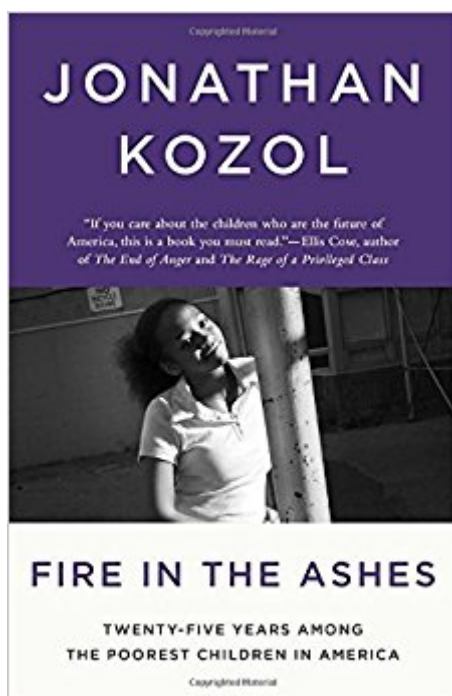


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# Fire In The Ashes: Twenty-Five Years Among The Poorest Children In America



## Synopsis

In this powerful and culminating work about a group of inner-city children he has known for many years, Jonathan Kozol returns to the scene of his previous prize-winning books, and to the children he has vividly portrayed, to share with us their fascinating journeys and unexpected victories as they grow into adulthood. For nearly fifty years, Jonathan has pricked the conscience of his readers by laying bare the savage inequalities inflicted upon children for no reason but the accident of being born to poverty within a wealthy nation. But never has his intimate acquaintance with his subjects been more apparent, or more stirring, than in *Fire in the Ashes*, as Jonathan tells the stories of young men and women who have come of age in one of the most destitute communities of the United States. Some of them never do recover from the battering they undergo in their early years, but many more battle back with fierce and often jubilant determination to overcome the formidable obstacles they face. As we watch these glorious children grow into the fullness of a healthy and contributive maturity, they ignite a flame of hope, not only for themselves but also for our society.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A Kirkus Reviews Best Nonfiction Book of 2012  
A Booklist 2012 Editor's Choice

Selection of Kozol's storytelling gifts shine through: with simple anecdotes that show the soulful humor, compassion, and wisdom that kindles progress among the survivors. "Christian Science Monitor" "Fire in the Ashes isn't some saccharine account of how disadvantaged youth get a break and then triumph over adversity. Instead, Kozol shows us the very real costs of putting children in bad schools. Throughout, Kozol connects with these kids and young adults on a human

level, refusing to step on to some political soapbox.â • â "Boston Globe" "As I read *Fire in the Ashes* and thought about Kozol's admirably principled commitment to chronicling the lives of the urban poor, I marveled at his staying power.Â His tone, too, has been consistent for almost 50 years â " cool, smart, empathetic and, despite all the evidence to rebut his convictions, full of hopeâ |.Kozol's brilliant body of work shines a light not merely on the lives of the poor, but also into the dark night of the American soul.â • â "Portland Oregonian" "Check out this magnificent book, because I think youâ™ll like it.Â For anyone [who] cares about his fellow human, *Fire in the Ashes* burns bright.â • â "Savannah Morning News" "Engrossing chronicle of lives blighted and redeemed....Eschewing social science jargon and deploying extraordinary powers of observation and empathy, Kozol crafts dense, novelistic character studies that reveal the interplay between individual personality and the chaos of impoverished circumstances.Â Like a latter-day Dickens (but without the melodrama), he gives us another powerful indictment of America's treatment of the poor.â • â "Publisher's Weekly (starred)" "In this engaging, illuminating, often moving book, [Kozol] recounts the lives of poor black and Latino childrenâ "many now close friendsâ "who once lived in Manhattanâ™s Martini Hotelâ |.Clear-eyed, compassionate and hopeful.â • â "Kirkus Reviews (starred)" "An engaging look at the broader social implications of ignoring poverty as well as a very personal look at individuals struggling to overcome it.â •Â â "Booklist (starred)" "Jonathan Kozol is Americaâ™s premier chronicler of life among the children of societal neglect. And *Fire in the Ashes* may be his best book yet . . . . Kozol does not just write about these people; he becomes an intimate part of their lives, sharing their triumphs, defeats, and, too often, mourning their deaths . . . . If you care about the children who are the future of America, this is a book you must read.â • â "Ellis Cose, author of *The End of Anger* and *The Rage of a Privileged Class*" "Despite the steep odds stacked against these childrenâ "which too many cannot overcomeâ "this is a hopeful book thanks to those who do. The incredible resilience, grit and grace of children like Pineapple are a call to urgent action.â • â "Marian Wright Edelman, President, Childrenâ™s Defense Fund" "Kozol has a knack for describing his relationships with poverty-stricken children with a sympathy that is so straightforward one cannot indulge in pity.Â *Fire in the Ashes* is a wonderful book. I couldnâ™t put it down.â • â "Deborah Meier, author of *In Schools We Trust* and *The Power of Their Ideas*" "Fire in the Ashes" is a terrific bookâ "powerful, insightful, and heartbreaking.â • â "David Berliner, author of *The Manufactured Crisis*

