Ignorance Is a Preexisting Condition

Ignorance is NOT bliss, Mr. President.

November 3, 2017 By Lora René Tucker

“I can’t believe what you say, because I see what you do.”

—James Baldwin

My friends,

I am afraid the diagnosis is not good.

The prognosis is even worse.

If this compassion-less, token of a healthcare coverage comes to fruition, I fear that I will not be able to take care of myself, even if I am able to work full time and obtain healthcare from my employer. (Hell, I can barely afford what I have, deductions, co-pays and all!) This Ponzi-schemed, shell game called “Repeal and Replace” they slapped together (by what seemed to be people who lost all sense of decency or logic) has me thinking about my damn mortality again. Would I be able to continue living the quality-of-life that will allow me to live to be my mom’s age, or at least give a damn good fight doing so?! (Mom’s 92 years old, her sister 97.) And Lord, please let me have my right mind… “Quality of Life” is important when you start seeing grey hair!

I am truly stuck in a “donut-hole”—I am not in an income bracket that will allow me to have Medicaid, not old enough for Medicare (yet) so, if I’m not able to work (I struggle not to become too weak to handle the “9 to 5”) I will be thrown into the cauldron called “The High-Risk Pool” and be given some knee-jerk health plan that may make me choose between my antiretrovirals or cat food salad. Now don’t call me a drama queen, it could happen exactly like that, in a blink of an eye, I would be dropped (again) into the dark world of economic marginalization… (Not to say I’m already on the boarder,) with my left foot on the banana peel, like so many other people with hiv. Forget about the stigma, stereotypes and general social dysfunctions, I am afraid of the systemic discrimination and exploitation of me and my vulnerabilities, being an aging single Black female with this crappy “dis-ease.”

I will have to be either indigent or wealthy to grow old!

(And I am definitely not wealthy, nor old!) And I am sure there are kindred spirits out there, no matter how one identifies… The common denominators is hiv and health.

Don’t promise “Healthcare for All*” with a damn asterisk. That [*] means “But not for ____ (fill in the blank)”

Hearing all the rhetoric, the bile babble and caustic construction of this “repeal and raze” health bill; I am livid. It practically reeks the stench of racial, gender, ability, and economic power privilege. I reel from the “smell” and have a visceral fear that creeps up my spine. The actions of the administration and Republican majority makes me wonder what they are saying behind closed doors (or at the bar at the Trump International Hotel). I can picture of a 50-ish year old, cisgendered, heterosexual, Caucasian man on the steps of the Capitol, declaring that “they” do not deserve healthcare because “their” disease is “their” fault… that we have the cooties and are a financial burden…

This administration has already forgotten the red ribbon and is replacing it with a scarlet letter.

As I was writing this blog, I attempted to keep up with the catastrophic changes being made not only to healthcare and people with pre-existing conditions, but even to the very acknowledgement that there STILL IS an epidemic. I now realize that the dismantling Trump wants is just the icing on the toxic layer cake. Back in the spring, practically all the members of the HIV/AIDS Council either resigned or were released, making for an empty table of experts that don’t even have the ear of the president. The hammer is coming down; and they aren’t chipping away, it’s a full throttle destruction of think-tanks, research, and over-seeing organizations that can make sure this administration (or junta) keeps the “C” in compassion.

Not too long ago, I read the Op-Ed that Scott A. Schoettes published in Newsweek (6/16/2017). Mr. Schoettes was a part of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA). Created in 1995, the council provided information and recommendations to the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS). But by the date of that editorial, six advisors, including Mr. Schoettes, had resigned because:

“…we cannot ignore the many signs that the Trump Administration does not take the on-going epidemic or the needs of people with HIV seriously.”

You almost think that he is thinking if he ignores us, we’ll just go away… or die off. Besides, what are we to him? We are not perfect. We are a financial burden. Also, Trump’s administration has had so many “acting” HHS secretaries that they could produce a (morose) Broadway musical: “Sweeney Trump… the Demon Marauder of Main Street” (Please sing in the key of “E.”)

And lest we forget the former HHS secretary Mr. Tom (Jet-set) Price?

Now, a former pharmaceutical executive is being considered for Secretary of HHS. The Washington Post stated:

“Trump eyeing former drug firm executive Alex Azar for Health and Human Services secretary.”

Alex Azar was the president of Lilly USA, LLC; a part of Eli Lilly, the company that brings you Cialis, a Viagra competitor, and Prozac, America’s favorite antidepressant. Let’s put a fox in the hen house, do nothing to protect some of the most vulnerable “chickens” and lock up the hen house… And where are the checks and balances? The advocates? The Scott A. Schoettes of the world?!

You may ask if this is just “the swamp” moving sluggishly, as usual, WELL:

“By comparison, President Obama appointed a director to this office just 36 days into his administration. Within 18 months, that new director and his staff crafted the first comprehensive U.S. HIV/AIDS strategy…”

Number 45, tRump, you know, him… has no plan at all.

Trump took down the Office of National AIDS Policy website the day he took office and has not appointed a new head of the White House Office of National AIDS Policy, (which is supposed to be a part of the Domestic Policy Council). He’s attempting to dismantle the Affordable Care Act and ravage healthcare reform. (The great “Marauder-in-Chief”) You think I’m kidding, look at these websites:

Trump’s website:

https://www.whitehouse.gov/ONAP/

I will sing in front of Macy’s window in a swimsuit (not a good sight) if you can go beyond the linked page and obtain ANY information on that website… He completely shut the office and website down.

President Obama’s (archived) website:
https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/administration/eop/onap

Oh, and if you want to check out President Clinton’s ONAP website, here it is:
https://clintonwhitehouse4.archives.gov/ONAP/

So, as your president personally insults and defames citizens, Gold Star families, and respected congress persons; as he makes scary statements about blowing up a country, shutting down the media, teaching Black men a thing or two, and ignores all that does not hold his interest…

I shake my head…

“I can’t believe what you say, because I see what you do.”

I cannot suspend my disbelief in this man and even think that he will show astuteness and incorporate compassion in his “repeal and replace” rampage… He doesn’t care about those with preexisting conditions. But he doesn’t realize he, too, would be rejected and denied care if he was among the 99%…

Doesn’t he know?

Ignorance is a preexisting condition.

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