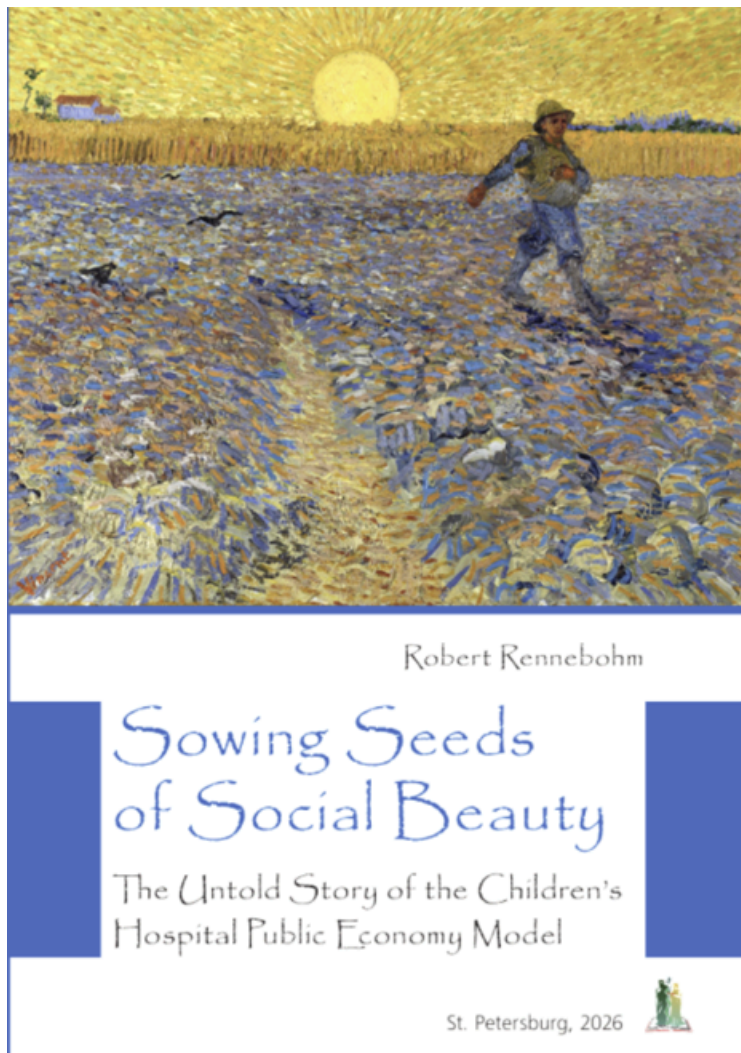


Sowing Seeds of Social Beauty—About Its Publication

Rob Rennebohm, MD

January 2026



Much of the book, ***Sowing Seeds of Social Beauty***, including many of the “Little Economic Stories” it contains, was written about 30 years ago (in the late 1990s). I was motivated to write the book then because of my concerns about the increasing corporatization and dehumanization of Healthcare and of society in general. In my opinion, a major root cause of the problems facing Humanity (and the earth itself), in the past and even more so now, has been the social and economic model (corporate capitalism) that has been allowed to increasingly prevail over Humanity. I wanted to stimulate and facilitate healthy, respectful dialogue about the prevailing model and alternatives to it.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s I submitted the manuscript to about 15-20 “progressive” publishing houses in the USA. None of these publishers showed any interest. The common theme of the letters of rejection was that the manuscript “did not fit with the list of subjects that interest our readers.”

In 2003 I sent the manuscript to Howard Zinn--the highly regarded American historian, professor of political science, and activist for the civil rights, labor rights, and anti-war movements, who authored the book: ***A People's' History of the United States***. As you can see from our brief email correspondence, he appreciated the content and potential of the manuscript:

From: Howard Zinn [hzinn@bu.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, July 15, 2003 9:57 PM
To: RENNEBOHMR@pediatrics.ohio-state.edu
Subject: manuscript

Dr. Rennebohm:

Thanks so much for sending me your manuscript on Health Care Reform and Global Economic Reform.

