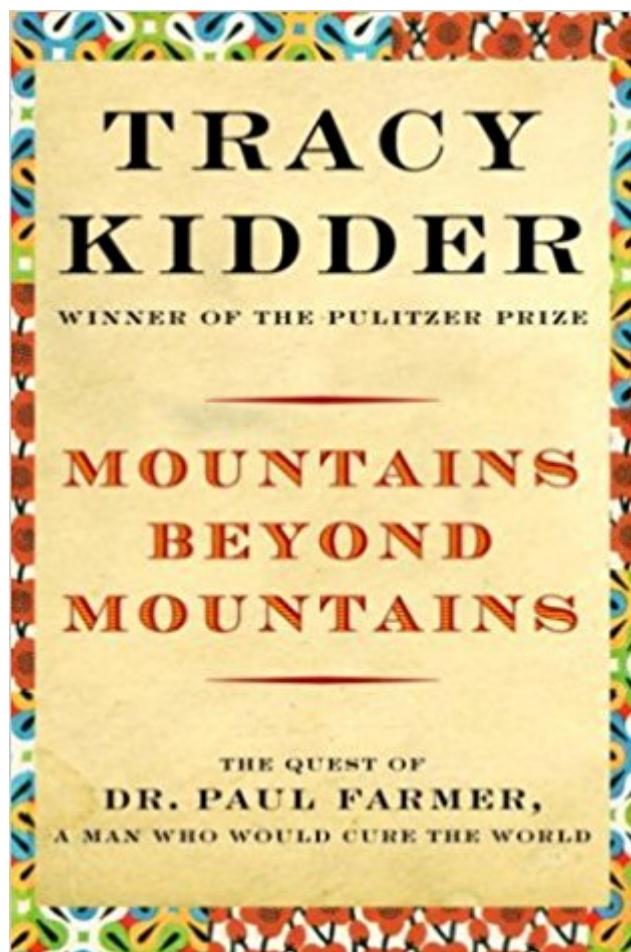


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# Mountains Beyond Mountains: Healing The World: The Quest Of Dr. Paul Farmer



## Synopsis

Tracy Kidder is a winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the author of the bestsellers *The Soul of a New Machine*, *House*, *Among Schoolchildren*, and *Home Town*. He has been described by the Baltimore Sun as the "master of the non-fiction narrative." This powerful and inspiring new book shows how one person can make a difference, as Kidder tells the true story of a gifted man who is in love with the world and has set out to do all he can to cure it. At the center of *Mountains Beyond Mountains* stands Paul Farmer. Doctor, Harvard professor, renowned infectious-disease specialist, anthropologist, the recipient of a MacArthur "genius" grant, world-class Robin Hood, Farmer was brought up in a bus and on a boat, and in medical school found his life's calling: to diagnose and cure infectious diseases and to bring the lifesaving tools of modern medicine to those who need them most. This magnificent book shows how radical change can be fostered in situations that seem insurmountable, and it also shows how a meaningful life can be created, as Farmer, brilliant, charismatic, charming, both a leader in international health and a doctor who finds time to make house calls in Boston and the mountains of Haiti, blasts through convention to get results. *Mountains Beyond Mountains* takes us from Harvard to Haiti, Peru, Cuba, and Russia as Farmer changes minds and practices through his dedication to the philosophy that "the only real nation is humanity" - a philosophy that is embodied in the small public charity he founded, Partners In Health. He enlists the help of the Gates Foundation, George Soros, the U.N. World Health Organization, and others in his quest to cure the world. At the heart of this book is the example of a life based on hope, and on an understanding of the truth of the Haitian proverb "Beyond mountains there are mountains": as you solve one problem, another problem presents itself, and so you go on and try to solve that one too.

"Mountains Beyond Mountains unfolds with the force of a gathering revelation," says Annie Dillard, and Jonathan Harr says, "[Farmer] wants to change the world. Certainly this luminous and powerful book will change the way you see it."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Adult/High School-Thought-provoking and profoundly satisfying, this book will inspire feelings of humility, admiration, and disquietude; in some readers, it may sow the seeds of humanitarian activism. As a specialist in infectious diseases, Farmer's goal is nothing less than redressing the "steep gradient of inequality" in medical service to the desperately poor. His work establishing a complex of public health facilities on the central plateau of Haiti forms the keystone to efforts that now encompass initiatives on three continents. Farmer and a trio of friends began in the 1980s by creating a charitable foundation called Partners in Health (PIH, or Zanmi Lasante in Creole), armed with passionate conviction and \$1 million in seed money from a Boston philanthropist. Kidder provides anecdotal evidence that their early approach to acquiring resources for the Haitian project at times involved a Robin Hood type of "redistributive justice" by liberating medical equipment from the "rich" (Harvard) and giving to the "poor" (the PIH clinic). Yet even as PIH has grown in size and sophistication, gaining the ability to influence and collaborate with major international organizations because of the founders' energy, professional credentials, and successful outcomes, their dedicated vision of doctoring to the poor remains unaltered. Farmer's conduct is offered as a "road map to decency," albeit an uncompromising model that nearly defies replication. This story is remarkable, and Kidder's skill in sequencing both dramatic and understated elements into a reflective commentary is unsurpassed.

