



Radical Hope: Letters of Love and Dissent in Dangerous Times

Carolina De Robertis (Editor) , Junot Díaz (Contributor) , Faith Adiele (Contributor) , Parnaz Foroutan (Contributor) , Chip Livingston (Contributor) , Mohja Kahf (Contributor) , Achy Obejas (Contributor) , Viet Thanh Nguyen (Contributor) , more... Cherrie Moraga (Contributor) , Kate Schatz (Contributor) , Boris Fishman (Contributor) , Karen Joy Fowler (Contributor) , Elmaz Abinader (Contributor) , Aya de León (Contributor) , Jane Smiley (Contributor) , Luis Alberto Urrea (Contributor) , Mona Eltahawy (Contributor) , Jeff Chang (Contributor) , Claire Messud (Contributor) , Meredith Russo (Contributor) , Reyna Grande (Contributor) , Katie Kitamura (Contributor) , iO Tillett Wright (Contributor) , Francisco Goldman (Contributor) , Celeste Ng (Contributor) , Peter Orner (Contributor) , Cristina García (Contributor) , Aliciz Garza (Contributor) , Roxana Robinson (Contributor) , Lisa See (Contributor) , Jewelle Gomez (Contributor) , Hari Kunzru (Contributor) ...less

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Radical Hope is a collection of letters—to ancestors, to children five generations from now, to strangers in grocery lines, to any and all who feel weary and discouraged--written by award-winning novelists, poets, political thinkers, and activists. Provocative and inspiring, *Radical Hope* offers readers a kaleidoscopic view of the love and courage needed to navigate this time of upheaval, uncertainty, and fear, in view of the recent US presidential election.

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From Reader Review Radical Hope: Letters of Love and Dissent in Dangerous Times for online ebook

Tracy says

Im only about halfway done, and I REALLY wish I could appreciate this but its just so repetitive....

maybe something will wow me and I'll change my mind when I'm done. Maybe I'm just in a horrible mood. I know I should be more interested in politics but honestly I am so bored right now.

Preethi says

To be quite honest, when I read the introduction and understood the seed for this book - That fateful election day in November 2016 when everyone sane lamented the brief death of sanity and reason in this world - I judged it a bit. Yes, we live in trying times, but it surely is not apocalyptic. It is very entertaining, in fact, and very sad, to see some basic rights being questioned, but it is not the end of the world.

Then I asked myself if I was being honest really. No, I was not. How could I forget the sinking feeling in my heart as I saw the election results on Nov 8, as I was in the flight? How did I forget the conversations I had with my seat-mate, an Afghani-American? What possessed me to forget the collective sad vibe in the flight that day, as we all looked at each other in disbelief as we locked eyes with strangers for the next 7-8 hours!

No, it wasn't the sadness that Trump was elected. Neither was it the question of how he won, enough analysis has been done on this and I can even understand why people voted for him. It was the shock that someone who stood for divisiveness and stupidity was supported and not condemned. It was a brutal fact that stared in the eyes of the world that there were people who thought he was right and commended him. Those racist feelings which always existed but were supposed to be shameful were expressed out loud and met with Ayes. This was what was worthy of a lament.

And that is what this book is about. A bunch of smart people writing letters to people in their past, present and future, giving anecdotes from their personal family histories about The Resistance they all had to stand up for, during various phases in the last century. With heavy references to humanity and America's dark past, this book is a good reminder of the struggle civil rights had to go through to reach where we are today.

I believe that history is important to be taught to the next generation because how else are we supposed to progress as a population if we forget where we come from. This book has plenty to support this feeling.

Pick up this book if you believe in accepting reality and want to work towards a better future. Make your innocent teens and racist family members read this book because every once in a while, it is important to know the struggle humans have had because of their race, religion, color, Creed, caste, language and looks.

However, talking about such things with people who already agree with us on principle is not something The Resistance should focus on, in this climate. Let this book give you fodder to reason with those that believe that the extreme-right-slogans we see today are right. Coz, I also believe that the intellectual war can be won only when we can reason with the enemy and show why hate is wrong. So, think about reaching into the other side and trying to understand why they think what they think. Think of innovative arguments to show them a mirror about victimhood and entitlement. More than anything, let's all not judge and let's be open to

listening to the arguments and debate with facts, not feelings.

