



Into the Storm: The Physicians' Revolution Will Not Be Televised

Jonathan Ross, MD; Nathan Favini, MD; Magni Hamso, MD, MPH; Noriyuki Murakami, MD, MPH; and Amit Patel, MD, MPH

Drs. Ross, Favini, Hamso, Murakmai, and Patel are residents in primary care/social internal medicine at Montefiore Medical Center/Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

Hope. Maybe it comes as a knock on your door, during your darkest hour, after the destruction of a hurricane. A stranger from the People's Medical Relief becomes your friend, each day climbing 20 flights of stairs to deliver food, water, and blankets while the electricity is out.

Hope. Perhaps it arrives in the mailbox, a letter from Strike Debt, explaining that your medical debt has been abolished, no strings attached, so that no creditor or debt collector can harass you or threaten your livelihood again.

As physicians, we almost instinctively offer hope to each of our patients, yet it is something we rarely feel when our attention turns to the context we work in. We are no longer immune or safe in what was once the sanctuary of our practices. We are increasingly isolated in our clinics and hospitals, constrained to shorter visits with our patients, and forced to comply with the terms of insurance companies that dictate what we can or cannot do. Our performance is being judged by lab values, CT scans and nuclear tests are replacing our histories and physicals, and our patients are being called in not because they need to see us but because a quality checkbox must be checked off. The machinery of financial efficiency that fuels corporate growth has silently invaded the art and science of our work.

Our profession may pride itself on a history of overcoming the odds, challenging convention, and reshaping society for the better—even if it requires civil resistance at times. Still, a new form of structural violence threatens 99.9% of us today. Wired to prioritize economic growth and power, we have allowed

corporations to take over our governments while our communities suffer. And just as corporations are undermining our legislative process, they are encroaching on the way we provide care for our patients in order to maximize their profits.

Doctors for the 99% returned to SGIM this year to describe the successes achieved by a community of organizers, nurses, physicians, and advocates who worked together to provide relief for the residents of New York City hit hardest by Hurricane Sandy. We occupied SGIM to highlight the unjust burden of debt

shouldered by hundreds of thousands of individuals in our country. We chose SGIM as the forum to showcase the human response to the destructive corporate influence in our society, especially the power of the medical-industrial complex.

Hope. It is the antithesis to this influence. It is you. In each of us lies a piece of the solution toward an equitable, just, rational, and humane system that empowers communities and makes sustainable use of our ecology, our human capital, and our spirits.

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