Lynn Nutwell, Fairfax City Regional Library, VA  
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Paul Farmer is a 44-year-old specialist in infectious diseases and an attending physician at the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. His biographer, Tracy Kidder, read his book on the connections between poverty and disease -- *Infections and Inequalities* -- and wrote to him, "I'm reading your oeuvre." "Ah, but that's not my oeuvre," Farmer replied. "To see my oeuvre you have to come to Haiti." Indeed, Farmer founded a hospital and health center, Zanmi Lasante, in Cange, Haiti, hours from the capital and at the end of a gutted road in a region destitute even by Haiti's

standards, as part of an extensive community-based health network linked to a hospital, Clinique Bon Sauveur (see Figure). For more than 20 years, Farmer has spent many months every year there, often taking care of patients himself and continually improving the treatments offered by the clinic. These now include antiretroviral drugs. Lasante is supported by a foundation based in Boston called Partners in Health, which is headed by Ophelia Dahl and largely financed by Tom White, the philanthropic owner of a large Boston construction firm. There is more. Through his patients in Cange, Farmer became interested in multidrug-resistant tuberculosis. From Haiti, he exported treatment of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis to Peru and then to Siberia, achieving cure rates comparable to those in the United States. Through the Institute for Health and Social Justice (the research and education division of Partners in Health) and his associate Jim Yong Kim, he started a movement to lower prices for the second-line drugs necessary to treat resistant tuberculosis and successfully lobbied the World Health Organization for changes in treatment recommendations for tuberculosis. Readers may have heard some of this story before (Farmer has received a MacArthur award and the American Medical Association's Dr. Nathan Davis Award) and may have wondered, as I did, where he came from and how one man could accomplish so much. Kidder traces Farmer's trajectory, starting with his unconventional childhood, which included living in a bus and on a leaky boat. He was given a scholarship to Duke, where he majored in anthropology and worked alongside poor Haitian farm workers in North Carolina's tobacco fields. After graduation he spent a year in Haiti, where he met Ophelia Dahl, and then went to Harvard Medical School. While in medical school and during his residencies and fellowships, he spent more time in Cange than in Boston. How does Farmer do it? Kidder provides some explanations: he works nonstop, hardly sleeps, sees his wife and child for a day or so every few months, inspires an uncommon degree of devotion and enthusiasm among collaborators and potential donors, and tolerates planes and airports for days on end. In addition, the Boston medical establishment has bent rules and regulations to accommodate his needs. Convincing? Maybe. There remains something miraculous about Paul Farmer. Should one go out and buy *Mountains beyond Mountains*? By all means. Not only is it an enjoyable book, but it is also very likely that a part of the \$25.95 spent in purchasing it will find its way back to Haiti. That is more than can be said about many books. In addition, readers looking for a worthwhile charity to support may be inspired to send some money to Partners in Health. Bernard Hirschel, M.D.

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Tracy Kidder is the master journalist, like a clear window on the world. Long ago I read *The Soul of*

