

# The Winds of Change

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As members of the medical faculty of our university, I believe we—and members of medical faculties on other campuses—have been a bit smug in observing that student riots and related manifestations of the winds of change have been confined to other campuses and other faculties. After all, if anything, our students have long had a reputation for conservatism. But about a month ago, I was deeply shaken. I encountered the first medical student to tell me that “the system” cannot be changed by peaceful action from within. The fact that the student was bright, well-informed, polite, sincere, and probably quite ethical, added to the poignancy of this event.

I believe that over a beer, I was able to raise some doubts in this student’s revolutionary mind. As a faculty member who believes in constitutional community activism, and who has been able to contribute to rapid social and legislative changes in a number of human service areas in our state and elsewhere, I could argue strongly in support of the effectiveness of the

constitutional change process, and the possibility of fusing traditional scholarship with successful and relevant social activism.

But suppose my specialty had been one less apt to provide a springboard to relevant activism? Or suppose that I had been an activism failure? How could I have argued meaningfully and constructively with the student?

Yes, the winds of change are upon us. Even the medical campus is no longer immune from revolutionary ideology. But are we prepared for the new generation of students? I understand that some of these young people now openly laugh at what they consider professional irrelevancy or absurdity—at material either not perceived as such by past classes, or swallowed by them in silent frustration.

Our faculty is responding to the new student—some departments undoubtedly faster than others. But maybe it is easier than we think to do even more. Perhaps one such thing would be to offer a course that is unabashedly concerned with citizenship: relevant, constructive, constitutional, unselfish, active, citizenship for the physician citizen of the future. I believe that an excellent three-year course of this nature could be constructed, and that it could have a major impact upon our students.

Don't forget: Che Guevara was also a physician.