Natalia says

Short stories from various authors, primarily centering around issues of immigration and intersectionality post-election. I liked it more than a 3, I think I'm just a little jaded re-hashing all the post-election feelings. Would have been much more useful 7 months ago!

Mugren Ohaly says

How dare you compare this trash to the work of Ta-Nehisi Coates and James Baldwin?!

I was expecting the letters to cover a variety of dangerous times, rather than just 'Oh, no! Trump is now president'.

This is basically a book full of letters from 30 writers who have lived with blinders on in a world supposedly full of rainbows and fairies. Trump being elected president shouldn't be such a surprise for so many people, and the world can't get better if people don't wake up and realize that!

The only letter I liked was by Io Tillett Wright.

Writing says

Touching, informative, radical: this collection of essays is to be read over and over again! Some of the best writers of our time have poured out their hearts, in many ways, to advance thought and action about the status of the USA following the election of Donald Trump as the 45th president. Letters to historical figures, letters to future generations, letters to the reader--all intended to bring a new perspective on where we are as Americans in a time of unrest, uncertainty, and downright fear. And the overall message: develop radical hope.

I borrowed this book from my local library, and I plan to own a copy soon.

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

These letters are written in the months directly after Trump's election. Some are to historical figures, some are to future beings (grandchildren who are babies, etc.) They help each writer specify their beliefs in the context of the person they are addressing.

Something about the letter format with this directive, however, comes across to me as overly didactic. I may just be weary of protests while the political climate grows increasingly harmful. I also doubt anyone outside of the radical left would ever feel compelled to read a book marketed in this way, and in that sense they are preachy in two ways - preachy in tone and preaching to the choir.

I can't really fault them for the impulse. But solidifying our own beliefs and urging people we already have in our circles to do the same is easy. Preaching is easy, young man, changing is harder.

For the intended audience, these letters will likely be a balm and a boost. And for the literary crowds, seeing names like Viet Thanh Nguyen, Celeste Ng, Hari Kunzru, Karen Joy Fowler, Junot Diaz, etc., is a likely draw.

Thanks to the publisher for approving my request in both Edelweiss and NetGalley; clearly my impulse to read them was strong as I asked twice! The book officially came out May 2.

Cherrie says

Truly thankful for the amazing compilation of letters from progressive authors of our time. Definitely timely and perfect for giving us a much-needed dose of hope. My favorites include: "America" by Parnaz Foroutan, "Human Rights is the Handhold, Pass it On" by Mkhja Kahf, "A Time to Demand the Impossible" by Viet Thanh Nguyen, "The Fear and The Resistance" by Jedf Chang, Claire Messud's letter to her daughter, "The Most Important Act of Resistance" by Meredith Russo, and Celeste Ng's "Stay Open."

"Every moment our fears and anxieties hold dominion over us is a moment that those who hate have stolen from us, and we must give them nothing." -M. Russo

Kristen Lemaster says

Forever keeping this in my office. A book full of love, hope, and a call to action - read this if you need a reminder that people can still fight to be good and true. (junot diaz and celeste ng's letters are perfect, as usual)

Hannah (fullybookedreviews) says

I'm not American, but I did follow the electoral goings-on with a mixture of horror and dismay. And dramatic political upheavals are not limited to the US of A – a brief glance at the news will reveal that bigotry and corruption have gotten a stranglehold in countries across the globe.

So when I saw this book up for request on Edelweiss, I didn't hesitate to click. I think we're all in need of some mental encouragement, some restorative for the soul in these rather trying times. (I'm not one to bury my head in the sand, but constant political awareness is somewhat exhausting and depressing.)

This is hard work. One could easily become exhausted, or fall prey to despair. This is where this book comes in. There is an antidote to despair to be found in connection, in shared words and thoughts and voices.

While the anthology is obviously US-centric, many of the lessons, observations and encouragements contained in this anthology can be applied across borders. As evidenced by the cover, this collection is made up of a diverse array of voices, some which may resonate with you, and others you will learn from.

And I think, for this review, I'll allow a selection of quotes from the book to speak for themselves.

Colonial power, patriarchal power, capitalist power must always and everywhere be battled, because they never, ever quit.

