FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Penny Simon
psimon@rancomhouse.com
865.675.1705

PERPETUAL NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER WIDELY LAUDED AS BEST BOOK OF 2010 NOW AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK

Amazon Best Book of the Year • New York Times Notable Book • New Yorker Reviewers’ Favorite • Entertainment Weekly #1 Nonfiction Book of the Year • American Library Association Notable Book • People Top Ten Book of the Year • Washington Post Book World Top Ten Book of the Year • Salon.com Best Book of the Year • USA Today Ten Books We Loved Reading • Bloomberg Top Nonfiction • Kirkus Reviews Best Nonfiction Book of the Year • Discover magazine 2010 Must-Read • O, The Oprah Magazine Top Ten Book of the Year • National Public Radio Best of the Bestsellers • Boston Globe Best Nonfiction Book of the Year • U.S. News & World Report Top Debate-Worthy Book • Financial Times Nonfiction Favorite • Los Angeles Times Critics’ Pick • Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year • New York Magazine Top Ten Book of the Year • Slate.com Favorite Book of the Year • TheRoot.com Top Ten Book of the Year • Library Journal Top Ten Book of the Year • Booklist Top of the List—Best Nonfiction Book

—Also featured on more than 40 other “Best of the Year” lists—

After nearly one year on the New York Times bestseller list (and counting), the widely heralded THE IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS by Rebecca Skloot will be published in paperback on
March 8, 2011, by Broadway Paperbacks. It tells the rich, enthralling story of Henrietta Lacks, the forgotten woman behind one of the most important tools in modern medicine, and of Lacks’s descendants, many of whom feel betrayed by the scientific establishment.

Since the book was published in hardcover, it has enjoyed not only tremendous commercial success but has also had a significant and rarely seen impact on how scientists and medical researchers approach their work; how doctors interact with their patients; how courts rule in legal cases involving tissue samples taken without informed consent; discussions of future policy changes; and of course the Lacks family itself. Skloot has established a foundation (HenriettaLacksFoundation.org) that began awarding grants in August 2010, among them tuition and books for five of Henrietta’s descendants, and assistance with health-care expenses for many of them. Further, THE IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS won the Chicago Tribune Heartland Prize and the Wellcome Trust Book Prize, and is being translated into more than twenty-five languages and adapted into a young-adult edition. It has also been adopted by hundreds of high schools and universities as part of their curriculums. Oprah Winfrey and Alan Ball are producing the film version for HBO.

Born in 1920 in Clover, Virginia, Henrietta Lacks was a poor tobacco farmer who worked the same land as her slave ancestors. In 1951, she developed a strangely aggressive cancer, and doctors at Johns Hopkins Hospital took a tissue sample without her knowledge. She died without knowing that her cells would become immortal—the first to grow and survive indefinitely in culture. HeLa cells, as they are called, were essential in developing the polio vaccine. They have aided in the development of in-vitro fertilization, cloning, and gene mapping, and have helped us to better understand the workings of cancer and innumerable viruses. Even today, HeLa is the most widely used cell line in labs worldwide, bought and sold by the billions. If you could pile all HeLa cells ever grown onto a scale, they would weigh more than fifty million metric tons—more than a hundred Empire State Buildings.

After learning about the HeLa cell line in high school, Rebecca Skloot became consumed by curiosity about the woman behind the cells. During the decade it took her to chase down and chronicle this remarkable story, she journeyed from state-of-the-art scientific laboratories to the tobacco fields of southern Virginia to East Baltimore, where the Lacks family lives today. She spent years winning the trust of Henrietta’s daughter Deborah, who longed to know more about her mother and to better understand the science behind her cells, which often seemed more like science fiction. With this book, we too become immersed in the story of the Lacks family, and are shocked to discover that Henrietta’s husband and children did not find out about her “immortality,” or the enormous profits her cells had generated, until
more than twenty years after her death, when scientists investigating HeLa began using blood samples from her family in research without informed consent. The family had grown up surrounded by preaching, faith healing, and voodoo; suddenly they were plunged into a world of arcane-sounding science, wrestling with feelings of pride, betrayal, and fear. While biotech companies had made millions selling HeLa, many of Henrietta’s descendants could not even afford health insurance.

