

# shame of a nation

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### <sup>3</sup>**Segregation in Education**

*The shame of the nation* is a book written by Jonathan Kozol, an author expressing his mind towards segregation in schooling. The author explores ways in which rationales that are used to justify socio-economic inequalities evident in schools. In other words, he is expressing this form of segregation as restored apartheid schooling. In American schools, American students of minority status are negatively affected by this system. Kozol shows how inequality is profound in public education by linking issues of socio-economic status and race. Urban schools and funds they receive produce higher class students compared to what happens to poor social classes with minority races and living in deprioritized geographical livelihoods. Kozol argues that this form of segregation makes it difficult for children from minority races to acquiring quality education. In "*The shame of the nation*," Kozol states that the minority students are helped <sup>1</sup> by chains "... within caste-and-color sequestration and divorced... from the mainstream of American society" (Kozol, 6). However, Kozol has expressed many issues attempting to justify segregation. This paper will comprise two rationales widely applied to justify segregation in American schools, explain why there are such justifications, and why they are considered just.

Kozol expresses his feelings towards racial segregation through several narratives about the schools he visited around the country. He visited nearly sixty public schools. Kozol illustrates the condition of one of the schools with classrooms having broken glass and mishandled

equipment. Also, he gives an experience of a white teacher teaching in a black school, among other stories. These incidences were after the Civil Rights Movement project since it took place between 1990 and 2000 when educational reforms were supposed to be implemented. However, segregation was still in existence and in operational in full force. Another point of concern that hit Kozol the hardest was the rate at which students lacked knowledge about activist Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. even after establishing activist-memorial-based schools. For example, <sup>5</sup> Martin Luther King School in New York City was a school established, the white children would be allowed to walk, but on the contrary, Hispanic and Black students ride on bus or train (Kozol 25). The intention was to attract white students, but unfortunately, the school receives 54% black students and 42% Hispanic. 3.8% consisted of the white, Asian, and others (Kozol 26). The situation was evident that segregated schools were considered to be socially unhappy places and disorderly, with white children's parents avoiding such schools as most of them would have several violent cases (Kozol 26).

Why do minority students face lots of these challenges to receive an education? The rationale behind this is the lack of funding in these schools. Kozol clearly describes this in Chapter 2 of his book "*The shame of the nation*" where he asks a <sup>1</sup> question "How... do you begin to measure something so diffuse and vast and seemingly abstract as having more, or having less, or having not at all?" (Kozol 44). It was supported by an explanation of the funds students from different schools received. A student like Alliyah from a New York City public school received \$8000, another fairly typical white suburb received \$12000, and the wealthiest living in the white suburb in New York received \$18000 annually (Kozol 45). Moreover, teachers' salaries differed; for example, a teacher in Alliyah's school would receive a salary amounting to \$43,000 compared to another teacher teaching in a school in Scarsdale who received \$81000 in 1997

(Kozol 45). The author expresses his bitterness with the inequalities in school funding. He gives some examples like the <sup>4</sup> New York city that spent \$11,627 on education for each child. On the contrary, only \$22,311 were spent on each child in Nassau County in Manhasset. Kozol observes comparable disparities in other metropolitan areas because funding is locally based.

According to Kozol's research, less-funded schools are comprised of people living in poverty and have cultural diversity. In his report, he compared the status of a poor neighborhood to Greenwich village in New York, where approximately 20% of the students came from low-income earning families (Kozol 47). Their schools could not receive external and private funds, which would help establish libraries, introduce programs, facilities, and employ staff (Kozol 46). Only schools with children from wealthy families could receive funds for extra resources and acquire superior education compared to other children in poorer schools (Kozol 47). In another instance, Kozol describes the certain elementary school and junior high parents who contributed more than \$ 1 million to enrich the children's school programs. Parents from poor neighborhoods <sup>1</sup> attempted to raise money for the same purpose through candy sales, but the idea was not successful as they raise less than \$4000 (Kozol 47-48).

In chapter 3, "*The Ordering Regime*", Kozol brings another aspect of segregation of education. Other than lack of funding, he describes the traditional classroom's transformation, which is meant to help students learn. Students are expected to learn particular skills helpful in becoming good members of society, according to Mr. Endicott, a teacher who shared this information with Kozol (Kozol 62). Schools started to apply the "Skinnerian approach," as described by Kozol. The approach was meant for the black and Hispanic children to ensure that their attitudes and learning styles are improved after going through penal institutions and drug-rehabilitation programs (Kozol 65).

According to Kozol, the Skinnerian approach was applied at elementary school P.S. 65, located in the South Bronx, New York. It was to ensure students are strictly monitored and checked during their learning. Additionally, there were uses of phrases like “Portfolio Protocols,” “success for all,” “Principles of learning,” and “Authentic writing” printed and posted in hallways, classrooms, and other buildings. Teachers could write curriculum goals and standards for students, although all these did not have meaning for students (Kozol 66). All this raises a big question; does the community believe handling Hispanic and black students is difficult during learning? Are the strategies meant to suppress any violence chances in these schools?

There are various justifications raised to support these kinds of inequalities. One of the justifications is that teachers applying this program have an easy time dealing with students. For example, a teacher who does not secure a job in a reputable school will get hired in a school like P.S. 65 Elementary. Such a teacher will find students following the already written instructions and school objectives. It makes it easy for such a teacher to direct students. It seems somehow convincing to Kozol as he states, “scripted lessons and the other elements of order and control... are essential strategies for schools in which the teacher frequently are inexperienced” (Kozol 84). On the other hand, he still disagrees with the argument since he believes that teachers are denied the opportunity to practice what they feel their students deserve to learn, especially when they are not comfortable with the lessons being taught (Kozol 85). Also, he feels that the nature of such schooling extends to standardize testing. It becomes more disadvantageous to poorer schools during testing since they do not have equal opportunities as other prestigious schools attended by students from wealthy families.

An interesting justification is the one on which inequality is justified based on the claim that minority students are more difficult to control in their learning. The community believes that Hispanic and Black children are more difficult to control than their white counterparts. The inequalities in funding are therefore necessary to reduce violence in such schools. Teachers who follow such a program have an easier time with the students.

Students are expected to be tested in disciplines including science, math, and language arts. Poorer schools lack resources and have less study time. The justification is seen to be easier, cost-effective, and intended to bring forth results. Still, on the contrary, it raises students with less knowledge as they are not acquiring enough education.

Today, inequality in schools is led by many factors, resulting from the inability to determine whether they provide equal education chances to all students. However, this type of inequality is thriving by choice. The lack of funding is justifiable due to the amount of work needed to bring changes to poor schools and promote their success. Also, applying the "Skinnerian approach" to learning that limits students' freedom and abilities seems justifiable because a teacher can teach many students with less effort. Considering arguments from both sides about whether they are justifiable, inequality in schools is still in existence as it remains to be Kozol's goal in his book.

**Work cited**

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