On nationality, roots and ancestral history:

The human story is one of continual branching movement, out of Africa to every corner of the globe. When people talk of blood and soil, as if their ancestors sprung fully formed from the earth of a particular place, it involves a kind of forgetting.

On idealism:

I want to believe in prophecies more than policies. I want to listen to poets instead of pollsters. I want prosperity for all rather than profits for some. I want to believe in the people rather than the president.

Being a white women, it is perhaps unsurprising that one of the essays that resonated with me was one entitled "Dear White People".

Nothing changes if we just feel shitty about being White. And nothing changes if we refuse to talk about it. The opposite of white pride does not have to be white shame. We can't push it away and pretend it's not us. We are not color-blind, we are not post-race, we do not get to reject our whiteness because it makes us feel bad... This does not get solved with a Celebration of Diversity Day and a coexist bumper sticker.

&

You are an ally because of your actions, not because you say you are.

On those who hold political power:

Sometimes the office may elevate the man; more often, the man degrades the office.

On despair:

I saw that I had overestimated the goodness of ordinary people. I saw that men who care about nothing but money will always rule the world.

A critique of the 'better option' still not being good enough:

Yet we progressives had handed you the very tools with which you would critique what was possible in favour of what was perfect. You couldn't see Hillary as creating the preferable but imperfect conditions in which you would act. Because you were taught to wait on the sidelines for someone beyond criticism.

And this food for thought, which I don't think I have the goodness to embrace:

There will come a time and it won't be long, when the followers of Orange Caesar will realise that they have been lied to. That they have been fooled. That they are objects of cynical derision. And they will be hurt. We think we ache, we Nasty Women and Bad Hombres. That is when we must act. It will be our task not to gloat or mock. Because they are Us. It will be our job to comfort. We are not, in this midnight, permitted to refuse

to shine. We are the light. Grace beats karma.

This thoughtful rumination on the power of words:

But language is malleable, and it is not always on the side of truth. This is something every writer knows. Words make and unmake the world with terrifying rapidity, and they do so without moral distinction...There is a battle going on right now over the words we use, over who has the right to speak and who does not.

A scathing indictment of US policy towards migrants – this passage just gripped me and wouldn't let me go:

...Obama's so called Plan Sur, which has literally outsourced immigration enforcement to corrupt Mexican authorities, providing Mexico with millions and millions of dollars to hunt and deport – effectively hunt, rape, rob, extort, murder, and maybe deport – Central American migrants in its southern regions in an attempt to alleviate the embarrassment of having hundreds of thousands of child refugees amassing at our borders, fleeing the violence and poverty of the very same Central America countries we gifted with “democracy” in exchange for helping to turn their countries into mass graves back in the '80s.

And a final message for all of us, going forward.

That people you don't know are worth knowing, that they have something to teach you. That learning about them – that encountering new ideas – doesn't threaten you, it enriches you.

ARC received from Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review. Quotes taken from uncorrected proof and may differ from final publication.

Nancy says

I was attracted to *Radical Hope: Letters of Love and Dissent in Dangerous Times* because of the outstanding contributors, including Junot Díaz, Lisa See, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Jane Smiley, and Celeste Ng. A firm believer that writers are the key to maintaining society's highest aspirations, I hoped to find inspiration and affirmation in these pages.

The letters are written to leaders of the past, to real and to imagined future children, to strangers and to the known. Each contributor speaks of their personal journey and agony. They share a fear of our government's agenda that threatens hard-won rights and protections.

The letters are divided into three sections: *Roots*, which "explores the histories that bring us to this moment," and *Branches*, considering present day people and communities, and *Seeds*, considering the future who will inherit the system and world we will leave behind.

Frankly, many of these letters were hard to read, confronting us with the pain and misery inflicted upon people because of their color, sexual orientation, or ethnicity. I could only read an essay or two a day. Yet there is also in these letters a strength, a commitment, a vision of hope.

The message, says Katie Kitamura, is that this is not a time for complacency, and yet we must be open and

not mired in certitude, to think and not be compelled to "ideological haste."

"Beware easy answers," warns Boris Fishman, "Let's get out of our comfort zones...let's lose our certainty--perhaps our arrogance."

