



Hope Dies Last: Keeping the Faith in Difficult Times

Studs Terkel

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The renowned oral historian turns his attention to the aspirations of "the American century."

I feel there's gonna be a change, but we're the ones gonna do it, not the government. With us there's a saying, "La esperenza muera ultima. Hope dies last." You can't lose hope. If you lose hope, you lose everything.—Jessie de la Cruz, retired farm worker

Studs Terkel's marvelous oral histories have hitherto dealt with specifics, as he puts it "the visceral stuff the job, race, age and death." While Terkel's chosen theme here, the incandescence of hope, might at first appear elusive, it is anything but abstract. For Terkel, hope is born of activism, commitment, and the steely determination to resist.

The spirit of activism has ebbed and flooded through Terkel's venerable life. In the Great Depression of the 1930s he recalls a man swinging from a chandelier at the Astor Hotel shouting for "Social Security!" In the 1960s it was African Americans and students who advocated for equal rights and an end to maladventure overseas. And now, in a new century, young and old are joining forces on the streets to say no to war. The spark of activism is igniting the precious idea of a better world once again.

The interviews in *Hope Dies Last* constitute an alternative history of the "American century," forming a legacy of the indefatigable spirit that Studs has always embodied, and an inheritance for those who, by taking a stand, are making concrete the dreams of today.



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