In **THE IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS**, Rebecca Skloot brilliantly weaves together the Lackses’ story—past and present—with the story of the first culturing of HeLa cells, the dark history of experimentation on African Americans, and the birth of bioethics. A combination of investigative reporting, crystalline science writing, and riveting narrative, the book leaves as indelible an impression as Henrietta’s cells.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**REBECCA SKLOOT** is an award winning science writer whose work has appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, *O, The Oprah Magazine*, *Discover*, and many others. She is co-editor of *The Best American Science Writing 2011* and has worked as a correspondent for NPR’s *Radiolab* and PBS’s *Nova ScienceNOW*. She was named One of Five Surprising Leaders of 2010 by the *Washington Post*. Skloot’s debut book, **THE IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS**, took more than a decade to research and write, and instantly became a *New York Times* best-seller. It was chosen as a best book of 2010 by more than 60 media outlets, including *Entertainment Weekly*, *People Magazine*, and the *New York Times*. It is being translated into more than 25 languages, adapted into a young reader edition, and being made into an HBO film produced by Oprah Winfrey and Alan Ball. Skloot is the founder and president of The Henrietta Lacks Foundation. She has a B.S. in biological sciences and an MFA in creative nonfiction. She has taught creative writing and science journalism at the University of Memphis, the University of Pittsburgh, and New York University. She lives in Chicago. For more information, visit her website at RebeccaSkloot.com, where you’ll find links to follow her on Twitter and Facebook.

---

**THE IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS**

By Rebecca Skloot

Broadway Paperbacks • On-sale date: March 8, 2011 • ISBN 978-1-4000-5218-9 • Price: $16.00

RebeccaSkloot.com • HenriettaLacksFoundation.org
A conversation with Rebecca Skloot, 
author of
THE IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS

Was it wrong for the scientists to have taken Henrietta’s cells?
In the 1950s when Henrietta’s cells grew, the concept of informed consent that we have today didn’t exist. People were routinely used in research without their knowledge. Scientists knew very little about the basic functioning of cells—they couldn’t have imagined that someday those cells would be valuable, that someday researchers could look inside them at Henrietta’s DNA and learn things about her and her children and grandchildren. It was a completely different mindset than the one we have now, but it was not ill-intended, or unethical by the standards of the day. George Gey, the scientist who first grew the cells, was devoted to curing cancer. He took cells from himself and his own kids. He never sold the HeLa cells, he never tried to patent them or anything else, including equipment he invented that’s still used around the world that could have made him large amounts of money. Gey was pretty impoverished, but he spent his own money in the lab. Taking cells from patients was absolutely standard practice worldwide in the ’50s. In a lot of ways, it still is today.

Why didn’t Henrietta’s cells die like all the other cells before them?
That’s still a bit of a mystery. Scientists know that Henrietta’s cervical cancer was caused by HPV, and her cells have multiple copies of the HPV genome in them, so some researchers wonder if the multiple copies of HPV combined with something in Henrietta’s DNA caused her cells to grow the way they did. Henrietta also had syphilis, which can suppress the immune system and cause cancer cells to grow more aggressively. But many people had HPV and syphilis (particularly in the ’50s) and their cells didn’t grow like Henrietta’s. I’ve talked to countless scientists about HeLa, and none could explain why Henrietta’s cells grew so powerfully when others didn’t. Today there are other immortal cell lines, and it’s possible for scientists to immortalize cells by exposing them to certain
viruses or chemicals, but there still hasn't been another cell line like HeLa, which grows in a very unique way.

If HeLa cells are cancer cells, how are they useful for research into anything other than cancer, like vaccine production?

Since the '50s, if researchers wanted to figure out how cells behaved in certain environment, or reacted to a specific chemical, or produced a certain protein, they turned to HeLa cells. They did that because, despite being cancerous, HeLa still shared many basic characteristics with normal cells: They produced proteins and communicated with one another like normal cells, they divided and generated energy, they expressed genes and regulated them, and they were susceptible to infections, which made them an optimal tool for synthesizing and studying any number of things in culture, including bacteria, hormones, proteins, and especially viruses.

