

# Punishment

By Jordan Rogers

As a child I had privileges taken away especially when I was sassy to my parents. I would be sent to my room and have the next play-date or outing revoked. The worst punishment of all occurred when something that I was looking forward to was swiped from me—usually accompanied by quite a bit of crying and begging on my part. In the end, however, mom and dad knew best. Here I am years later, a seemingly functional adult capable of making decisions on my own and no longer needing such “privileges” used as tools for behavior modification.

Fortunately the privileges that were used as punishment by my parents were not a matter of life or death. I was never told, “For that smart remark you are now grounded from your yearly vaccines.” Nor was I denied annual check ups because of bad report cards, or trips to the hospital because of a dirty room. No, my parents continued to provide access to a doctor’s care regardless of my mood or demeanor. It seemed to my folks that no matter how petulant or rude I might be, as their child, it was mom and dad’s responsibility to get me the best health care they could provide, no matter what.

As Americans, we see ourselves as crusaders of good. Americans are the avengers of what is right. We must forge ahead for those in need. Protect those who cannot help themselves. We invaded a Middle Eastern nation not to procure oil or financial security; we invaded to triumph over evil, of course. Try as the evildoers of the world might, they cannot squash the unconquerable spirit of good that our country upholds. At least, that’s what we’ve been told for the past eight years. If we find it necessary to better the lives of millions overseas, why would it not be a necessity to better the lives of our own? How can we justify letting millions of Americans go without health care, the most basic of human needs? It would be one

thing to deny a corporate bigwig a new Porsche or trip to Fiji; but scrimping on vaccines for school-aged children? Somehow it just doesn’t add up.

I know what you’re thinking. We are only in the beginning of our medical careers and what do we know? We are working harder than we ever imagined, in an all-consuming educational program. Once that set of letters is placed after our names, we want the respect and (monetary) accolades that we feel we deserve. I’m right there with you. However, just imagine for a moment that the struggles of medical school and residency were transformed into a lifetime of scrimping and saving. At the end of our road is a future full of promise; we won’t be without healthcare. But there are some people who work harder than we do, and they never seem to get ahead. For them, life is just surviving

Health care is a right. As a future provider of such a right, it comes with the territory that one might have to make adjustments to care for those who cannot do it on their own. I will be able to sleep much better knowing that perhaps someone’s mother, daughter, husband, son, or grandmother saw me that day instead of being turned down some place else.

It’s a long road ahead for our new president. We are bound to see some interesting changes take place in the world of medicine no matter what. Right now, however, millions of Americans are denied the essential human right of adequate health care for themselves and their families. This must change. In the meantime, I’m content just knowing I get to be a part of the field and participate the changes that will occur. Perhaps in the future, I will be more outspoken on the matter. Thank goodness I can no longer get sent to my room.