

BOOK REVIEWS

Jonathan Kozol. *Death at an Early Age: The Destruction of the Hearts and Minds of Negro Children in the Boston Public Schools.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967. 240 pp.

When, untrained and inexperienced, Jonathan Kozol became a substitute teacher in the Boston Public Schools, his classroom was the corner of an auditorium between two broken windows and a torn stage curtain. The other Fourth Grade used the opposite corner, and the middle was occupied by the Glee Club, the play rehearsals, and the various remedial classes. When a pane of glass blew out in a storm, that window remained open all winter, but it was replaced when a TV company came to visit.

The pupils were mainly colored children. In Boston. In 1967.

The school cellar smelled of urine. That was where emotional and troublesome children were whipped. The stick was flexible, light and quick. "When you do it, you want to snap it abruptly or else you are not going to get the kind of effect you want," one teacher advised.

In Boston. In 1967.

Worse, far worse, than peeling paint and urine smell was the false learning the children acquired: their own inferiority. When they entered school, their achievement levels were about normal; with each year of schooling they dropped lower. The school itself killed its children.

Jonathan Kozol is an angry teacher who had the courage to make a stand against the system, lose his job because of it, but bring the issues to public attention. In his book pupils, teachers, parents, and school administrators stand out vividly alive, and each significant incident is documented with precise date and place and published account.

Have you wondered why there were riots in the cities in 1967?

Have you wondered about our own Indian and Eskimo schools?

Daisy MacNeill