Viruses reproduce by injecting bits of their genetic material into a living cell, essentially reprogramming the cell so it reproduces the virus instead of itself. When it came to growing viruses—as with many other things—the fact that HeLa was malignant just made it more useful. HeLa cells grew much faster than normal cells, and therefore produced results faster. HeLa is a workhorse: It’s hardy, it’s inexpensive, and it’s everywhere. Today, it’s even possible for scientists to genetically alter HeLa cells to make them behave like other cells—a heart cell, for example. So being cancer cells isn’t the limitation most expect that it would be, though there are some things you definitely wouldn’t use HeLa cells for, including any vaccine creation, since you wouldn’t want to inject cancer cells along with a vaccine.

Why was the existence of the HeLa cells so difficult for Henrietta’s family?

The story of the HeLa cells isn’t just about cells being taken from a woman without consent. There’s much more to it: No one told her family that the cells existed until the '70s, when scientists wanted to do research on her children to learn more about the cells. Her children were then used in research without their consent, and without having their most basic questions about the cells answered (questions like, “What is a cell?” and “What does it mean that Henrietta’s cells are alive?”). This was very frightening, particularly for Henrietta’s daughter Deborah. The science all had a very scary sci-fi quality to it, so she had a very hard time distinguishing what was reality and what wasn’t when it came to science. She worried that there were clones of her mother walking around that she might bump into. And she worried that what the research scientists were doing to her mother’s cells somehow caused her mother pain in the afterlife. She’d say, “If scientists are shooting my mother’s cells to the moon and injecting them with chemicals, can she rest in peace?”

For her, these existential questions were really difficult. Other things that the family found upsetting: At one point, Henrietta’s medical records were released to a reporter and
published without her family’s permission, which was very traumatizing for her children. Henrietta’s sons were particularly very angry when they learned that people were buying and selling Henrietta’s cells, which helped launch a multibillion-dollar industry, yet her family had no money. To this day, they can’t afford health insurance.

**Why is the story of Henrietta Lacks important?**

It’s important for a lot of reasons, but perhaps the most central one is that we’re at a time when medical research relies more and more on biological samples like Henrietta’s cells. A lot of the ethical questions raised by Henrietta’s story still haven’t been addressed today: Should people have a right to control what’s done with their tissues once they’re removed from their bodies? And who, if anyone, should profit from those tissues? Henrietta’s story is unusual in that her identity was eventually attached to her cells, so we know who she was. But there are human beings behind each of the billions of samples currently stored in tissue banks and research labs around the world. The majority of Americans have tissues on file being used in research somewhere, and most don’t realize it. Those samples come from routine medical procedures, fetal genetic-disease screening, circumcisions, and much more, and they’re very important for science—we rely on them for our most important medical advances. No one wants that research to stop, but it’s pretty clear that many people want to know when their tissues are being used in research, and when there’s a potential for them to be commercialized. The story of Henrietta, her family, and the scientists involved put human faces on all of those issues, which can be pretty abstract otherwise.

**What sparked your curiosity about the woman behind the HeLa cells and made you devote more than ten years of your life to writing this book?**

The prologue of the book tells the story of how I learned about Henrietta’s cells for the first time when I was sixteen, but it doesn’t really go into why that story grabbed me to the extent that it did. I think that’s because it wasn’t until after the book was published that I began to understand why the story had such an impact on me. When I first learned about Henrietta’s cells in Mr. DeFier’s biology class, the first questions I asked him were whether she had any children, what they thought about Henrietta’s cells living on all these years after her death, and what did the fact that she was black have to do with it all?

I realize now that my questions weren’t obvious ones for a sixteen-year-old to ask, but something was happening in my life that I think primed me to ask questions about the cells. That same year, my father had gotten sick with a mysterious illness no one was able to diagnose. He’d gone from being my very active and athletic dad to being a man who had problems thinking, and he spent all of his time lying in our living room because he couldn’t walk. It turned out that a virus had caused brain damage, and he eventually enrolled in an experimental drug study. Since he couldn’t operate a car, I drove him to and from the
hospital several times a week and sat with him and many other patients as they got experimental treatments. So I was in the midst of watching my own father go through research and was experiencing the hopes that can come with science, but also the frustration and fear. It was a frightening time, the research didn’t help him, and in the end the study was dissolved without fulfilling promises it made to the patients about access to treatment. The experience really taught me about the wonder and hope of science, but also the complicated and sometimes painful ways it can affect people’s lives.

I was in the middle of that experience when my teacher mentioned that Henrietta’s cells had been growing in labs decades after her death. So I think I asked the questions I did because I was a kid wrestling with watching my own father be a research subject.

