

Healthcare

- I. The rationing of healthcare in America and the debate over how much money the government contributes and to whom is an important debate in America today.
 - a. African and Latino Americans have the highest uninsured rates and therefore contribute more to the dysfunctional healthcare system.
 - b. They are more likely to die of diseases which are treatable if caught early
 - c. Have worse outcomes from chronic diseases like diabetes
 - d. America has the lowest life expectancy, the highest incidence of chronic disease, and the highest rate of avoidable hospitalizations and avoidable deaths when compared to other high-income countries, despite spending more money on healthcare by far.
 - e. The ACA has improved this situation marginally.
- II. Healthcare for freed slaves in the aftermath of the Civil War (p. 389)
 - a. Book: Jim Downs: Sick from Freedom
 - b. Freed Blacks had horrible health problems following their emancipation from slavery
 - c. The sparse US hospital system was reluctant to admit Blacks into the hospital.
 - d. After the Civil War, Blacks congregated in camps which were ravaged sometimes by diseases like smallpox.
 - i. The Black settlement's poor nutrition and sanitation accounted for their residents being sicker and dying. White settlements did better.
 - e. Freed blacks requested that quarantine quarters, together with latrines, be erected in their camps as they were in White camps.
 - f. Incredibly, President Johnson and many in congress objected to the Freedman's Bureau and its task of providing support for newly emancipated Blacks.
 - i. They said that such measures would undercut individual initiative and foster dependency.
 - g. In 1865, the first federally funded healthcare system came through the Freedman's bureau. It's commissioner, General O. O. Howard, inaugurated its Medical Division to establish a system of hospitals across the postwar South.
 - i. This system was underfunded and understaffed with a limited vision for providing healthcare for the formerly enslaved. All medical care for Blacks in this time was bedeviled by fear of fostering dependency.
 - h. The racist trope of the freed Blacks coming extinction took hold. Blacks were said to be unsuited for freedom
 - i. Rebecca Lee Crumpler, the nation's first Black female doctor, worked with the Freedman's Bureau; and the National Medical Association (NMA), under its president, Robert F. Boyd, became the leading voice on issues surrounding the medical treatment of Black people and other disadvantaged groups.
 - i. They called for a national healthcare program, which went unheeded.
- III. After Reconstruction
 - a. Southern states power in Washington kept New Deal programs from being successful enough to disrupt the strict social stratification between Whites and Blacks.

- b. Blacks were excluded from many New Deal programs including Social Security and the [Wagner Act](#).
 - c. Southern states, under the banner of states' rights, excluded Blacks from these programs.
 - d. The Hill-Burton Act provided federal grants for hospital construction to communities in need, and gave funding priority to rural areas, many in mainly Black areas of the South.
 - i. And, sadly, it gave local (southern) officials administrative control.
 - e. Employer funded health insurance came post WWII but excluded many Blacks because they weren't working jobs that provided coverage.
 - f. American Medical Association (AMA) allowed Black doctors to be excluded, medical schools barred Black students, and most hospitals and health clinics segregated Black patients.
 - g. Thus, Black Americans have shorter, sicker lives than Whites. (p. 392)
- IV. The response to medically underserved Blacks and poor Americans
- a. Black women began a national community healthcare movement that included fundraising for Black health facilities; campaigns to educate Black communities about nutrition, sanitation, and disease prevention; and programs like National Negro Health Week.
 - b. The NMA, advocating for national healthcare, came into conflict with AMA that opposed nationalized healthcare.
 - c. In the early 1960's, the AMA resisted Medicare.
 - d. The author credits the NMA with advocacy for a nationalized health program
 - e. Medicare and Medicaid desegregated the US hospital system.
 - i. And the Civil Rights Act outlawed segregation from any entity receiving federal funds. Thus Blacks had access to the hospital system.
 - f. Black struggles for equality resulted in greater rights for all Americans.
- V. Conclusion
- a. The US has been totally unable to grapple with the ethics of unregulated health care.
 - b. And the condition of US healthcare today is the result.
 - c. Summary: This chapter traces America's blocking Black and Brown skinned citizens from adequate healthcare, which has resulted in less than adequate health outcomes for this group. The chapter begins by summarizing the general sub-par state of American healthcare. America has the lowest life expectancy, the highest incidence of chronic disease, and the highest rate of avoidable hospitalizations and avoidable deaths when compared to other high-income countries, despite spending more money on healthcare by far. These problems are and long have been worse for Blacks. Almost immediately after emancipation, Blacks had no healthcare in a country where hospitals were not commonplace and ex-slaves were herded into separate and unsanitary camps. Racist ideas, notably that Blacks were basically frail and destined to extinction, blocked Whites

from investing in their care. In this period, the first outcry demanding nationalized health care went unheeded and has yet to be implemented fully. In the New Deal era, programs that would have alleviated Black health problems tended to be blocked by the programs' local state administration. The successful inclusion of all Americans in access to hospitalization came only with the advent of Medicare and Medicaid. An additional measure, the Civil Rights Act, outlawed federally funded programs from blocking any person from receiving benefits. These programs are the most consequential ones since the Civil War for bringing Blacks along to where we are now...which isn't sufficient.