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EDITORIAL

Jonathan Kozol's *Nation of Shame* Forty Years Later

Lorraine Kasprisin, Editor

On September 29, 2005, Jonathan Kozol spoke at Western Washington University on his latest book, *The Shame of the Nation, the Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America*. We have used the occasion of his talk as the impetus for this issue of our journal. For those interested in viewing Mr. Kozol's lecture, we have provided a link to [the video of his presentation](#). Against a background of the concerns he has raised over the last forty years, we asked authors to consider the following dilemma:

Jonathan Kozol reminds us that this country's schools are more segregated now than at any time since 1968. The moral imperative driving the public schools is found in the language of the nation's ideals as well as in the rhetoric of its political slogans, but that imperative has not been able to be realized. What is the nature of the gap between the present realities of American schooling and a fulfilled vision of equal educational opportunities for all? In this issue we invite authors to examine various forces that impede or distract from the realization of this vision, whether structural, moral, political, or pragmatic.

Since our "call for papers" went out, the United States Supreme Court has decided to hear arguments in the Seattle case on the use of race as a factor in public school admissions policy. As Jonathan Kozol says in his article in this issue, when the appeal from the Ninth Circuit is heard this term, "the prospects for integrated education in this nation may be decided with finality." Because of the events starting to transpire, our intent in this issue of the *Journal of Educational Controversy* is to offer the reader a comprehensive look at the multiple dimensions of the topic with the addition of a special section on Washington State Politics and the future U.S. Supreme Court decision. Since we are going to press before the decision is handed down, we will provide a link to the decision in our next issue along with articles in our rejoinder section that will bring the reader up to date. We invite authors to submit articles for our rejoinder section that examine the implications of that decision. We will continue to publish those articles as long as the conversation continues.

This issue of the journal has several sections – a prologue, an introductory section, articles in response to the controversy, and a special section on Washington State Politics.

PROLOGUE

First, we have a prologue written by Jonathan Kozol. The *Journal of Educational Controversy* is dedicating this issue to the life and work of Jonathan Kozol, who has been a voice for society's neglected children over the last forty years. We called our theme, "Jonathan Kozol's *Nation of Shame* Forty Years Later," because Jonathan's first book was published around forty years ago. Entitled, *Death at an Early Age*, the book was to be the first in a lifelong journey in which he has relentlessly reminded the nation about the conditions of the lives of so many of our forgotten children. With the recent publication of his latest book, *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America*, the editors of the *Journal of Educational Controversy* thought it was time to take a deep, serious look at where we have been, where we are, and where we are going in our country in fulfilling the mission of public schooling in offering equal educational opportunity for all its children.

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

Section I, our Introductory Section, contains a background essay to provide a context for the theme. Gary Orfield, distinguished professor of education at UCLA and co-director of the Civil Rights Project/El Proyecto de CRP, has permitted us to excerpt sections of his 2006 Report on *Racial Transformation and the Changing Nature of Segregation*. We are providing a short introduction to the selection of excerpts and a link to the entire report.

SECTION 2 – ARTICLES IN RESPONSE TO CONTROVERSY POSED

Following our introductory essay, Section 2 publishes articles that were written in response to the dilemma and controversy posed for this issue. The articles offer diverse approaches to the problem. Kerri Ulucci suggests that our inability to respond adequately is the result of the myths that blind us, the set of background beliefs that go largely unconscious and unexamined, but that continue to influence ways we conceptualize our problems and the solutions we seek. Beliefs in cultural deprivation, meritocracy and colorblindness together function as “blame shifting” myths that result in the achievement gaps, low expectations, and acceptance of failure of too many of our children left on the margins.

That insight is furthered in the work of Curt Dudley-Marling who alerts us to the return of language that conceptualizes the issues as deficits and the implications this has for our search for adequate answers. Specifically, he looks critically at Ruby Payne’s “culture of poverty”; Hart and Risley’s research on vocabulary development; and, the *family literacy* movement.

Brian Schultz brings us into his actual classroom and gives us a description of his fifth grade class who are living “savage inequalities.” With Brian’s essay, the journal is able to take full advantage of this new electronic media. Describing a project initiated by his class to fight for a new school, Brian intersperses the text of his essay with links to the students’ own website and DVD, letters the children wrote to the school board, city officials, local legislators, newspaper reporters, as well as to U.S. Vice President Cheney, television newscasts (still awaiting permission from ABC and NBC) and newspaper articles of the children’s efforts, video of their classroom conversations, charts of their own action plans, visits by a state representative and Ralph Nader, and photos the children took of the conditions of their school including photographs of the bullet holes that were still in the windows.

Our next essay goes beyond the traditional dualistic “Black/White Paradigm,” and looks at segregation from the viewpoint of its impact on other student populations. In a well-researched and informative article, Beatriz Arias argues that in the past desegregation remedies have seldom been tailored to the unique cultural and linguistic context of Latino students, and argues “that access to English is an integral component of the learning opportunity denied many Latino students.” Arias argues that court remedies fashioned in the past failed to adjust to the changing demographics of a district, and hence, failed to accommodate the needs specific to the changing student population.

Finally, Judith Owens provides a “modest proposal” to end the achievement gap, one reminiscent of another proposal offered by 19th century writer, Jonathan Swift.