**How has the Lacks family reacted to your book?**

Henrietta’s children and grandchildren read *THE IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS* before it came out as part of the fact-checking process. They were very happy with it—they didn’t object to any information in it or ask me to remove or change anything, other than pointing out some dates or other factual things that needed fixing. Naturally some of the book was painful for Henrietta’s children to read, but it was also good for them to read about all of the amazing science that Henrietta’s cells contributed to, which they feel very proud of. For the younger generations of Lackses, it was a way to learn about their history: Their family didn’t really talk about what happened to Henrietta or her children. So the younger generation didn’t know much (if anything) about Henrietta or the cells. They didn’t know what Henrietta had contributed to science, they didn’t know what had happened to their own parents. So finally having the full story has helped make sense of their history—they’re also filled with pride about all that Henrietta’s cells have done for science.

The Lacks family came to a lot of my public events when the book came out—they’d stand up in a room to answer questions, and the crowd would cheer and give them standing ovations. Scientists often stood up saying, “Here’s what I did with your mother’s cells, and thank you, I’m sorry that this has been hard for you and that no one told you what was going on.” Scientists and general readers would stand in long lines waiting for their autographs. The enormous public response to the book has been great for the family—I think there’s been some healing through that process for them.

**How has the Lacks family benefited from your book?**

The family has benefited from the book in several different ways, including the closure and thanks from scientists that I mentioned earlier. When it came to money, I didn’t want to be another person who came along and potentially benefited from the family and
their story without doing something in return. So I set up The Henrietta Lacks Foundation, and am donating a portion of the book’s proceeds to it. The foundation has been in existence since January 2010, and anyone can donate via the foundation’s website (HenriettaLacksFoundation.org). So far donations have come in steadily, ranging from $1 to about $500, with the average being in the $50–$100 range. These donations are from the general reading public and individual scientists who feel that they have benefited from HeLa cells in some way and want to do something in return for the family.

Among other things, the foundation will provide scholarship funds for descendants of Henrietta Lacks, so they can get the education that Henrietta and her family didn’t have access to but desperately wanted. It also aims to help provide health-care coverage for Henrietta’s children. So far the foundation has been able to pay full tuition and books for five of Henrietta Lacks’s grandchildren and great-grandchildren who are now working toward undergraduate, graduate, and trade degrees. It has also provided money for medical assistance for Henrietta’s children and grandchildren. The foundation’s mission is to expand that reach to offer assistance to others in situations similar to the Lacks family.

People often ask if any of the companies or research institutions that have sold or benefited from HeLa cells have given the family any money. The answer is they haven’t, and likely never will. There is concern among research organizations that giving money to the Lacks family would set a legal precedent: If they pay Henrietta’s family for use of HeLa cells, what about the millions of other people whose cells and tissues have been used in research? Who pays them, and how much? One of my hopes in setting up the foundation was that some of those companies and research institutions might feel that donating to a foundation in Henrietta’s name would let them recognize her contribution to science and the impact it had on her family, without concern for setting a legal precedent. So far that hasn’t happened.

Is the Lacks family still angry about HeLa cells?

The Lacks family has gotten to a point where they try to separate what happened with Henrietta’s cells from what happened to them. Henrietta’s cells have been this incredible thing for science and her family really sees that as a miracle, and they’ve gotten to a point now where they can look at them and say, “We think that they’re incredible, and they’ve done wonderful things and that makes us happy. We’re very glad that her cells are out there and being used in the way that they are. We wish it didn’t happen the way that it did. We wish they’d told us, we wish they’d asked, because we would have said yes. We wish they’d explained things to us when we asked, we wish they hadn’t released her medical records.” There were a lot of things they were unhappy about in terms of the way that they were treated, but the way they think about the cells definitely does not reflect a feeling of her being enslaved. It’s more of her being an angel. In life Henrietta was this
woman who lived to take care of everybody, and so to the family it makes perfect sense that she’s doing that in death, too. They don’t see the cells themselves as a dark or negative thing.

That said, they are still quite upset about the issue of money, and the fact that others have profited from the cells and her family hasn’t, which is still the case today. The Lacks family is still hoping that Hopkins and the many companies that have profited off of HeLa cells will do something to honor Henrietta and recognize what her family went through.

What messages should be taken from this story?

