



## **Jonathan Kozol**

*Educator & Social Justice Advocate*

In the passion of the civil rights campaigns of 1964 and 1965, Jonathan Kozol gave up the prospect of a promising and secure career within the academic world, moved from Harvard Square into a poor black neighborhood of Boston, and became a fourth grade teacher.

He has since devoted nearly half a century to the increasingly complex and urgent issues facing public education and to the challenge of providing equal opportunity within our public schools to every child regardless of racial origin or economic level. Today, he is the most widely read and highly honored education writer in America.

Kozol's latest book, *Fire in the Ashes*, is the major book of his career—a powerful and stirring culmination of the stories he has told for over a quarter century about the children of the poorest urban neighborhood in the United States. *Fire in the Ashes* follows these children out of their infancy, through the struggles of their adolescence, and into their young adulthood. Though some of their stories are painful and heartbreaking, others are thrilling and dramatic tributes to these children's courage and audacity in refusing to be defeated by the gross inequalities of US education and instead achieve unpredictable and triumphal victories.

Called "today's most eloquent spokesman for America's disenfranchised," he believes that children speak best for themselves and thus relates their testimony through his presentations and his latest book.

*Death at an Early Age*, a description of his first year as a teacher, was published in 1967 and received the 1968 National Book Award in Science, Philosophy, and Religion. Now regarded as a classic by educators, it has sold more than two million copies in the United States and Europe.

Among the other major works that he has written since are *Rachel and Her Children*, a study of homeless mothers and their children, which received the Robert F. Kennedy Book Award for 1989 and the Conscience in Media Award of the American Society of Journalists and Authors, and *Savage Inequalities*, which won the New England Book Award and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1992.

His 1995 bestseller *Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation* was featured on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and received the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award in 1996, an honor previously granted to the works of Langston Hughes and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison wrote that *Amazing Grace* was "good in the old-fashioned sense:



beautiful and morally worthy." Elie Wiesel said, "Jonathan's struggle is noble. His outcry must shake our nation out of its guilty indifference."

Ten years later, Kozol published *The Shame of the Nation*, a powerful exposé of conditions he found in nearly 60 public schools in 30 different districts. He charged that inner-city children were more isolated racially than at any time since federal courts began dismantling the landmark ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*. *The Shame of the Nation*, which appeared on the New York Times Bestseller List the week it was published, has since joined *Amazing Grace*, *Savage Inequalities*, and *Death at an Early Age* as required reading at most universities.

When he is not with children and teachers in their classrooms or at universities speaking to our future teachers, Kozol is likely to be found in Washington, where he has spent much of the past two years attempting to convince his friends within the Senate leadership to radically revise the punitive federal testing law No Child Left Behind.

Kozol received a summa cum laude degree in English literature from Harvard in 1958, after which he was awarded a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford University.

### Topics:

- "The Race Gap": Why Does It Persist? What Are the Solutions?
- In Praise of a Beautiful Profession: Educators Working in the Front Lines of the Public Schools
- Turning Around Low-Performing Schools: New Strategies, New Visions
- Letters to a Young Teacher: The Formidable Challenges & Passionate Rewards of Those Who Teach in Public Schools (Advice, Encouragement & Inspiration)
- Among Schoolchildren: The Challenges for Teachers in the Age of Tests & Severe Accountability
- The Shame of the Nation: Inequalities & Racial Segregation – A Strategic Response, A Call to Action
- The Soul of a Profession: Public Education Under Siege
- A Talk to Teachers: Race, Poverty & Public Education
- Joy & Justice: An Invitation to the Young to Serve the Children of the Poor