



# June Jordan: Her Life and Letters (Women Writers of Color)

*Valerie Kinloch*

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June Jordan was born on July 9, 1936, in Harlem, New York, to Mildred and Granville Jordan, Jamaican natives. During her life, she became one of the most prolific, important, and influential African American writers of her time. Before her death from breast cancer in 2002, Jordan published more than 27 books, including *Some of Us Did Not Die*, *Solider: A Poet's Childhood*, *Poetry for the People: Finding a Voice through Verse*, *Haruko Love Poems*, and *Naming Our Destiny*. Her work *Civil Wars*, a collection of letters and essays, addressed such topics as violence, homosexuality, race, and black feminism. Working in many genres and touching on many themes and issues, Jordan was a powerful force in American literature. This biography reveals the woman, the writer, the poet, the activist, the leader, and the educator in all her complexity.

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Kinloch offers a life and letters of this prolific writer, delving into both her biography and her contributions as a writer and activist. This approach unveils the power of language in Jordan's poems, essays, speeches, books, and ultimately in her own life, as she challenged political systems of injustice, racism, and sexism. Kinloch examines questions surrounding the pain of writing, the anger of oppression, and the struggle of African American women to assert their voices. Attention is paid to the ways in which Jordan's life informed her writings, her perspectives, and her contributions to the global landscape of class, race, and gender issues. The writer's major works are explored in detail, as Kinloch weaves discussions of her life into critical considerations of her writings. Ultimately, this portrait illustrates the ways in which Jordan's career represented her dedication to making words work; her ability to rally and revolutionize the spirit of people invested in decolonization, love, and freedom; and her responsiveness to the world in which she lived.

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