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### Henrietta Lacks Reflection

After reading articles and watching “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks” one thing was brought back to mind; there are so many evil people, or people who choose to do evil, in this world and the only way to overcome this is by getting everyone to stand up for what’s right. Henrietta Lacks was an amazing, caring, and selfless woman whose life was cut short from cancer. She cared deeply for her children to the point where her final request was to make sure they were taken care of. Even though her cells went on to pave the way for major vaccines and overall strides in the medical industry, she was just one cog in a horrendously large machine. The sad thing is that Henrietta Lacks was not the first person to be unethically used in experiments or research, and since her cells were taken in 1951, she was undoubtedly not the last.

Similar to this, in terms of unethical treatment, is the Tuskegee Study, which began in 1932, where hundreds of black men with and without syphilis were refused treatment in order to confirm if this disease was affected by race. Quickly touching on that, for the longest, professional, accredited doctors believed that race played a part in many medical factors such as diseases, which was previously mentioned, pain tolerance, as well as some other absurd things. This would lead them to commit other very unethical practices along the lines of not administering anesthetics, or not trusting black people, as well as other people of color, when

doing medical procedures. So, after learning that, it was not much of a shock when I learned that the US government committed an identical atrocious act just 14 years after this one.

In 1946, the US led an unethical experiment in Guatemala in order to determine the effects of penicillin and other medications on syphilis. The people they used as experiments had no knowledge of what they were being signed up for nor did they consent, and a quarter of them were intentionally injected with this disease in order to conduct the study. The experiment “officially” ended in 1948, but research on the biospecimens, such as blood and spinal fluid, continued to be researched on up until 1957, at least. However, by that time the Tuskegee Study would still be going on and it wouldn’t end until 1972. That was 40 years of blatantly mistreating and disregarding those innocent lives who will forever be changed by this senseless act, including their relatives who were indirectly and directly affected as well.

Lastly, going back to my statement at the beginning, the only way for us to fight back against this, is for everyone to stand up and speak out. The only reason that these awful experiments and research studies have seen the light of day is because someone spoke out against them. We can’t just sit idly by waiting for someone else to do what we know we should be doing. There is so much going wrong in this world and so many blissfully ignorant people say that this is the worst that America has ever been through or done. However, if you just open a factual history textbook and flip to Genesis, Chapter 1, you’ll see that it has always been at its worst from the moment it was formed. We can’t let history pass us by because unless we do something, it will just keep coming back around to haunt us.