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Book Review - Breaking Ground: My Life In Medicine

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Off the SHELF

Breaking Ground: My Life In Medicine by Dr. Louis W. Sullivan, with David Chanoff; forward by Ambassador Andrew Young (The University of Georgia Press, Athens, GA, 2014: ISBN 978-0-8203-4663-2, \$29.95)

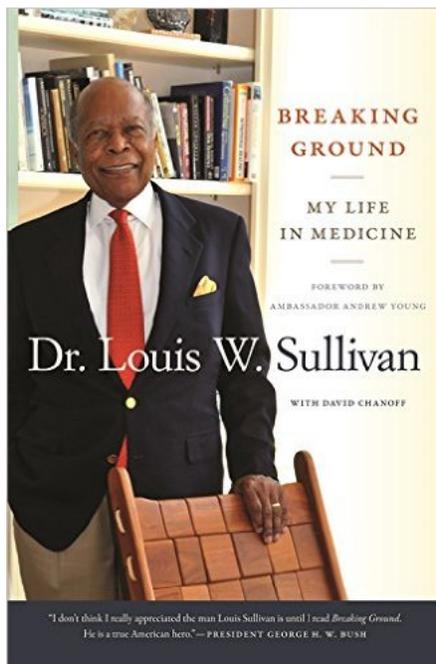
The life of Dr. Louis Sullivan illustrates the capability of a single extraordinary individual to influence the lives of many. This autobiography is a riveting account of his life from childhood segregation in rural Georgia to founding Dean of Morehouse Medical College and Secretary of Health and Human Services. Dr. Sullivan begins with a description of obstacles created by a climate of discrimination and fear in his childhood. This opening is especially poignant as the nation continues to address longstanding effects of prejudice and poverty.

Dr. Sullivan describes clearly the need of a support system of colleagues, family, and role models for success in higher education. Morehouse College students held exacting standards and learned to navigate a society just beginning to provide minority educational opportunities. This theme is clearly illustrated throughout the book as Dr. Sullivan interweaves incidents of discrimination with his journey from college student to physician to cabinet member.

Dr. Sullivan expounds on his medical education and reflects on challenges from social integration occurring while he attended Boston University. The next career chapters include residency training, research fellowship, and

hospital clinical service. Dr. Sullivan chose hematology specialty and actively engaged in clinical research, later rising to chief of hematology at Boston City Hospital. Dr. Sullivan describes initiating several events to encourage medical student diversity. His success with patient care, clinical research, and recruitment laid the foundation for his career in medical education.

Morehouse College recruited Dr. Sullivan to serve as Dean of a new medical school to meet the needs of the underserved African American population. Dr. Sullivan provides an insider's view of challenges he faced including faculty and student recruitment, financial and political support, facility development, and finding clinical placements. He writes with a refreshing candor of struggles and errors experienced in the course of developing a premier African American medical school. A highlight is his description of networking with business and political leaders to support minority health care and education.



Dr. Sullivan was appointed as Secretary of Human Health and Services (HHS) in 1989 by President George H.W. Bush. He shares his perspective on being the key representative for health care issues facing the nation. Dr. Sullivan writes frankly regarding his learning process to lead the HHS and develop an agenda for healthcare reform. A major accomplishment was the Healthy People 2000 campaign to increase health literacy. He details his

determination to improve health care for underserved and minority populations.

Dr. Sullivan returned to Morehouse School of Medicine as president to continue building a pipeline of African American physicians. He describes his services on corporate and pharmaceutical boards to highlight employee health care concerns. Dr. Sullivan explains the process behind notable achievements such as elevating Minority Health Office at the National Institutes of Health to institute level.

The book ends with an overview of the current issues in health care, which resonate to the beginning of his life. He describes the

importance of the Sullivan Alliance to expand the pool of potential health care professionals. Dr. Sullivan elucidates efforts to save Grady Hospital, once the only choice for African American health care. Dr. Sullivan has made remarkable strides in expanding medical education, increasing opportunities for African Americans, and improving the health of the nation. This autobiography is a fascinating glimpse of the journey from segregation to recognition as a national leader for health care education and reform.

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