

many peoples. Democracy requires a public education that well represents the history and the intertwining, daily, new predicament of public—of American—existence. Less white, less male, less English speaking: So shall the core curriculum conform to the realities of who we really are.

And, yes, the bible for these changing challenges has not been written yet, nor could it ever be contained within the limits of one vision. Truly basic materials for our education of ourselves would, of necessity, begin with oral literatures and then move forward to address and comprehend the multilingual, multiracial, multicultural, two-gendered nature of our complicated, indissoluble society: The text is all of life.



Jeremy Brecher

Historian in residence, Connecticut Public Broadcasting; author, History From Below: How to Tell the Story of Your Own Community, Association or Union (Commonwork/Advocate Press).

If I were advising a totalitarian regime on how to perpetuate itself, I would suggest rounding up all the children in the morning and locking them up in buildings where people would lecture at them all day. Whatever else you do, cut them off from the world.

Sometimes a Shining Moment (Anchor), by Eliot Wigginton, recounts an effort to take education in the opposite direction—into the life of the community. It also describes the experimental process by which one teacher learned how to connect his students with the world. Wigginton sent his students out to interview rural neighbors, learn nearly lost craft skills, and record in words and photographs their ways of life. The results were ultimately published as the now-famous *Foxfire* books.

Partly inspired by Wigginton, I've been working for the past several years with teachers who are applying similar techniques in urban schools. Their students do history and social studies projects based on the life of their communities. When students interview their parents, grandparents and other senior community members, they connect themselves to their own backgrounds in new ways. When they interview other community members, they learn about the worlds from which *they* come. History becomes a living reality.

The lesson for democratic education? Whatever you do, connect children with the world.



Ellen David Friedman

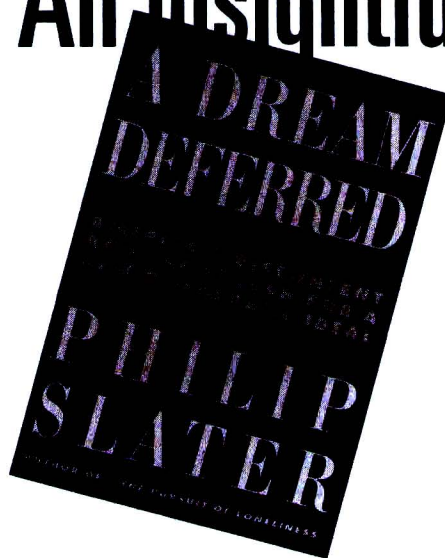
Organizer, Vermont-NEA.

If *Death at an Early Age* (Plume), by Jonathan Kozol, does to future generations of young Americans what it did to me in 1965, then public education could well be the beneficiary. This book made me an organizer, launched me on twenty-

five years of unbroken activism and finally booted me into political organizing for Vermont's largest union—the school employees' union, Vermont-NEA.

Was it Kozol's anger, his icy clear indictments, his hortatory wrath . . . or was it his appeal to the smoldering brushfire of defiance that all young people nurse? Whatever it was, back in the middle 1960s I was grabbed by the windpipe and whipped into a fury of deep feeling. While my 13-year-old girlfriends were beginning to outgrow the door-to-door sale of Girl Scout cookies, another group of us decided to sell Kozol's book door-to-

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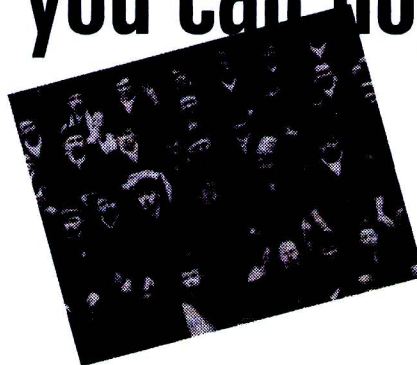
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