focus on the negative effects of materialism.

Rebecca Solnit is a combination of Joanna Macy and Joan Didion. We need that. She is a writer to be watched and listened to. Hope In the Dark is the name of one of her other books, and isn't that exactly what we need right now?

Gain both a better understanding of historical disasters and guidelines for better surviving future ones, as well as the importance of a community being prepared, and informed government.

It is an interesting thesis, but after a while it just sort of paraphrases what has already been said and then says it again. The concept that people are brought together in crisis is valid and important, I just think it could have been said with fewer words and fewer redundancies.

I just really couldn't get into this book. It jumped around a lot and rambled. I wanted to like it, but I just couldn't.

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