I've just browsed in it, reading samples of sections through to the end of the book. I am very impressed with what you have done. I think it an ingenious idea to use health care -- which is a universal humanistic value, crucially important to everyone -- as an entrance into the larger question of how our society should be run. Your analysis of the "Merchant Model" contrasted to the "Appropriate Reimbursement Model" is very carefully worked out and persuasive. We need to challenge the system in its fundamentals -- the market system, the profit system, the assumption that humans naturally are greedy -- and you do this very well, using the health care system as a powerful entry into the larger question. I like the way you use examples that have immediate appeal, like your discussion of the New York City Fire Department as an Appropriate Reimbursement Model. And then you tackle foreign policy and get to the root problem -- the assumption that the Merchant Model should be imposed on the rest of the world. Your Social Clinicians' Recommendation is down to earth and clearly based on practical experience. Your "Little Economic Stories" are full of rich ideas, and because they are so personal, draw the reader in and illustrate your thesis beautifully.

If you want to pass on my comment to South End Press, I'd be happy for you to do so. If you would like me to speak to them about this, I'll do that. If South End Press isn't interested, it seems to me there would be other progressive publishing houses you should approach. There is Seven Stories Press in New York, The New Press in New York. I have connections with both -- if that would be useful to you. There are a few independent publishers left: Norton is one of them, and they do a good job. Then there are the "entrepreneurial" big publishers! Ironical for them to take on your book, but it's a possibility. At some point it might be useful for you to have a literary agent, and if so I might recommend one or two.

Anyone reading your CV would know immediately that what you say is based on a wealth of experience.

Best wishes,

Howard Zinn

Rennebohm, Robert

From: Howard Zinn [hzinn@bu.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, July 16, 2003 10:26 AM
To: Rennebohm, Robert
Subject: Re: manuscript

Robert Rennebohm

I have just sent off to South End Press, to Joey Fox (a young woman), one of the editors at the press, the comment I gave you plus a few more sentences of support. And in a few days I will be seeing Joey on another matter and I will bring this up, so at the least they consider your proposal seriously. Let me know what happens with South End. If that doesn't work out, I can write to the people I know at The New Press and Seven Stories Press.

Howard Zinn

Howard particularly liked the “Little Economic Stories.” He thought my critique of the American healthcare system served as an effective and instructive context in which to discuss the root cause of social and economic problems in society as a whole. He encouraged me to pursue publication of the manuscript, and he offered his help.

Despite Howard Zinn’s help, I continued to receive letters of rejection from several more publishers, all of which were considered “progressive” publishers.

By 2005 I had run out of time, energy, and patience to further pursue publication of the manuscript. I was busy practicing more than full-time medicine. I decided that Howard Zinn’s appreciation of the manuscript represented sufficient affirmation of the manuscript’s merit and value. I was grateful for that, and for the time being I was satisfied with that. I decided to table my book project and pursue it at a later date, perhaps after I retired from Medicine. Unfortunately, I had no further correspondence with Howard Zinn before he died in 2010.

In 2024 I resumed efforts to publish the manuscript. I re-wrote parts of the original manuscript, polished and updated other parts, and added several new chapters. I then submitted the new, improved manuscript to several publishing houses in the US, Canada, and Europe. None showed any interest.

Since 2007 I have worked closely with pediatric rheumatologists at Saint Petersburg State Pediatric Medical University (SPSPMU) in Russia. We have collaborated to mutually improve our understanding of the immunopathogenesis and treatment of autoimmune rheumatic diseases afflicting children. We shared an altruistic approach to the practice of Medicine. We also shared concerns about the increasing corporatization of healthcare—first and foremost occurring in the USA but also seeming to be on the horizon in Russia.

