Each year 100,000 people die in the United States because they cannot pay for health insurance; 202 million do not have comprehensive coverage, such as long-term care; and millions of workers and their families can be dropped from their health insurance plans if employers so choose. People are frustrated and demanding change.

In this timely book, Dr. Vicente Navarro goes beyond the current debate to show graphically the economic, social, and political forces responsible for the sorry state of U.S. health care. Understanding these forces will help facilitate the struggle to reform the health care system so that access to care is guaranteed as a human right. Navarro provides this understanding in direct, accessible terms.

The first chapter shows why the health care system in the United States does not respond to people’s needs. The next two chapters describe the deteriorating situation of diminishing benefits and growing costs during the Reagan/Bush years and the possibilities for change during the Clinton administration. They also critically analyze the proposals put forward by the Democratic leadership.

The last two chapters discuss the health care systems of other advanced countries and explain the political and social forces responsible for the establishment of universal and comprehensive health programs. The final chapter explains how the possibility for such a program in the United States is handicapped by the class, race and gender relations that exists both inside and outside the health sector.

Vicente Navarro, M.D. D.M.S.A., Dr.Ph., is professor of health policy, sociology, and policy studies at The Johns Hopkins University and editor of the International Journal of Health Services. He is the author of over fifteen books on health and science issues and was senior health advisor to Jesse Jackson in the 1988 presidential election campaign.

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