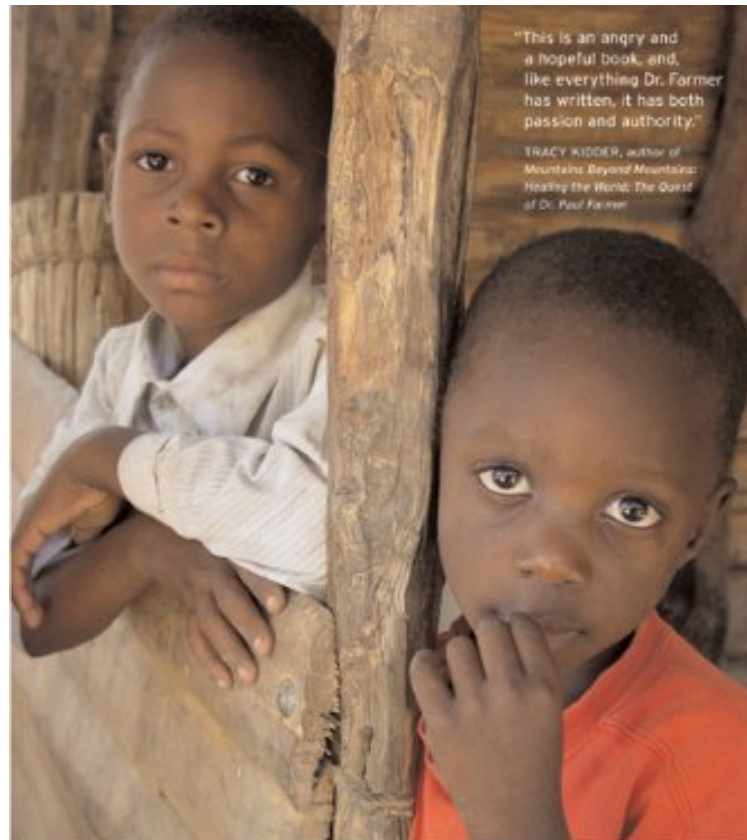


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(California Series in Public Anthropology)

## **Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor (California Series in Public Anthropology)**

*Paul Farmer*

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**PATHOLOGIES OF POWER**  
HEALTH, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND THE NEW WAR ON THE POOR

**PAUL FARMER** WITH A NEW PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR  
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**Paul Farmer : Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor (California Series in Public Anthropology)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor (California Series in Public Anthropology):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Teaching Resource Like No Other By Carol j Montgomery-Taylor Paul Farmer is well known in the anthropological world as well as within the christian world. He works to make social issues known to the greater public for the greater good. Through his own work in Haiti, South America, and Russia, he illustrates the turmoil prevalent in our world. He writes in an easy style that makes what he is trying to convey, easy to digest. He shares with the reader situations and circumstances where he has tried to make a difference. His books, and this one in particular, are excellent teaching resources for any of the social sciences 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. ... as a school text and it was informative and easy to read By Jessica Needed as a school text and it was informative and easy to read. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By Penny Interesting read

Pathologies of Power uses harrowing stories of life and death in extreme situations to interrogate our understanding of human rights. Paul Farmer, a physician and anthropologist with twenty years of experience working in Haiti, Peru, and Russia, argues that promoting the social and economic rights of the world's poor is the most important human rights struggle of our times. With passionate eyewitness accounts from the prisons of Russia and the beleaguered villages of Haiti and Chiapas, this book links the lived experiences of individual victims to a broader analysis of structural violence. Farmer challenges conventional thinking within human rights circles and exposes the relationships between political and economic injustice, on one hand, and the suffering and illness of the powerless, on the other. Farmer shows that the same social forces that give rise to epidemic diseases such as HIV and tuberculosis also sculpt risk for human rights violations. He illustrates the ways that racism and gender inequality in the United States are embodied as disease and death. Yet this book is far from a hopeless inventory of abuse. Farmer's disturbing examples are linked to a guarded optimism that new medical and social technologies will develop in tandem with a more informed sense of social justice. Otherwise, he concludes, we will be guilty of managing social inequality rather than addressing structural violence. Farmer's urgent plea to think about human rights in the context of global public health and to consider critical issues of quality and access for the world's poor should be of fundamental concern to a world characterized by the bizarre proximity of surfeit and suffering.