SECTION 3 – SPECIAL SECTION ON WASHINGTON STATE POLITICS AND THE U.S. SUPREME COURT DECISION

Section 3 is a special section on Washington State Politics. As Jonathan Kozol says in his prologue, the upcoming U.S. Supreme Court decision on the use of race as a factor in public school admissions may decide the prospects for integrated education in this nation with finality. Because the Seattle schools are one of the litigants in the case, the *Journal of Educational Controversy* has decided to publish articles that give the reader both an understanding of the issues that will be argued before the

U.S. Supreme Court, and a look at the history and politics of the city and state that are at the center of this national debate.

Douglas Judge first provides an introduction to Washington state politics and history that led to the U.S. Supreme Court case including a timeline of events.

Two authors whose organizations offered amicus briefs to the Ninth Circuit and the U.S. Supreme Court provide the general reader with an understanding of the arguments presented to the court from both sides of the issue. Sonya Jones, an attorney for the Pacific Legal Foundation, argues that race conscious admission policies are a form of racial discrimination that violates the fourteenth amendment's equal protection clause. Arguing that such decisions should be based on constitutional grounds alone, Jones makes an argument against the court's use of social science research to justify any kind of racial preferences. Ricardo Sanchez, senior writer for the American Civil Liberties Union in Washington state, writes an introduction to the amicus brief that the ACLU presented to the U.S. Supreme Court. In his introduction, Sanchez specifically addresses the question of whether race-neutral remedies can lead to racial desegregation. As one of more than sixty briefs presented to the Court, the ACLU focused on one aspect of the issue - whether magnet schools and student assignment plans by socioeconomic status are sufficient to integrate schools. A copy of the complete amicus brief follows.

Two school administrators present opposing views on the issue in two deeply personal accounts of their experiences in the Seattle schools. David Engle, currently principal of Squalicum High School in Bellingham, Washington, was principal of Ballard High School in Seattle at the time the lower court passed down its decision ending the use of race in public school enrollment decisions. Here David talks about his decision to publicly resign his position from Ballard to voice opposition to the court's decision. He ends his essay with several questions for his readers, "Do we see integration as a desirable social goal? Do we believe public policy should support integration? Will we resolve our differences through the exercise of privilege or through a broader sense of destiny based on principles of equity?" Bruce Bivins, assistant principal of Franklin High School in Seattle, reminds the reader that there are important advantages to the neighborhood school concept that ought to be considered and shares the experiences of his school. He also ends his essay with a question for his readers, "Has busing limited our imagination to create something different for our children?"

Finally, we provide a unique look at the work of community groups in the state of Washington who, through the formation of the Multiethnic Think Tank, have voiced their concerns and offered ideas for action that would provide a more equitable education for all children. Started by the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) (Washington state's department of education) as part of its community outreach, the Multiethnic Think Tank has become a powerful and moving voice of the communities whose children have often been on the margins. The Multiethnic Think Tank is made up of five individual think tanks serving different populations (African American, Asian American and Pacific Islanders, Latino American, Native American and Low Socio-economic). The journal is publishing the position papers and calls for action that the community groups have prepared. To place their work in a context for the reader, Assistant Superintendent of the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Andrew Griffin, has written an introduction to the papers giving a history of the community outreach efforts from 1997 to its demise in 2006. In addition to the Multiethnic Think Tank position papers, Thelma Jackson, who played an important role in the formation of the Washington State Multiethnic Think Tank, has written a separate article in which she articulates the concerns and hopes of the communities demanding to be heard not only in Washington State but throughout the nation. With the demise of the Multiethnic Think Tank in 2006, the community groups are working on resurrecting themselves in another form.

Perhaps, it is most fitting that we end this issue with a student's perspective. For it is ultimately the next generation that will inherit the results of our actions and inactions. Lynette Vogeley, a student studying to become a teacher at Western Washington University, describes the attempt to create a student club devoted to social justice. Influenced by the visit of Jonathan Kozol to our university, Lynette describes how initial passion and enthusiasm can so easily succumb to the pressing demands of everyday life. The questions she raises at the end of her article are perhaps the next step in the challenge that Jonathan Kozol poses to us in his prologue, *Turning Our Ideals into Concrete Deeds*. "It is time," writes Kozol, "for educators, civic leaders, and our students to transform their abstract ethics into concrete deeds." But says Lynette, "a disconnect remains between the passion for social justice and ways to turn that passion into enduring action." We invite students from across the nation to enter the conversation with us in our Rejoinder Section.

The format of this issue of the *Journal of Educational Controversy* reveals the evolution that the journal's philosophy has taken as it defines its identity in the publishing world. We are beginning to see our journal as a forum not only for the discussion of controversial issues that arise from teaching and learning in a liberal, democratic society, but also as a comprehensive look at the context in which those issues arise. We will continue this pattern in the future. Each of our issues will have a focus exemplified by the author invited to write the prologue and to whom the issue will be dedicated, background essays that provide a context for the articles that follow, the specific controversy that was sent out in our "call for papers," articles in response to that controversy that have undergone a peer review, and occasionally a special section that gives the reader a look at some of the related issues that are on the cutting edge of our public discussion of the issue. We think that this format provides the reader with a comprehensive look at a current controversy within a context of background understandings.

With this issue of our journal, we also begin printing the first responses to articles published in our inaugural issue. We invite readers to continue the conversation with additional rejoinders to both our inaugural issue and this current issue. We will publish responses to articles from all issues as long as the conversation continues. We invite readers to send in their suggestions and comments on the journal's evolving philosophy.