Throughout my years of involvement with SPSPMU, its pediatricians have taken great interest in my thoughts on Social Beauty. They have been appreciative and supportive of the altruistic CHPEM, which they themselves have long practiced and want to continue to practice. I eventually became a non-residential on-going Visiting Professor of Pediatrics at SPSPMU. SPSPMU valued both my experience in pediatric rheumatology and my thoughts on Social Beauty and the CHPEM.

In 2025, when it became apparent that publishing houses in the USA, Canada, and Europe had no interest in publishing ***Sowing Seeds of Social Beauty***, SPSPMU enthusiastically offered to publish it. They believed in its logic, its message, and its importance. They wanted to preserve and expand the Social Beauty of their children's hospital, and they wanted to protect it and other children's hospitals in Russia from the kind of corporatization that had adversely affected children's hospitals in the US. They viewed my manuscript to be an effective and instructive articulation and justification of their concerns and of the importance of the CHPEM. They wanted to share the manuscript with other children's hospitals in Russia and with healthcare administrators in Russia.

I was grateful that pediatricians at SPSPMU were enthusiastic and unafraid to publish ***Sowing Seeds of Social Beauty***. The book was officially published as an e-book in January 2026. It has been accepted as a peer-reviewed contribution to the Science e-Library of Russia. Soon the entire e-book will be posted on the official SPSPMU website, where the general public will be able to read it for free. A copy of the original full manuscript is already posted on my website: www.notesfromthesocialclinic.org

The fact that the book has been published in Russia serves as an example of how citizens in Russia and the USA have common concerns, values, and goals and can work together to achieve those goals. In this case, an American pediatrician and pediatricians at a children's hospital in Russia are collaborating to create more social beauty—not only in children's hospitals but also in society as a whole. At a time when global transnational ultra-capitalists and their preferred political leaders are creating Mean Social Arrangements and ever-worsening Social Atrocities, it is important that citizens in Russia and the USA work together to create Kind Social Arrangements and ever-increasing Social Beauty, instead of acquiescing and contributing to the rhetoric of animosity between our two nations.

From a social, cultural, and geopolitical standpoint, I think it is good, perhaps even preferable, that ***Sowing Seeds of Social Beauty*** has been published in Russia—for it demonstrates how citizens in Russia, the US, and other countries can peacefully and enthusiastically work together to create and support Kind Social Arrangements and Social Beauty, as opposed to Mean Social Arrangements and Social Atrocities (such as wars).

Some might disagree that it is good that ***Sowing Seeds of Social Beauty*** has been published in Russia. Some might immediately dismiss the book and not read any of it, precisely because it has been published in Russia.

Some might claim that Russia published it, not because of its merits, but because of the propaganda value of publishing an American-authored critique of the healthcare system, economic model, and foreign policy of the USA. But such a dismissal insults the intelligence and motivations of the Russian pediatricians who immediately and intuitively saw the value of the book and were altruistically motivated to publish it for the sake of children and for the sake of creating more Social Beauty in a world that is suffering mightily from Mean Arrangements and Social Atrocities.

In my opinion, the Social Atrocities occurring in the world today will only worsen in number and severity (with potential for WWII and nuclear holocaust) until/unless the majority of citizens in nations around the world engage in healthy, respectful dialogue about the strengths and weaknesses of the prevailing corporate capitalist economic model and the strengths and weaknesses of alternative economic models, such as the CHPM. In particular it will be important to compare the social understandings (regarding human nature, competition, motivation, leadership, and freedom) upon which each economic model is based and compare the behaviors each model encourages. I would posit that current and past Social Atrocities are largely due, in the first place, to the absence of such dialogue.

Indeed, the purpose of ***Sowing Seeds of Social Beauty*** is to stimulate and facilitate careful, respectful, informed dialogue about the currently prevailing social and economic model (global corporate capitalism) and potential alternative social and economic models, such as the CHPM.

RM Rennebohm