

Preface

After enjoying extraordinary prosperity for over half a century, humanity is collectively experiencing the first “world war” of the twenty-first century. One that is challenging the global population, its clinical soldiers and scientists, and our way of life. The pandemic of 2020 serves as a humbling reminder of our limitations and vulnerabilities as we mount a response to the crisis.

Fortunately, the investment placed in science, technology, and medicine by generations before us has enabled us to rapidly develop vaccinations and treatments that may avert global catastrophe. If this crisis passes with limited death and destruction, our commitment to science and knowledge, to peace and collaboration, and to openness and transparency will perhaps be deeper and broader than ever before. Over centuries and millennia, such victories of human ingenuity add to the compelling body of evidence supporting diversity of thought and equality in opportunity as key contributors to innovation and prosperity for all.

Now, in a most unusual sequel anthology, we present a more personal example of diversity of thought and equality of opportunity as reflected in the journey of twenty-five physicians. We first met them twenty-five years ago when they shared their stories and experiences of being medical students in the book, *Becoming Doctors*. After studying at Brown, Cornell, Emory, Johns Hopkins, Stanford, Yale and a dozen more medical schools, these doctors went on to become emergency medicine physicians, family practitioners, gynecologists, internists, obstetricians, pediatricians, psychiatrists, and surgeons across the United States. Today, while working alongside the clinical soldiers and scientists protecting our friends and neighbors from this pandemic, they share their personal insights and oversights of learning, practicing, and teaching medicine over the past twenty-five years. Their essays, stories, drawings, and poems form this unique anthology, capturing their aspirations and struggles as students and their challenges and successes as physicians, parents, and teachers.

Over the last three decades since they decided to become doctors, these physicians tell us of the gratification, joy and fulfillment of their work coupled with their experiences of uncertainty, fear, and disappointment. They share how their professional responsibilities impact their personal lives while caring for their patients. How living up to the expectations of their colleagues and community often conflicts with the needs of their family.

Through their words, we hear the personal toll becoming a doctor has taken. Yet, regardless of diversity in gender, faith, or race, these doctors embrace healing even when they may be suffering, teaching even as they continue their learning and reassuring even as they seek better methods, ideas, and solutions. Not surprisingly, when asked whether they would make the same career choice or whether they would recommend a career in medicine for their children, they reaffirm the decision to become doctors. Perhaps such predictability is best explained by an innovative thinker and gracious teacher from the past century, Albert Einstein, who said, “only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile.” Given the opportunity, these physicians have done just that.

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Editor