

Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a Man Who Would Cure the World

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The author Tracy Kidder recounts the life of Paul Farmer, a man who grew up with a rather underprivileged childhood but dedicated his life to providing medical support for people ridden with infectious diseases in Haiti, Peru, Cuba, and Russia. His hard work earned himself a full scholarship to Duke where he studied medical anthropology, and later received acceptance into Harvard Medical School. However, throughout his academic career he traveled extensively and developed an interest in all things Haitian, with particular interest in providing medicine for places that need it most.

In his first year working as a volunteer at a medical clinic in rural Haiti, Paul witnessed the death of a woman and her unborn child simply because the clinic lacked resources and money to provide her with a blood transfusion. As the woman's sister sat there crying, she said *tout moun se moun*, Creole for "we're all human beings." It was this moment that led Paul to dedicate his work to improving the lives of as many people as he could.

His passion drove him to spend most of his time in Haiti, travelling back and forth between the U.S. and Haiti only when he needed to return for exams during his time as a student at Harvard. He worked in a town called Cange, one of the poorest within Haiti, and fought tirelessly to build a hospital called *Zanmi Lasante*, or Partners in Health. As the work expanded, Partners in Health grew from just the name of a hospital in Cange to an international nonprofit organization dedicated to fighting diseases all over the world, thanks largely to the financial support of a man named Tom White, who continually gave millions of dollars to their cause. Farmer focused extensively on treating tuberculosis, particularly after strains in Cuba were found to be resistant to all five main drug treatments currently used at that time.

Suddenly the fight against tuberculosis became a political one, as Partners in Health sought help from drug companies, political leaders, and even the World Health Organization to produce new, cheap alternatives to try and contain the outbreak of the multi-drug resistant tuberculosis. Farmer's role transformed from actively treating people in towns like Cange to traveling to underprivileged towns in order to provide any support he could. By this time, Dr. Paul Farmer was an extremely well known expert on infectious diseases, and underprivileged people looked to him for reassurance about their situations. However, at the turn of the 21st century, tuberculosis was not the only major infectious disease that Partners in Health was worried about. The AIDS epidemic was growing into a global health concern, and funding for new medicines was now more important than ever in controlling large-scale disease outbreaks.

This book emphasized the importance of dedication and hard work in achieving your goals, whether that be personal or at a global scale. Dr. Paul Farmer began his career just wanting to bring change to developing countries by helping in any way he could in the field of medicine, and after 20 years has created an organization that has done exceptional work in several countries around the globe. Even though his work seemed futile and he was surrounded by death almost every day, he never lost hope in finding a cure for some of the most prominent diseases that existed at that time.