"Be kind, be curious, be helpful...stay open," Celeste Ng writes to her child.

"Please promise me that you will, insofar as any person can, set your fear aside and devote yourself to a full, honest life. That, my child, is the first and most important act of resistance any of us can undertake," advises Meredith Russo to her child.

The struggle for human rights is ongoing, continual. We have seen the backlash against hard gained protections and equality. The battle continues.

I received a free ebook from the publisher through NetGalley in exchange for a fair and unbiased review.

Gabrielle says

I found it to be incredibly repetitive. We get it, Trump isn't the president you wanted and SOMEHOW it's white people's fault? Just a no.

Heather says

This book is amazing. I learned a lot. And many of the letters pointed me in the direction of other books, both by the letter-writers, and people they quoted. I HIGHLY recommend this!!

Diane S ? says

Like many, author Carolina de Robertis was overcome with fear, a new President had been elected. Worried about the civil rights of many, people of color, different sexual orientation, different religions, she put in a call for action. She reached out to fellow writers, asking for love letters, letters written for what she believes will be a turbulent time. Some of our most well known authors and some I wasn't familiar with did what they do best, put pen to paper. Most of these letters are simply amazing.

Some are written to their child, some to the reading public, ancestors or children not yet born, some to famous boundary breakers of the past. They come from different backgrounds, they or their ancestors came from different countries, Syria, China, Vietnam, Mexico, Egypt. They are black, Hispanic, Middle Eastern, Asian, we hear the words from many, the world over. Some of the most known are Lisa See, Jane Smiley, Junot Diaz, Karen Joy Fowler, Claire Massud and Celestina Ng. They are full of fear, hope, love and anger, Karen Joy Fowler's was the most angry but does end on a note of hope. My favorite was by Viet Thanh Nguyen, the author of *The Sympathizer* and *The Refugees*.

A wonderful collection that expresses many of things so many of us feel in a very personal and real way. Very interesting, informative and well done.

Mrs. Europaea says

If you read only one book this year please, please make it **Radical Hope** by Carolina De Robertis. **Radical Hope** is composed of individual letters written in a variety of tones: tender, analytical, impassioned, hopeful, deeply personal, and much more. The collection of these love letters are written by various writers discussing their personal reactions in the days and weeks proceeding the November 8th, 2016 election. The letters are addressed to historical figures like Harriett Tubman, to sons and daughters, to White People, and to future kin generations from now.

Radical Hope combines into one epistolary essay what many American people have been feeling and protesting in the months since Trump won the electoral college, putting a face, along with a story behind each threat to human rights and democracy.

No matter what side of the political spectrum you fall on, **Radical Hope** is a story shared by individuals discussing their life experiences and their hopes for the future. While you may not share Junot Diaz's opinion that Trump is a toxic misogynist, racial demagogue who wants to make America great by destroying the civil rights gained of the past fifty years, you will come to understand the feelings and experiences behind his rationale on why colonial power, patriarchal power and capital power must be battled everywhere, all the time. If you are in a place of privilege and have trouble relating to the social issues minorities face, Schatz lays it out for you in her letter "What I Mean" addressed: Dear White People. Schatz asks white people to recognize their privilege, recognize that in America there is a system to ensure hierarchies of economic, political, and social control that white people benefit from every day. Even if you didn't vote for Trump, Schatz explains, we still elected him and it is our responsibility to accept and acknowledge this in order to resist.

So, again, if you only read one book this year, please make it **Radical Hope**. We don't always have to agree but we do need to hear people's stories, we don't need to agree but we can grow from hearing another perspective. At the end of the day all we are are our experiences, they make us, mold us into who we are, what we stand for, and what we place value on.

Shirleen R says

full review - to come

I'd recommend. I foresee myself reading **Radical Hope** when I'm depressed about our current political climate in the U.S.. Favorite contributions: Mona Eltahawy, Karen Joy Fowler, Francisco Goldman, Kate Schatz. Aya De Leon, Jeff Chang,

Question for anyone who read this book: Thoughts about the unifying device - each writer addresses their letter to their children? 95% of the writers wrote to actual children. Cristina Garcia' wrote to a child she imagined 7 generations from now into the future. Did this m.o. irritate anyone? Or become a restraint on the essays that backfired, in your opinion?

