

## Reflections on Sicko

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What is the point of Sicko? If you could sum up it's purpose in a single sentence, what would it be? This is the most important question to ask before any reflection, criticism or report can be made. Yet, the point Sicko, is easy to miss. Sicko is not about comparing the health care policies of Canada, England, France and Cuba with that of the United States. Sicko is not about how America and Americans are bad. The point of Sicko isn't even that for profit health care is a bad and wasteful model.

Sicko is based around a moral question, do we do right by our neighbors and fellow citizens? And the point that Sicko makes is that we as a community of Americans have lost our way in a way that our peer-nations and even a third world authoritarian nation have not. The point is that we don't look after our own even when they have made great sacrifices to look after us. To reiterate, the question that Sicko asks is not, at it's root a policy question or an economic question, neither is it a political nor a health question, it is, at it's root, a moral question. How could such abominable things happen in the US and not in our peer-nations? How could we as a nation refuse to take care of those who willingly take care of us? And further, how come these same refusals don't happen in a nation we consider beneath us? How can all these things happen? How can we as a nation, a community of people allow them to happen? Why do these other nations and communities consider the welfare of their neighbors, fellow citizens and contributing members of society their problem while we do not, while we wash our hands of their troubles? That is the point of Sicko. That is also why it is called Sicko, meaning that our community acts like a sicko (not that it's full of sick people). However, it's easy to focus on the peripherals, Michael Moore the personality, some of the pros of our health care system, some of the cons of those health care systems compared to ours. It's easy to criticize the fact that Moore focuses on the more extreme stories in America and only looks for the most satisfied people in foreign countries. But understanding what the point of the movie actually is will make you realize, "well, yeah, of course he does." How else would you address the moral question? How else would you address the way that we ignore and forsake many of those who contribute and make sacrifices for the American community while those other countries don't? You certainly wouldn't focus on those people with \$10k annual POS health insurance plans who get to choose which hospital and doctor perform their elective surgery because they are not the ones ignored, they are not the ones left behind and they are not the one's forsaken. You also would not focus on how other citizens of other countries often have to wait longer for elective procedures because the public plans prioritize by need. You wouldn't address those things because those things do not address the moral question. Those points address the finer points of the various policies. Now, I would argue that the economics benefits of universal health care on a society are huge, I would argue that but it is not relevant to the moral question. I would also argue that for most routine procedures, most preventative health care visits and even for the over all health of a nation a public health care system is far superior, I would but that wouldn't be relevant either. Instead, I would focus on people who have contributed but are left behind, people who are unable to get insurance (people with preexisting conditions), people who have insurance but don't get care (DoS), and people who have insurance, get care but are bankrupted. Or, more broadly, what would be relevant would be to ask is, are there contributions that individuals make to society that go unnoticed by the economy, in other words, that go unpaid? And if so, should our society look for ways to reimburse, or rather, to make right on those contributions (or should we just consider them suckers)? I believe that the answer to both of those questions is yes and that public health care is a good way to address making right on those contributions. We already provide health care to those who have not made or are not currently making economic contributions to the American community even if they do not make or have not made significant non-monetary contributions. So what about those who do and who have but get ignored? Why isn't the country as a whole a good neighbor to those who are good neighbors to it? Why have we failed them? Why have we failed ourselves? Why are we not seeking to make good on their contributions be they unpaid 9/11 rescuers or simply helpful good samaritans? Why, when the next catastrophe happens, would anyone be foolish enough to help their fellow citizens when those fellow citizens have proven a complete unwillingness to reciprocate? Sicko asks these questions and Sicko's answers lie in creating a public health care system. Any alternative suggestions for rectifying this moral problem that now exists in our country would be quite welcome. I've thought about it and I have not come up with a better solution. This is why I think Sicko is an important movie that deserves more honest attention and less reflexive reactions to its maker and its subject matter.