

Rise Up: 'They get rich while we fade away'

Featuring Daniel Ray Hilsinger



IN THIS EPISODE

For most of us, the horror of **getting a cancer diagnosis is only the beginning** of a protracted, exhausting and stressful struggle to get the coverage and care we need to survive. Patients with life-threatening illnesses are at ground zero of **a major moral conflict in America** - a healthcare system that is as much about profit as it is about care.

Join host **Brenda Gazzar** and **Daniel Ray Hilsinger**, filmmaker, activist, singer and songwriter as they discuss his fight to survive a rare cancer while only in his 20s. **What did he learn about health care and privilege while in the chemo wards?** How did his experience change his life? Why should sick people have to deal with the "overwhelming and tragic and horrible burden" of health insurance hassles while fighting to live?

SHOW NOTES

WE DISCUSS

How did you feel when you were first diagnosed with cancer?

“...you know, it was just so scary. It's hard to even talk about I think and to remember, but it really just changed everything. You know, I think at that point in my life, I still had a goal or a dream to go back to New York and to make films. And, you know, that changed everything to just very simply I want to survive.” – *Daniel Ray Hilsinger*

How did your struggle with cancer change your life?

“...that's when I think I first started learning more about healthcare justice specifically. And it's also when I just started learning more about health and wellness and what does that mean? And you know, what impacts our health and, you know, from the food we eat to the air we breathe to water we drink to, you know, our emotional and psychological health? It's just been really transformative. You know, I'd been learning so much since then, I think just because I, but like I needed to survive and yeah, it's been a big change.” – *Daniel Ray Hilsinger*

How was your patient experience different from that of other patients you met in the chemo wards?

“I come from a place of privilege. I'm in a white body in this world and also a male body and I was born into a family where my dad was a doctor...not everyone was able to navigate those circumstances in the same way that I was just because of my knowledge of how to talk and things like that. And I met people really struggling and being at a time in your life when you are...literally on the edge of life or death and it's just like an overwhelming pressure and fear also having to navigate this system that is so broken and is so confusing...even for me who had grown up in this privileged way, with all this knowledge, it was very challenging to be able to just like get through a day, you know, and it's like ...calling all the people and navigating the insurance and navigating providers and navigating the drugs and navigating all of these things is just so much. ” – *Daniel Ray Hilsinger*

Tell us about your song, “Rise Up,” and how it's connected to your advocacy for healthcare justice.

“...it’s coming from my heart, it’s coming from like this tragic experience of being sick and feeling alone and being afraid and not knowing what to do...Parts of the song are kind of talking about my - and also different people’s - experiences navigating the healthcare system and getting sick and working and then it eventually, you know...calls out different people...and systems like pharmaceutical companies and private health insurance, and then it finishes with...a plea...for people to come together and, and rise up and make a change.” – *Daniel Ray Hilsinger*

Helpful Links

[Breaking Down Barriers to Access Cancer Care Equity](#)
Cal-Matters

[Many Cancer Patients Face Mounting Bills Despite Having Health Insurance](#)
US News & World Report

[High Cost of Cancer Treatment](#), *Asbestos.com*

[Medicaid Rules May Affect Americans’ Cancer Survival](#), *US News & World Report*

[When Adolescents and Young Adults Get Cancer](#), *The American Cancer Society*

Episode Transcript

Read the full episode [transcript](#).

Guest Biography

Daniel Ray Hilsinger is a filmmaker, activist, singer and songwriter based out of Oakland, CA who is currently recording his debut album of all original music. After being diagnosed with bone cancer, Ray started singing and playing guitar for the first time — something he had always wanted to do, but never made time

for. He is so deeply grateful to be alive and feels so fortunate and excited to share his music with you.

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