a New Machine and liked it, but didn't think too much about it. The brilliance of Kidder's style is so make you feel like you are there, really feel what the subject is about, without any distortion positive or negative. What an amazing subject for this work: Dr. Paul Farmer. This guy is just amazing! As a college student, he travels to Haiti to dedicate himself to the poor. He attends Harvard while spending 8 months a year in Haiti building his own hospital there. He gets a PhD in Anthropology at the same time he gets his MD, the latter not surprising given that he already has 6 years of intense clinical experience dealing directly with life and death situations. You would expect such a person to take on airs, maybe be a big proud of himself, maybe even be motivated by the 'big bucks' so clearly available in a rich city. Dr. Farmer appears to be vying for a "saint" award. Kidder makes you feel like you are there sitting in the same room, and it is no big deal. To say this book is inspiring is badly understating it. Look at what you can do if you hold true to your ideals! It is humbling as well. Dr. Farmer is my age, and I can't help drawing parallels with my own life, and there is no way I could do a fraction of what he is done. Yet I don't need to: it is satisfying to know that there are people like him in the world. There is so much to learn from the book. Never give in, and never give up! His daily accomplishments are so small, and yet at the same time so profound and consistent. It is all about "caring". If you care about your friends, your neighbors, your family, and - yes - the rest of the world, how can you not love a person who literally saves people on a daily basis? Are we seeing a saint walking among us? One has to wonder. This is a story that needs to be told. It reminds me a lot of Three Cups of Tea. If only we could motivate others to do the same -- if only we could motivate ourselves to do the same -- the world could be a better place. How refreshing to read about a real superhero. While continuing to work in Haiti, he started to investigate Lima Peru, where there was a disturbing trend: people with Tuberculosis that was resistant to 4, maybe even 5 of the top antibiotics. He goes there and finds that in general Peru is competently following a program in strict accordance to WHO standards. The problem was the WHO guidelines! How to raise this issue without alienating the world's most important health organization, or the officials in Peru. At the same time, what can be done about drugs with inflated costs putting them out of reach of these poor patients? His travels take him to the prisons in Russia, which has an extreme problem with TB as well. Prisoners are easy to study and monitor. He points out that the prisons are like a pump that cycles TB into the general population with prisoners who stay a few years and bring the disease back with him. You almost cheer when he gets a grant from the Gates foundation to develop a modified procedure to battle MDR-TB. He does not do any of this all by himself. There are a lot of truly dedicate people who recognize his talent and follow/help him all along the way. Kidder manages to capture many of these people as well. At still, Farmer's real talent is to be the catalyst

that makes it all come together. It might be better to say it all flows around him...In the end, his success is due to one simple talent, and he says it best in his own words: "I like people." It is hard not to like him back.

One of the most interesting authors I have stumbled upon in years. I will forge through everyone of his books. I had to take a break from Tracy Kidder's books after reading this one because it gave me so much food for thought. I have not finished digesting his revelations of Paul Farmer. Tracy Kidder finds people that are worth reading about; those with dedication, drive, and the energy to follow through a personal dream. I am hoping to find a book of this caliber about a woman. I don't know if Kidder has written one, but I'm off for the hunt!

Thank you Tracy Kidder. It was hard to put this book down. I felt as if I'd walked every mile with Paul Farmer through remote mountain villages where he helped people suffering from maladies that took root in the midst of poverty, isolation and lack of knowledge. Reading this story, my takeaway was this: When we do have occasion to meet people like Dr. Farmer, we are fortunate if we recognize we are in the presence of someone who is living out his or her mission without holding back. Passionately, tirelessly and with perseverance. Deserving of our gratitude and support. Kidder does an admirable job by providing an accurate and respectfully written portrayal of Dr. Farmer with the power to inspire others to follow in his footsteps.

This book provides a glimpse not only into the medical and sociological challenges of Haiti and other impoverished regions, but into the culture of those who serve, support those who serve and in many cases obstruct those who serve. Mr. Farmer's view of all human life being worthy of an opportunity to live is refreshing in an era of global narcissism. Mr. Kidder did an exceptional job capturing Paul Farmer's character, dedication, commitment and single-minded focus, but I still came away not fully understanding what drives him at his core. This lack of understanding may be my fault as I've been trained to seek a "root cause" when I analyze a situation, in a culture where everyone has an agenda. Regardless, I applaud Mr. Farmer and the thousands of other unnamed global servants who engage on a life level helping those who most need help.

I had to read this book for school summer work so of course I went into it not having high hopes, but it ended up being one of the most educational and eye opening nonfiction stories I ave ever read. There were many life lessons that I learned throughout the novel and many lessons dealing with

world medical history, racism, diversity, politics, and the issue of poverty in the world.

This book was most definitely inspiring, hearing about the story of Dr. Paul Farmer and all of his achievements through the years, sacrificing so much for the benefits of so many and what he accomplished from it was truly moving. Tracy Kidder has done a fantastic job of writing a non-fiction book almost as if it was fictional, I had to keep reminding myself while reading this that these events most certainly did happen and Paul Farmer is a real human being on this Earth. This book led me through an experience that let me sympathize and experience events through the eyes of an incredible man. Overall this book was a fantastic read

This is an extremely well-written biography of Dr. Paul Farmer, a remarkable man and doctor who co-founded Partners In Health, originally based in Haiti- now world-wide. The story is extremely inspiring and well told [the book won the Pulitzer Prize]. Reading these pages, you really do come to see that one very dedicated, highly energetic and driven man can change the world. And we keep rooting for him mightily as he does. Maybe this book will also inspire you to become a donor to Partners In Health- which would be another good outcome.

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