

Kozol Bio



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In 1967, during the heart of the civil rights movement, a young white teacher in the poor, black section of Boston was fired for reading a Langston Hughes poem to his fourth grade students. That individual was Jonathan Kozol.

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, *Death At An Early Age* sold more than two million copies in the United States and abroad.

After being fired from his first job, Kozol did a short teaching stint at a suburban school. The shock of going from one of the country's poorest public schools to one of its richest never left him. From the start, Kozol combined teaching with activism. He taught at South Boston High School during the city's desegregation crisis. Working with black and Hispanic parents, he helped set up a storefront learning center that became a model for many others throughout the U.S. In 1980, the Cleveland Public Library asked him to design a literacy plan for the nation's large cities. His plan became the model for a major effort sparked by the State Library of California. The book that followed, *Illiterate America*, was the center of a campaign to spur state, federal and private action on adult literacy.

In 1989, Kozol revisited America's schools. He went to rich and poor schools in over thirty communities. This experience led him to write *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools* (1991), which received The New England Book Award in non-fiction.

This summa cum laude graduate of Harvard and a Rhodes Scholar, Kozol lives today in Massachusetts.