JONATHAN KOZOL is the award-winning author of *Savage Inequalities*, *Death at an Early Age*, *The Shame of the Nation*, and *Amazing Grace*.Â He has been working with children in inner-city schools

for nearly fifty years.

The book, *Fire in the Ashes*, is a book of many different stories. The book has chapters for each different family living in poverty. The author shows how poverty can completely destroy people and crush their spirits and how some are able to overcome it. What is interesting is that the only success stories in the book are the ones in which people received help. Whether it be a scholarship for college or a new home, children who were given help thrived. The ones who were not given help ended up dead or in prison. The book shows the sad reality of what happens to most kids in poverty. It also shows that it is not their fault. People who have the mindset of: "They do it to themselves" should read this book. People living in poverty may be just as hard working and determined as anyone else. When given an opportunity people from poverty took advantage of it. The only problem is that most people are not given a chance. Most kids don't think they have anything to work for, and realistically, they don't. I would recommend that anyone who cares about children, or people in general, should read this book.

This book captured my attention immediately. I read it from cover to cover in no time. I can relate to the information that is conveyed throughout this book perhaps because I am a life-long resident of the Bronx. I have seen personally how hard it is for many to succeed under the most difficult of circumstances. I have been a follower of Jonathan Kozol's writings for years beginning with *Death at an Early Age*. I admire Jonathan because he is genuine, sincere and fully commits himself to the children he profiles by getting totally involved with their lives, their neighborhoods and their education. He is fearless!

I bought this book because I am a longtime reader (and lover) of Mr. Kozol's work. While I found the book interesting (and was happy to get some updated information) I don't think I'd necessarily call it required reading for anyone interested in education (as I have said about *Amazing Grace*). It felt more like a summary of his older work than a new book, even though it was all new material. Still, assuming one hasn't read all of his other books, I would recommend it. 3 1/2 stars.

Another well researched and written book by Jonathan Kozol. I read *Fire in the Ashes* when it was released many years ago and was delighted to see a followup on the children. I did a cross reading check with both books to refresh my memory on the lives of the children then and today. The book highlights how 25 years later the children and parents struggled to survive and make a path in life. It

is not easy when their foundations were laid on the sands of poverty and drugs. Some are successful and some are lost along the way. I admire the determination shown despite having so many obstacles to overcome. Jonathon Kozol was a solid rock for those children and parents. He never let them down and was a constant reminder to them that he cared and stood up for them when society was so dismissive. Read all his other books if you get a chance. It will bring tears to your eyes and make you wonder how could this happen in America.

Good book

This book goes beyond thought provoking... it tears at your heart strings and whispers in your ear... "are you part of the problem or part of the solution" ? It is a book for policymakers at all levels. Fire in the Ashes makes visible the longstanding implications of deliberate, or at best unintentional strategies for change, that have divided us as a nation. Both politically and educationally, poorly conceived policies have pushed the poorest of us into despair, while sparing everyone else a glimpse of the overwhelming roadblocks and repercussions of such policies on individuals and families. By legislating against HOPE for whatever reason, great damage has been done to innocent children and their families. As you read into the several decades represented in this book, ask yourself what is the answer that has so long eluded us.

Read this book and share it with your friends and family. Kozol gives readers the ability to feel the surroundings, see the scenes, and hear the voices those he writes about. He isn't telling stories, he's sharing these individuals lives with us and does so with respect.

I've been reading Jonathan Kozol for two decades, and the sensitivity he has for the populations he writes about is inspiring and admirable. His writing comes alive and leaves me feeling as though I personally know each person in his books. The fact that he realizes how children are our future and it is so important to treat them as they are a precious resource coincides with my way of thinking and the sadness of the realization that our current society has more concern for other things. I appreciated learning about how life has been for the children he has encountered and especially Leonardo. His books are all highly recommended by me.

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