From The New England Journal of Medicine There are many kinds of gifted physicians: clinicians, researchers, and those who build institutions. Paul Farmer is the rarest of all: a prophet. Pathologies of Power is a jeremiad on how the "structural violence" of denied opportunities, economic deprivation, violent despots (and the powers supporting them), and international financial organizations harm the health of billions of people who are so distant that they are glibly and incomprehensibly referred to as living in a "third world." This summary does not do justice to the richness of the book. Farmer deftly weaves personal stories from his work with the dispossessed, careful academic notes, and well-chosen quotations from intellectuals, poets, and proponents of liberation theology. These citations introduce marvelous writers who are not well known to readers from the United States. Farmer builds from the 19th century's Rudolph Virchow, who argued that physicians must advance public health through political and social reform as "attorneys for the poor." Farmer's anecdotes about mobilizing the poor on their own behalf echo the work of Norman Bethune. And Farmer extends Jonathan Mann's fusion of human rights and medical ethics to health and human rights. Farmer, a physician and an anthropologist, offers a blistering critique of anthropologists who describe colorful folkways or bits of social problems, such as sexual barter, without illuminating how such practices are sustained by class and political history. This critique and Farmer's advocacy for oppressed persons mark this book as a prophetic work. Therefore, it is also a towering work of medical ethics. Farmer's critique of anthropology applies equally well to medical ethics, with its scholastic focus on moral curiosities and its decorous silence on "political" issues such as the lack of insurance or the ways in which the policies of international financial organizations affect health and health care for the world's poor. The prophetic voice speaks for the marginalized and can strike listeners as shrill, odd, or discomfiting. Farmer skirts that risk by careful scholarship and compelling writing. That being said, I think he overrates the competence of Haiti's reelected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide and the success of Cuba's program to suppress the human immunodeficiency virus. Though he correctly notes the entrenched and mistaken pessimism of the international health authorities about the ability of dispossessed people to complete tuberculosis treatment, he overestimates the capacity of the available infrastructure in many poor countries to manage daily antiretroviral therapy. Such quibbles do not diminish the importance of his larger thesis. Farmer calls on physicians to mount a sustained engagement against human-rights abuses as the roots of disease, disability, and lack of access to health care. Health itself, rather than technical compliance with laws or accords, must be the standard for evaluating governments, foreign policy, and the national restructuring plans of such organizations as the International Monetary Fund. Expanding health services and democratizing information must be central to the global agenda of all physicians. Academic research and education must use the privilege conferred by their power and independence to articulate specific relationships between human rights and abuses of human rights with health and disease. We live in a time when epidemics keep pace with globalization and when the map of deprivation and human-rights abuses precisely overlays the atlas of war, disease, and terrorism. Farmer's sane prescription is more likely to work than is rationalizing neglect, dribbling charity,

averting our eyes, or attempting to build a garrison state bounded by a cordon sanitaire. *Pathologies of Power* is a profound work; it deserves the widest possible audience. Steven Miles, M.D. Copyright 2004 Massachusetts Medical Society. All rights reserved. The New England Journal of Medicine is a registered trademark of the MMS. "This detailed analysis of public health draws on perspectives from anthropology, history, liberation theology, sociology, law, and medicine. From this broad platform, Farmer takes us back through the causative underpinnings of disease-ridden lives and paints a unifying picture of ruling power structures aligned against impoverished constituents. His conclusions are well articulated, thoughtful, and damning. . . . Through his engaging and passionate style, Farmer gives voice to the unheard poor around the world and challenges medical professionals to broaden the vision of medicine to include human rights. In reinvigorating the role of human rights in the health and well being of the poor, Farmer's book is a valuable addition to the growing literature on health and human rights."--"The Lancet

From the Inside Flap "This is an angry and a hopeful book, and, like everything Dr. Farmer has written, it has both passion and authority. *Pathologies of Power* is an eloquent plea for a working definition of human rights that would not neglect the most basic rights of all: food, shelter and health. This plea has special potency because it comes from Dr. Farmer, a person who has proven that the dream of universal and comprehensive human rights is possible, and who has brought food, shelter, health, and hope to some of the poorest people on this earth." Tracy Kidder, author of *The Soul of a New Machine* and *Home Town* "Farmer's brilliance and charisma leap from the pages of his book. He challenges us to face the urgent theoretical and political challenges of the twenty-first century by linking structural violence to embodied social suffering and in the process calls for a new definition of human rights. Once this book is out, we will no longer be able to remain complacently--or rather, complicitly--on the sidelines." Philippe Bourgois, author of *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* "A passionate critique of conventional biomedical ethics by one of the world's leading physician-anthropologists and public intellectuals. Farmer's on-the-ground analysis of the relentless march of the AIDS epidemic and multi-drug resistant tuberculosis among the imprisoned and the sick-poor of the world illuminates the pathologies of a world economy that has lost its soul." Nancy Scheper-Hughes, author of *Death without Weeping: the Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* "In his compelling book, Farmer captures the central dilemma of our time: the increasing disparities of health and well-being within and among societies. While all member countries of the United Nations denounce the gross violations of human rights perpetrated by those who torture, murder, or imprison without due process, the insidious violations of human rights due to structural violence involving the denial of economic opportunity, decent housing, or access to health care and education are commonly ignored. *Pathologies of Power* makes a powerful case that our very humanity is threatened by our collective failure to end these abuses." Robert S. Lawrence, President of Physicians for Human Rights and Edyth Schoenrich Professor of Preventive Medicine at the Bloomberg School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University "Farmer has given us that most rare of books: one that opens both our minds and hearts. It stands as a model of engaged scholarship and an urgent call for social scientists to forsake their cushy disregard for human rights at home and abroad." Loc Wacquant, author of *Prisons of Poverty* "Paul Farmer is an original: a powerful writer, an insightful theorist, and a human rights activist on behalf of the health needs of some of the poorest and most excluded people on the planet. *Pathologies of Power* brings together all his strengths, as a thinker and an activist. Every health worker, human rights teacher, and government official who seeks to improve the health status and life chances of their fellow human beings simply must read this book." Michael Ignatieff, author of *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry* "Paul Farmer is a great doctor with massive experience working against the hardest of diseases in the most adverse circumstances, and at the same time he is a proficient and insightful anthropologist. Farmer's knowledge of maladies such as AIDS and drug-resistant tuberculosis, which he fights on behalf of his indigent patients, is hard to match. But what is particularly relevant in appreciating the contribution of this powerful book is that Farmer is a visionary analyst who looks beyond the details of fragmentary explanations to seek an integrated understanding of a complex reality." Amartya Sen, Nobel Laureate, Economics