

Friday, May 16, 1997  
The White House  
Washington, DC

STATEMENT OF HERMAN SHAW  
LIVING PARTICIPANT IN TUSKEGEE SYPHILIS STUDY

On behalf of all the survivors who are here today, and those who could not attend, and on behalf of the heirs of my fellow participants who have died, I wish to thank President Clinton for inviting us to the White House. It has been over 65 years since we entered the program. We are delighted today to close this very tragic and painful chapter in our lives.

We were treated unfairly and to some extent like guinea pigs. We were not pigs. We were not dancing boys as we were projected in the movie, "Miss Evers Boys". We were all hard working men, not boys, and citizens of the United States. The wounds that were inflicted upon us cannot be undone.

I am saddened today to think of those who did not survive and whose families will forever live with the knowledge that their death and suffering was preventable.

Mr. President, we want to also thank our lawyer, Attorney Fred Gray, who has represented us during these 25 years, and who has helped to make this day possible.



This ceremony is important because the damage done by the Tuskegee Study is much deeper than the wounds any of us may have suffered. It speaks to our faith in government and the ability of medical science to serve as a force for good.

As I said at the press conference at Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church in Notasulga, on April 8, in addition to an apology, we want to construct in Tuskegee a PERMANENT MEMORIAL. A place where our children and grandchildren will be able to see the contributions that we, and others, made to this country. I am glad that I have helped form the Tuskegee Human Rights Multicultural Center which will be for the purpose of creating such a lasting memorial.

In my opinion, it is never too late to work to restore faith and trust. And so, a quarter of a century after the Study ended, President Clinton's decision to gather us here; to allow us to finally put this horrible nightmare behind us as a nation, is a most welcomed decision.

In order for America to reach its fullest potential we must truly be one America -- black, red and white together; trusting each other, caring for each other, and never allowing the kind of tragedy which happened to us in the Tuskegee Study to ever occur again.



Mr. President, words cannot express my gratitude to you for bringing us here today -- for doing your best to right this tragic wrong, and resolving that America should never again allow such an event to occur. Because of your leadership I am confident that we never will.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I have the great pleasure of doing something I always wanted to do and never thought I would have the privilege. I present to you the Honorable William Clinton, President of the United States.