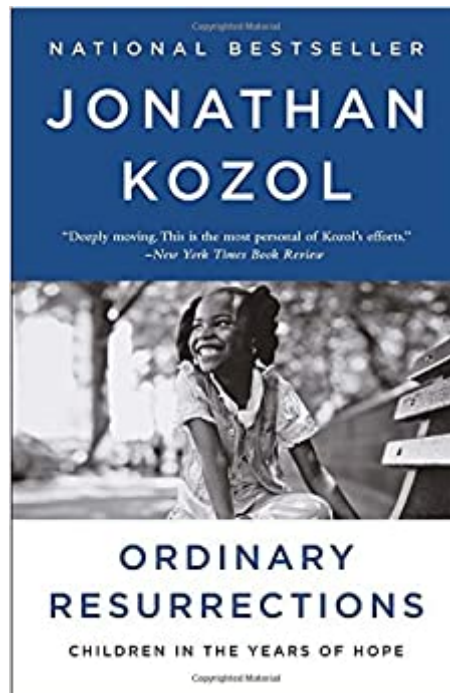




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# Ordinary Resurrections: Children In The Years Of Hope



## Synopsis

Jonathan Kozol's books have become touchstones of the American conscience. In *Ordinary Resurrections*, he spends four years in the South Bronx with children who have become his friends at a badly underfunded but enlightened public school. A fascinating narrative of daily urban life, *Ordinary Resurrections* gives a human face to poverty and racial isolation, and provides a stirring testimony to the courage and resilience of the young. Sometimes playful, sometimes jubilantly funny, and sometimes profoundly sad, these are sensitive children—complex and morally insightful—and their ethical vitality denounces and subverts the racially charged labels that the world of grown-up expertise too frequently assigns to them. Yet another classic case of unblinking social observation from one of the finest writers ever to work in the genre, this is a piercing discernment of right and wrong, of hope and despair—from our nation's corridors of power to its poorest city streets.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Stepping back from his 30-year attack on the inequalities of education, Jonathan Kozol allows the children to speak for themselves in *Ordinary Resurrections*. These are the schoolchildren of South Bronx's most dismal neighborhood, Mott Haven, where social struggles with poverty and imprisoned fathers rate just under AIDS and asthma as the greatest threats to young lives. Yet, Kozol marvels, despair and bitterness don't come to mind when you meet 10-year-olds like Ariel, who "skips through life" and displays a healing tenderness to others at the church afterschool program that has become a living laboratory of sorts for Kozol since he wrote *Savage Inequalities* in 1996. This is "not

the land of bad statistics but the land of licorice sticks and long division, candy bars and pencil sets," he writes. In recording conversations between these kids and each other, their teachers, caretakers, parents, and even himself, Kozol manages to move the adults to the periphery in order to let the children teach. There is no government data, no research conclusions, only a sense of hope and wonder at the resiliency of the young. Kozol readily admits that he's due for a reflective moment. In his 60s, living alone, his parents seriously ill, he seeks safety in surrounding himself with children. He confesses that he's not a religious man, yet he finds himself overcoming his awkwardness with prayer, even bowing his head with the children at times. His writing in this moving account is among his most eloquent, as when he describes the gentle way in which a teacher tugs for the attention of a dreamy first-grader as if carefully unwrapping a small package that may be breakable. He captures the rhythm of the exchanges between teacher and student in a way that practically whispers to the reader. Ultimately, this is a book about healing that reveals more about the lives of children in poor neighborhoods--and Kozol--than any of his prizewinning books to date. --Jodi Mailander Farrell --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A persistent voice of conscience, Kozol poses the question: do we want our schools to remain segregated and unequal? The National Book Award-winning education activist revisits Mott Haven, a poverty-stricken section of the South Bronx that was the setting for his two previous books, *Amazing Grace* and *Savage Inequalities*. The tone here is more optimistic, partly because his extended conversations and interactions with children take place not only at public elementary schools, but also at a supportive after-school center run by St. Ann's Church, a neighborhood Episcopalian congregation that reaches out to the hungry and homeless. Ranging in age from six to 12, all of the children in Kozol's empathetic, leisurely portraits are black or Hispanic; some know hunger; many have lost at least one relative to AIDS; a large number of them see their fathers only when they visit them in prison. Many have asthma or other severe respiratory problems, which Kozol blames on the high density of garbage facilities in the area and on a waste incinerator that was not shut down until 1998 after protests by community activists, environmentalists and doctors. His sensitive profiles highlight these kids' resilience, quiet tenacity, eagerness to learn and high spirits, as well as the teachers' remarkable dedication despite sharp cutbacks in personnel and services; overcrowded, decaying buildings; and crime-riddled streets. Yet as Kozol makes piercingly clear, the students' "ordinary resurrections" can only go so far amid what he calls "apartheid education," a racially and economically segregated school system that in effect assigns disadvantaged children to constricted destinies. Major ad/promo; 11-city author tour. (May)

