



Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues

Paul Farmer

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Paul Farmer has battled AIDS in rural Haiti and deadly strains of drug-resistant tuberculosis in the slums of Peru. A physician-anthropologist with more than fifteen years in the field, Farmer writes from the front lines of the war against these modern plagues and shows why, even more than those of history, they target the poor. This "peculiarly modern inequality" that permeates AIDS, TB, malaria, and typhoid in the modern world, and that feeds emerging (or re-emerging) infectious diseases such as Ebola and cholera, is laid bare in Farmer's harrowing stories of sickness and suffering.

Challenging the accepted methodologies of epidemiology and international health, he points out that most current explanatory strategies, from "cost-effectiveness" to patient "noncompliance," inevitably lead to blaming the victims. In reality, larger forces, global as well as local, determine why some people are sick and others are shielded from risk. Yet this moving account is far from a hopeless inventory of insoluble problems. Farmer writes of what can be done in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds, by physicians determined to treat those in need. *Infections and Inequalities* weds meticulous scholarship with a passion for solutions—remedies for the plagues of the poor and the social maladies that have sustained them.

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