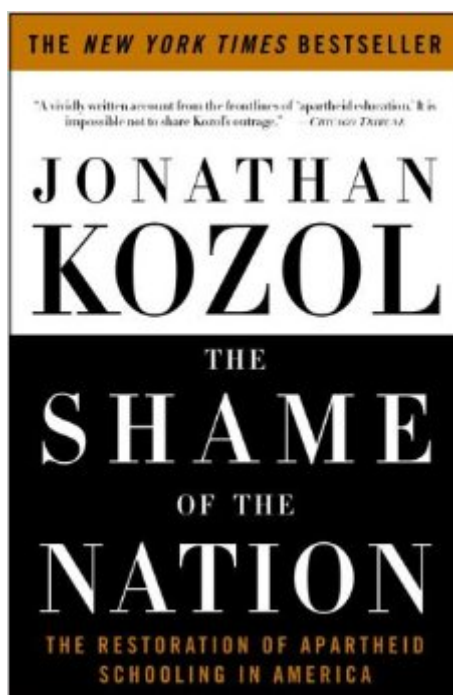


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The Shame Of The Nation: The Restoration Of Apartheid Schooling In America



Synopsis

Since the early 1980s, when the federal courts began dismantling the landmark ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, segregation of black children has reverted to its highest level since 1968. In many inner-city schools, a stick-and-carrot method of behavioral control traditionally used in prisons is now used with students. Meanwhile, as high-stakes testing takes on pathological and punitive dimensions, liberal education has been increasingly replaced by culturally barren and robotic methods of instruction that would be rejected out of hand by schools that serve the mainstream of society. Filled with the passionate voices of children, principals, and teachers, and some of the most revered leaders in the black community, *The Shame of the Nation* pays tribute to those undefeated educators who persist against the odds, but directly challenges the chilling practices now being forced upon our urban systems. In their place, Kozol offers a humane, dramatic challenge to our nation to fulfill at last the promise made some 50 years ago to all our youngest citizens.

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Customer Reviews

It is noted that those who make the choice to attack the book on the basis of their own ideological biases, seem to have serious problems with honesty (they didn't actually read the book) or exhibit for all the world to see that they are unable to grasp a fairly simple thesis: that segregation in our public schools damages children. Jonathan Kozol has spent the last forty something years observing on a first hand basis the tragedy of how our educational system has failed those who might most benefit from going to clean, well-equipped schools, where every child has a desk, a chair and

materials....as well as a decently trained professional educator dedicated to imparting knowledge to them. It is one thing to blame the poor for their conditions, it is quite another to consign small children to rotten schools on the basis of their luck in not being born into the right race or class. It would seem the only compassion worthy of the conservatives who write reviews for books they can't be bothered to read is feeling sorry for a failed scheme like No Child Left Behind. That, and gratuitous attacks on teachers unions. Talk radio propaganda< however, is not a good foundation for book criticism. Kozol, a man of extraordinary decency and insight into the inequities of our educational system, doesn't base his theories on statistics and thinktank framing. He goes into the schools he writes about, and talks to the kids who are consigned to them, the teachers who have to make do with impossible conditions, and parents fighting for their kids. Kozol just reports what he sees, and writes movingly and gracefully about those who will pay the price of the criminal neglect our society seems to think is acceptable. The stories he tells are heartbreaking. And that there is no escaping the shame that those attack this book, clearly without reading it, would feel if they weren't so firmly invested in escaping the accountability and responsibility, which the last time I checked were supposed to be Conservative Values.

Jonathan Kozol uses his background in public education and keen wit to deliver another scathing, needed, and largely accurate critique of American public schooling. In the sequel to his 'Savage Inequalities', he argues that patterns of socioeconomic stratification paired with standardized testing fever are creating and maintaining disparate education systems which are recreating segregated schooling. Mostly white children in 'nice' suburbs have clean and safe schools with a curriculum that stimulates their interests and creativity. Meanwhile, predominantly black and Hispanic children are consigned to attend run-down inner city schools whose administrators and staff (even the 'good and caring' ones) must spend the scant money they do receive on rote memorization. Socioeconomic discrepancy will subsequently be used to track those students into an altogether different set of life opportunities. In addition to economics, Kozol heaps blame at the rise of standardized testing programs. Instituted with the then-idealistic idea they would help schools, teachers, and parents proactively diagnose "learning problems" so all students could then achieve, these programs have instead become a tool in creating and reinforcing the disparities. Students unable to pass the testing program become branded as 'failure' subsequently limiting their academic and other future options---all on the results of one piece of paper. Examining the current high-stakes test-centric environment, it is difficult to believe that this public policy originated as a program intended to help all children. 'Whose children are being helped in America's schools with our current policies?' should be

asked All school districts are vulnerable to 'teaching to the program' but such actions hurt already short-changed inner city students much more than the suburbanite. Because the former school has money to spare outside of the testing programs, compliance with federal and state testing program requirements (no matter how unrealistic the benchmark definitions of student success) is easier to absorb. The same school struggling to keep working toilets is not as fortunate. Brilliant observations aside, Kozol did not factor in how disability affects education. I had attended a 'rich' school district, but had my own experiences with tracking and unequal resources because I was a special education student who was enrolled in a resource math class. Because I am also aware these experiences are severely amplified in urban school districts and current standardized testing programs attempt to ignore or downplay the need to provide disability accommodations for eligible students, this information should have been included in his study.

A compelling look at the disparity in our educational system. In some parts of this country there is a disparity in annual expenditure per pupil WITHIN THE SAME CITY of \$9,000. Nearly every city has an unacceptable disparity. The poor in this nation stay poor because they are denied an equal chance to better themselves - starting at age 5. The money spent on the bogus No Child Left Behind could and should instead be spent to level the playing field for all students. Ignoring poverty and blaming the poor is all too popular in America these days, but how can a child escape the cycle of poverty if they don't have the same access to education? I don't believe that anyone could actually have read this book and still believe that the poor in America are poor because they don't try as hard as the rest of us. The better-off keep these people down by refusing to educate them. No Child Left Behind is a sham. I know: I work for a software company that makes the tests, scores them, and supports the teachers and administrators who administer these tests. It is simple window dressing by the current administration. I have yet to meet a teacher, administrator or parent who believes NCLB accomplishes a thing for the students. The teachers already KNOW which kids are underperforming. Race and poverty are the biggest predictors of NCLB test scores. Duh! The money being spent to show what is already known could be spent to improve the worst public schools. We waste money measuring students to find out what we already know, instead of spending money to improve their education.

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