

# Mama might be better off dead: the failure of health care

[Experience](#), [Failure](#)



In this essay I'm going to provide a creative review of the book "Mama Might Be Better Off Dead: The Failure of Health Care in Urban America" and discuss the overall failure of the health care in the modern US.

The shocking title of the book speaks for itself. The frank, insightful and humane nature of the book will leave nobody indifferent. The book provides an account of the unhappy destiny of the four generations of the poor and miserable Banes family living in the dirty and dangerous North Lawndale (near Chicago) neighborhoods. Every member of the Banes family experiences health problems, and the government turns out to be unable to protect its citizens from diseases and physical disability.

The family is the typical example of a disadvantaged social group. They are African-American, the husband is drug-addicted, children are neglected, and all of them suffer from the so-called "inherited poverty" - the situation, when poverty is passed from generation to generation. The American government may be successful protection rich, white and young, but when the matter concerns poor and disadvantages, the government either doesn't care, or is unable to provide quality health protection for them.

What problems do the family members face? Younger children don't get necessary immunization. Grandmother has diabetes and went through the amputation of limbs. The son is partially paralyzed after a stroke. The husband has problems with kidneys.

The most striking feature is that the place, where the Banes family lives, is surrounded by the city's best medical facilities, but they have no access, moreover, not a single chance for access to them.

The author takes the reader for a horrible trip around hospitals, primary care facilities, emergency rooms and even courtrooms, where the Banes try to improve their conditions by trials with home care.

Many families in the modern urban America face the same problem as the Banes. They are quickly trapped in the vicious circle of illness and poverty. If citizens are poor, they are especially sensitive to the maladies of the century, for instance, alcohol and drugs addiction, and they don't adhere to the basic hygienic demands. If citizens are ill, they can easily fall into poverty.

It's shocking that in the urban areas people suffer from the same health care problems as people in the third-world countries. Our government seems to be the most democratic and progressive, but while it's unable to guarantee basic social rights of its citizens, it can't be regarded as such. Our government should pay more attention to caring than curing. Health has systematic nature, it's a habit, and the government should stimulate and, what is more important, allow its citizens to get into it.

The author shows that many people in the nowadays America are uninsured and underinsured. It's not the issue of the numbers of public spending. It's the issue of attitudes. It's the issues of loopholes in the health care. It's the issue of the commitment to quality and equality in this sphere.

The author calls for the reform of the Medicaid and Medicare. These health care programs don't benefit medically underserved communities. Poor and disadvantaged citizens face the lack of access to medical care every day. The policymakers on the highest level don't know much about the problems their people face in the small towns and suburbs all across the country.

The governance of the hospitals is often corrupted and reluctant. It seems that racial discrimination is nonexistent in America, but, in fact, medical aid is like litmus that shows all the problems that Africa-Americans and representatives of other minorities face, for example, when the matter concerns the transplantation of organs.

The Banes have enough self-respect to battle for the health care, but many other families have to cope with other problems in the first place, including domestic violence, unemployment and crime. The author suggests that a health care should ensure proper and equal access to health care facilities. I know that some hospitals in other states have implemented outreach programs for the minority citizens, for instance, mobile health care centers and interactive health care education.

The health care should have a human face. The author shows how treating the poor is bad and unprofitable for the health care business. White doctors can be discriminatory towards disadvantaged minority patients. If children don't receive proper preventive care, they will be likely to fall into the vicious circle of illnesses and poor health. All these problems should be targeted – and targeted immediately on the federal, state and local levels. The book

can and should be viewed as a consistent and sound argument for a health care reform in the modern America.

### Sources

Abraham, L. K. (1994). *Mama Might Be Better Off Dead: The Failure of Health Care in Urban America*. University of Chicago Press; Re