**

Transcript: Laurence Clark – HEALTHCARE in the USA

Laurence Clark:

I‘ve come to America to find out about Independent Living here. In this film, I travel across the country to discover how their healthcare system treats poor people and people who are disabled.

*[A number of people who are disabled sit around a table with Laurence]*

Laurence Clark:

So I’ve been trying to get my head round, is there health insurance here? And whether many disabled people can get it?

PARTICIPANT 1:

It’s the only country in the world where your medical insurance is related to where you work, or your status if you’re not working.

PARTICIPANT 2:

Well a lot of people don’t have any healthcare here in the United States, a lot of people are working, sometimes two or three jobs and have no healthcare, so it’s just criminal as far as I’m concerned.

PARTICIPANT 3:

My mom works with people that are homeless, so I get this whole other side of, the higher percentage of people that are homeless are homeless because they can’t pay for their medication.

Laurence Clark:

It’s really noticeable here, lots of homeless people, lots of people with health issues are out on the streets.

PARTICIPANT 4:

Alright, they’ll put you in the shelter, guess what? You gotta be there by nine o’clock by the latest, then at seven o’clock you’ve gotta get out.

PARTICIPANT 3:

So how does it work within the UK?

Laurence Clark:

How does it work? Erm, you turn up at the hospital or the doctor and you get seen *[laughs]*

PARTICIPANT 1:

It means people can have access to healthcare, whether they are a citizen or not a citizen, have a disability, don’t have a disability, you just get what you need.

PARTICIPANT 5:

That just makes sense, I mean, it’s like Michael Moore says, everybody in the world lives in the world, ‘we, not me,’ but the United States seems to live in a world of ‘me and only me’

Laurence Clark:

So like, we turn up to the hospital or the doctors, you don’t have to show a card, you don’t have to pay a bill, you get the same whether you’re, you know, living on the streets, or poor, or whether you’re working…

PARTICIPANT 4:

That’s the way it should be.

Laurence Clark:

That’s the way it should be here.

PARTICIPANT 4:

But it doesn’t happen that way.

PARTICIPANT 6:

Unfortunately a lot of people in this country do not agree with that.

PARTICIPANT 7:

See my experience is, ok I’ve got friends who actually have gotten sick, sitting home sick, but they’re scared to go to the doctor, scared to go to the hospital, because the first thing that the think about, is the bills.

PARTICIPANT 4:

You get here, especially in Florida, you might as well just go play doctor yourself. Here’s a prime example – a friend of mine had his arm broken a few weeks back, he went to the hospital: ‘well you ain’t got no insurance,’ well, they just let him walk out with a sling ‘well, we can’t do anything with it.’

PARTICIPANT 7:

The people that need the help are scared, because the help, first of all, not all help is good. Second of all, the bills are just so outrageous, that people are scared to go get to the doctors. My clients are scared, when they sit there and they bump their foot or they hurt themselves in some way, they’re scared to ask for help because, you know what, they throw them in the hospital for two weeks or a month, it’s just a small little bump, but they sit there and they want all your money or Medicaid or Medicare, that they stick you in the hospital and the don’t give you good care.

PARTICIPANT 4:

You’re better off sittin’ in the woods and trying to operate on yourself.

PARTICIPANT 2:

And then, the only way that you can get certain things, if you have a disability, is, you have to be absolutely, completely poor. That’s it!

Laurence Clark:

Is that the way Medicaid works?

PARTICIPANT 2:

That’s how Medicaid is, you have to be desperately poor to qualify for Medicaid. You can’t have anything *[laughs]*. Poverty is both a cause and an effect of disability. People that are poor are more likely to have disabilities and if you acquire a disability you’re likely to become poor unless you’re outrageously rich.

PARTICIPANT 8:

What would your recommendation to the United States be?

Laurence Clark:

Everyone here seems to be really against government control, but certainly we find more government control means it’s fairer. It means that you haven’t got big companies, big insurance companies, big care providers, coming in and doing things for profit.

PARTICIPANT 2:

It’s a racket, the whole thing is a racket, and some people are making money, but a whole lot of people are suffering and a lot of people who are suffering are people with disabilities, but other people are also suffering who are workers – people who work for people with disabilities and they’re not getting a good shake out of this either. But the pharmaceutical companies and the top bigwigs and stuff, they’re making money hand over fist. That’s what’s going on, it’s greed.

Laurence Clark:

I think the attitude in the UK has changed recently and we’ve realised how lucky we are [laughs] and you know, it was like a British tradition to moan about the NHS wasn’t it? We tend to moan about our waiting lists and all that, but now that we’ve realised that everyone has it more adverse, we’ve suddenly gone more proud of it.

*[Time has moved on and Laurence and participant 2 are laughing together]*

PARTICIPANT 2:

If you don’t want me to come, don’t invite me [laughs]! So if you don’t want me to talk, don’t ask me a question!

*[Laurence and Participant 2 laugh]*

PARTICIPANT 5:

I’ve always been taught by my teachers, that the United States Constitution is the only constitution in the world that includes the word ‘happiness’ in its body. And it says ‘to ensure happiness for all citizens in habitats of the United States.’ ‘To ensure happiness’ has to include healthcare at whatever point you need it.

*End*