

Process Paper

We chose *The Guatemalan Syphilis Experiment* because we wanted to give a voice to those who were silenced from the cruelty they underwent and raise awareness for the inhuman treatment that was conducted against them.

We first began our process with searching all over the web using the class assignments our teacher handed out. We then tracked down our main sources which was the report, “‘Ethically Impossible’ STD Research in Guatemala from 1946 to 1948,” by the Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues and the papers themselves John Cutler and his researchers worked on. It took a lot of grueling hours of reading blurry prints and scientific text to make sure all the information we put into the website was accurate. Did we go blind? A little. Did we make sure the story stayed truthful? Yes, and it was worth all the trouble.

We decided to create a website because it allowed us to collect data and input them efficiently. Also...it was our artistic freedom. We understood that the resources we were seeing in scientific jargon might be uncomfortable to the viewer. To appeal to a wider audience, we made it more understandable and look aesthetically pleasing. We did face a problem in censorship in whether we should post the experiment’s more explicit pictures and the procedures the scientists did. We discussed that while censoring history is never good, there must be consent given by the patient as to not invade the privacy of them or their family. As well as the viewer and whether they would feel comfortable seeing the explicit images or imagining the procedures.

The skills we learned from doing this project have been raised exponentially. It has helped us whenever we do papers and debate the nuances of the world’s problems. We never intended to be this impacted by these revolutionary findings. We’ve truly had a memorable experience conducting this website - all it’s glory and the pains of the victims. We are grateful for the experiences of National History Day, and may we carry our knowledge into the near future. Thank you.

Alice: I was intrigued when I first came upon this topic. I never expected this research to stick to me and make me want to find out more. What actually kept me going into this research was due to the fact that I’m Guatemalan and this impacted my father’s side of the family. Unfortunately, many of my late uncles and aunts passed away from inheriting or getting contaminated by syphilis and gonorrhea. I learned more about my family history and found some answers, but not solutions sadly. This project led me to journalism and finding out more stories and chaotic events like the experiment. I was completely blown away by the end.

Manette: As a future medical worker in the gynecology field, I have been interested in the intersectional interactions doctors/scientists have with their patients (and samples) and whether that treatment is genuine and not antipathy.