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I just re-read ORDINARY RESURRECTIONS and wanted to update my review....the book is just wonderful....and full of such hope! Like other reviewers, I heard Mr. Kozol's interview on National Public Radio during my commute home and was completely enchanted by his stories of Pineapple and her friends in Mott Haven. I ordered the book from amazon.com and devoured it in two sittings. I cannot remember when a book moved me as much as this one. I'm not sure what gifts God gave Jonathan Kozol, but one of them is true compassion and insight without judgment or pretense. I was continually amazed, as was Kozol, at these children's tenderness, kindness, their incredible gift of insight and their wide-eyed innocence. At the back of the book, there is an address for St. Ann's Church. I will be sending them a check...for St. Ann's Scholars...for Pineapple and Elio and Mother Martha and all the children and caretakers who perform miracles day in and day out. This should be required reading for not only present/future teachers, it should be required reading for the human race. I hope Kozol and his kids win the Pulitzer/Nobel/and any other available award! Read this book...you will be richer for it.

Nice book

Great book! I highly recommend it! Kozol manages to capture the complexity and simplicity that is a child without pretension.

I, too, heard Mr. Kozol on NPR - and in the space of a few minutes was not only driven to tears, but driven to purchase the book. In a time when the world feels out of control and impossible for any one of us to alter its course, Jonathon Kozol gives me hope by reminding us that all children start out with pure love, truth and innocence - regardless of their economic or social circumstance. And that noticing and nurturing children is a precious and enriching process. The book is written in a compellingly intimate way, and I feel privileged to have been introduced to the children of Mott Haven and to the grown ups who love and care for them.

This powerful work is at once inspiring, frustrating and captivating. Kozol draws the reader into a world called Mott Haven that is filled with substance, love, service and hope. He poignantly describes the lives of children while blasting the manner in which we have chosen to deal with our

most needy sectors of society. Kozol's gifted and powerful storytelling reminds us of several truths:1. Segregation is potentially a bigger problem today than ever. White flight, private schools, school choice, home-schooling, virtual schools and lack of equitable access to technology are widening the gap.2. Inequities in education must be addressed with the underlying belief that every child has the potential to achieve his/her dreams. Society must be responsible and held accountable for creating conditions ensuring that this occurs.3. Teachers and students must all be able to work and learn in optimum conditions that safeguard and ensure dignity.4. Although children appear to be resilient, we must protect their innocence, ensure they have the chance to dream and be inspired by their eternal optimism and hope. The real heroes of today are those who spend time with our children, listening to and nurturing their dreams.5. We spend too much on our prison system and must figure out a way to divert that funding to education and healthcare so we can be proactive rather than reactive. Kozol manages to convey the realities of inner city education by illuminating the complexities behind the daily challenges facing teachers and parents. His manner of connecting the problems to the institutions and practices that society has created to deal with those who do not "fit the system" provides a wake-up call to all of us who are working to make a difference in the lives of children. Kozol shows us that the system we have created is nurturing itself instead of helping people to break out of the vicious cycle characterized by lack of quality education, health care, meaningful work opportunities and dignity. We can no longer ignore the problems in the inner cities of America, not just because it makes economic sense but because it makes human sense to individually develop our most precious resources - our children. Community leaders, parents, educators, and corporate leaders should put this compelling book on the top of their "must read" list.

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