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HOW TO WAKE-UP FROM A NIGHTMARE: A POSITION ON THE U.S. HEALTHCARE DISEASE

Paul Boynton

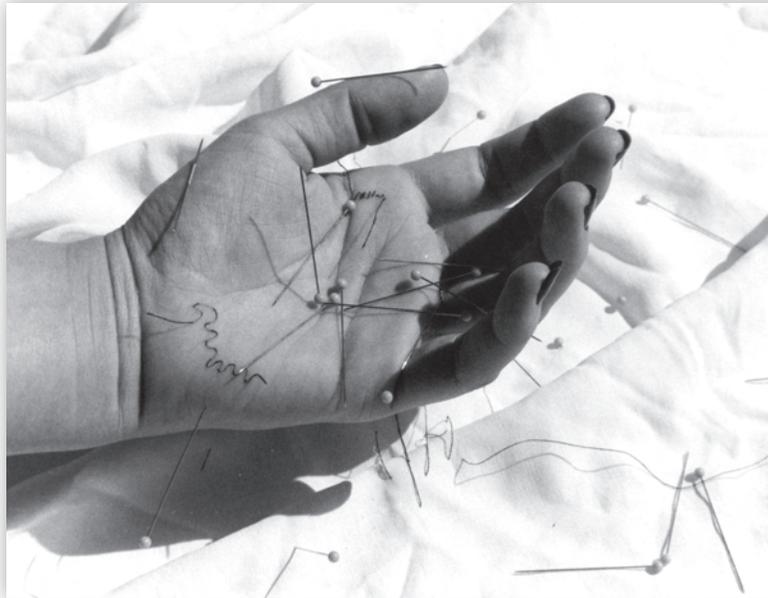
Winner of the Honors Scholarship Essay Contest

A DISASTER LOOMS OVER THE HORIZON as Americans kick off the New Year with their ears to the ground and in a tempered panic. With a weakening American dollar, a sky-rocketing national debt, international war, real estate crises, and rising oil prices, *recession* becomes a terrifying word. The economy is haunted by visions of a new depression; not only here in the U.S., but throughout the whole world too. In discussions for change, the current healthcare situation is often brought to the forefront. Its impact on America's well-being is similar to that of a disease. It is my position that the healthcare disease has become an epidemic, and that prevention is necessary for reform.

THE NIGHTMARE

To reform healthcare would be to reform our entire socioeconomic way of life, and there are numbers to prove it. They are both staggering and dismal. For instance, healthcare is the most expensive single category of a state's spending budget. In total, states spend 32 percent of their entire budget on healthcare ("State" 9). So I was not surprised to find out that in ten years, the federal government is projected to double its per year healthcare spending to a whopping 4 trillion dollars (Gibson and Gibson 21). No other sector in the economy has nearly that high a rate of inflation. Even with all that spending, many Americans are still without a balanced healthcare system. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics released a report last December that revealed "Nearly one in five Americans can't afford needed healthcare" ("Health" 1). So right now, approximately 61 million Americans do not receive the healthcare they need ("Population"). Moreover, many of those people do not even have access to healthcare. An article in Nation's Health went on to summarize part of that same report's findings:

[The report] found [that] more than 40 million people lack access to the healthcare they need. And 20 percent of U.S. adults needed and did not receive medical care, prescription medicine, mental health care, dental care, or eyeglasses in 2005, because they could not afford them.



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