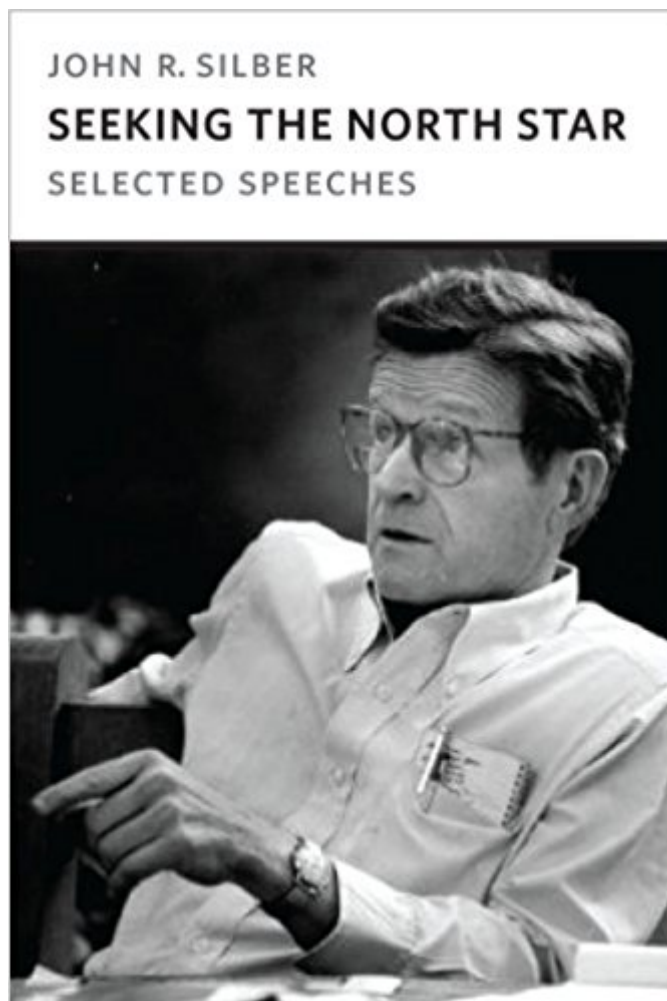


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Seeking The North Star: Selected Speeches



Synopsis

If you lived and worked in Boston at any point during the last half century, you were aware of a force emanating from an increasingly influential institution on the banks of the Charles River; the institution was Boston University and the force behind it was John Silber. From his induction in 1971 until his retirement in 2011, Silber was unrelenting in improving the standards and quality of his university. What he may have lacked in tact, he more than made up for in intellectual brilliance, wide-ranging vision, and stubborn advocacy. A professor of philosophy, celebrated for his work on Immanuel Kant, Silber was a humanist in the tradition of Jefferson, Holmes, Whitehead, and Barzun. The best of the man is revealed in this selection of his writing, speeches, essays, and articles, collected from over forty years of vigorous engagement. Here he speaks as a philosopher, educator, parent, and political observer and participant (ahead in the polls, he would have been elected Governor of Massachusetts had he not run afoul of Channel Five's beloved Natalie Jacobsen. The famous incident is recounted in high style in Tom Wolfe's Foreword). Silber tackles issues including education at all levels, culture and the media, democracy and international affairs. Delivered from 1971 to 2012, the speeches offer his incisive reflections on the Vietnam War, Watergate, student activism of the seventies, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, developments in science and technology, the increasing power of the media, global corporations, and many other issues. His style is lively, crisp, and pointed, spiked with his acerbic wit and guided by an ongoing search for wisdom. Silber was a model of probity and integrity in both his private and his public life, an intellectual pessimist and a congenial optimist. Even as he brought Boston University from a sleepy and fast-declining "streetcar college" to a major educational institution, he spoke out on topical issues and principles on which our human fulfillment and national identity depended. Inspiring many, infuriating some, his was a life that mattered, and a voice worth listening to.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

John Robert Silber was born in San Antonio in 1926. The seventh president of Boston University, he was, in addition, the first chairman of the Texas Society to Abolish Capital Punishment, a leader in the racial integration of the University of Texas, a member of the founding committee of Project Head Start, a member of President Reagan's Bipartisan Committee on Central America, the 1990 Democratic nominee for Governor of Massachusetts, and Chairman of the Massachusetts Board of Education. His books include *Straight Shooting: What's Wrong with America and How to Fix It*, *Architecture of the Absurd: How Genius Disfigured a Practical Art*, and *Kant's Ethics*. Silber died in 2012.

Silber was an authentic and courageous man. He had well-founded standards, stood by them, and was unafraid to speak up for what he believed. He was a remarkable presence in Boston for decades. One of his lesser known but lasting triumphs was creating Boston University Academy, a high school for intellectually gifted boys and girls right on the Boston University campus, where they could be challenged by taking college courses. It was a pleasure to talk with Silber about the high quality of that secondary-school experience. He had charm, but his conversation did not run to idle pleasantries, much less to platitudes. Pity he failed to get elected Governor of Massachusetts: he would have spoken uncomfortable truths not just to power, but to political villains.

This collection of speeches, essays, etc., were carefully selected by Dr. Silber shortly before he died. It is a literary treasure trove of his knowledge, wit and wisdom.

I was not familiar with John Silber until I read a review by the *WSJ*. This is an excellent book of his speeches. Loaded with wisdom and thoughts regarding values, roles of our Universities and many other topics to guide your thinking.

A very intelligent though abrasive personality. Cogent arguments about what is wrong culturally and in education in this country.

A fine and brilliant man...the depth and breadth of his knowledge were boundless

Great book!

Written beautifully by the greatest educator of modern times, John Silber's insights, compassion, and understanding should inspire us all. Not for people who are wedded to life in their 'comfort zones', these speeches should be read and reflected upon by anyone concerned with the future of intellect and dismayed by its impending demise in the halls of academe.

Excellent book. I learned a great deal from John Silber. He is a fine teacher and philosopher. I don't always agree with him but this doesn't diminish in any way the respect I have for him.

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