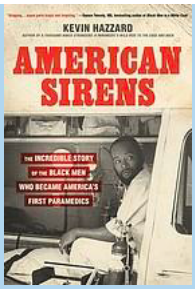
Discussion Guide



American Sirens
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Hachette Books
2022
316 pages
ISBN: 978-0306926075

History of Medicine

Summary

A dramatic story of the Freedom House EMS in Pittsburgh, a group of Black men who became America's first paramedics and set the gold standard for emergency medicine around the world.

Questions

1. Before the development of the pioneering ambulance service called Freedom House, what were the options for a person experiencing a medical emergency? What values and ideas about city and state government might explain such limited help for citizens?
2. When John Moon first saw the Freedom House paramedics deliver an emergency patient to Montefiore, what specifics about them and their work struck him so powerfully?
3. In what ways might John Moon's difficult and lonely childhood years have influenced his decisions to work as an orderly and then as a paramedic? In what ways was the Carrie Steele-Pitts Home helpful to him or not? What qualities and characteristics did he bring to the new, challenging work of Freedom House?
4. What was the "viciously destructive policy known as urban renewal"? What population did this policy harm the most? What was its legacy for cities, neighborhoods, and those who lived there? What systemic policies and laws were used to justify such destruction of neighborhoods and the segregation of those that replaced them? How was it all related to a service like Freedom House?
5. What was it about "street medicine" and "ambulance care" that didn't seem like "real medicine" to people? What kinds of emergencies began to change public and political opinion about the value of this new kind of treatment?
6. Why did Peter Safar want "ordinary people" to train to become paramedics for Freedom House? What did he believe was necessary to transform "life-failures to life-givers"?
7. Why did Nancy Caroline take the position of medical director for Freedom House? What unique and powerful ideas and abilities did she bring? What challenge in her personal life was she struggling with at the time?
8. What was important about the idea that "if medicine teaches you anything, it's that we all bleed rand and die easy"?
9. What many systemic and discriminatory forces explain how the profound work, success, and even jobs were largely take from those of Freedom House when ambulance care was finally accepted and valued by the larger society?
10. What is the legacy of Freedom House?

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