

We'll Fight It Out Here: A History of the Ongoing Struggle for Health Equity

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Louis W. Sullivan

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David Chanoff and Louis W. Sullivan's *We'll Fight It Out Here* covers the historical fight for equal access to health care.

In the 1890s, Fredrick Hoffman, the leading statistician of the Progressive Era, wanted to find out why Black Americans suffered more from serious illnesses, and had shorter life expectancies, than other groups in the US. His 1896 report concluded that Black Americans were racially inferior. This set the tone for US social policies for decades to come—despite the fact that Hoffman's report failed to account for the socioeconomic inequities that Black Americans faced because of the fallout from the Civil War. Chanoff and Sullivan set the record straight, showing that emancipated Black Americans were often ignored, and that discrimination in higher education prevented Black Americans from entering the medical profession. Due to the lack of access to health care, health crises ensued.

The book also notes that, following the civil rights movement, the Association of Minority Health Professions Schools, or AMHPS, was founded in 1977. Their lobbying efforts led to the Heckler Report in 1985—the first acknowledgment by the federal government of the inequities faced by Black communities pursuing health care. AMHPS set to work in the congressional fight to elevate the United States from being the lowest-scoring developed nation in providing health care for its population; Chanoff and Sullivan cover their efforts in detail, if with little analysis or narrative arch. The book sometimes loses itself in the intricacies of intrigue. Still, it notes that imbalances continue, which became apparent even during COVID-19.

We'll Fight It Out Here is an important, detailed account of the hard-won victories in the fight for equal health care access in the United States.

ERIKA HARLITZ KERN (September / October 2022)

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