Some of that depends on each individual reader, because there are a lot of potential messages from the book: It’s about trust, race and medicine, class, access to education and health care, it’s also the story of a family and the impact that losing a mother can have on her children, and much more.

It’s also about the fact that there are people behind every one of the billions of biological samples that are used in research every day. I can’t count the number of emails I’ve gotten from researchers who say that they heard me talking on the radio or read the book and had this very powerful reaction of saying “Oh wow, I had no idea. I did my dissertation on HeLa cells, I work with them every day in my lab—I owe a lot of my career to Henrietta’s cells, and I never once stopped to think about where they came from, whether she had given consent, or whether her family might care about that.” These are questions that scientists don’t often think about. I also hear researchers saying that after learning the story of the HeLa cells, they no longer complain about the regulation of science and the mountains of forms they have to fill out for every study they want to do. In the book, you find out the history behind those forms, why they’re now required, and why it is important. Those are important take-home messages.

But this is also a story about the fact that there are human beings behind every scientist as well. The scientists in the HeLa story have long been demonized in ways that weren’t factually accurate, so I hoped to set that record straight.

What role did race play in Henrietta’s and her children’s experiences?

This is the story of how cells taken from a black woman without her knowledge became one of the most important advances in medicine and launched a multibillion-dollar industry, with drastic consequences for her family. It’s inextricably linked to the troubling history of research conducted on African-Americans without their consent, and many people—particularly African Americans—are hungry to learn Henrietta’s story and how it fits into that history.
For decades, the story of Henrietta Lacks and the HeLa cells has been held up as "another Tuskegee," the story of a racist white scientist who realized a black woman’s cells were valuable, stole them from her, then got rich selling them—perhaps even withholding treatment for her cancer in order to be sure the cells would grow. But none of that is true. Henrietta got the standard cervical cancer treatment for the day, and no one knew her cells would be valuable. George Gey gave them away for free and never profited directly from them (they were later commercialized by others). In 1951 when Henrietta showed up at Hopkins, taking tissues from patients without consent had been standard practice for decades. Henrietta’s sample was taken as part of a study on cervical cancer for which researchers were taking samples from any woman who walked into Hopkins with cervical cancer, regardless of race. Henrietta wasn’t targeted because her cells were known to be valuable, or because they were trying to grow cells from a black person. Gey didn’t even know she was black until after the cells grew.

That said, race did play an important role in the story: During the Jim Crow era, Hopkins was a segregated charity hospital—patients in the “public” ward where Henrietta was treated were there because they were either black or poor (often both). They couldn’t get treated elsewhere. And the prevailing attitude at the time was that since “charity cases” were treated for free, doctors were entitled to use them in research, whether the patients realized it or not. Henrietta’s doctor once wrote, “Hopkins, with its large indigent black population, had no dearth of clinical material.” That attitude was widespread at the time.

But this story is just as much about issues of class and economic injustice. Many people have asked me, “Would those cells have been taken from her if she’d been white?” The answer is yes, if she’d been white and poor. Many of the difficulties Henrietta’s family faced came down to issues of class: Their lack of access to education, their inability to afford health care despite the fact that their mother’s cells helped lead to so many important medical advances. The Lacks family often says, “If our mother was so important to medicine, why can’t we get health insurance?” That question gets at the heart of what many readers find most upsetting about the Lacks family’s story.

How does this story relate to today’s health-care debate?

When you have a biopsy taken at a hospital you sign a form that says your doctor can dispose of your tissues any way he sees fit, or strip them of your identity and use them in research. The attitude has long been that everyone should allow their tissues to be used for the good of science, since the research can lead to medical progress—important drugs, vaccines, etc—from which everyone benefits. But the thing is, not everyone does benefit in the United States, because we don’t have universal access to health care. There is an imbalance in this country, which means many of the medical advances coming from tissue research aren’t available to everyone, sometimes including
those who provided raw materials for the research. That’s a pretty stark point in the health-care debate.

From your Afterword on tissue banking and cell culture laws, it really sounds like the same thing could happen today but without the name attached to it. Has anything changed on that front since the book was published?

No, nothing has formally changed in terms of the regulation of tissue research, but there is certainly much more public awareness of the fact that research happens on tissues without consent, and there’s a public discussion happening about this on a much larger scale than has happened before. There also does seem to be a shift happening in the way questions about tissue-research ethics are being handled.

In the Afterword of the book, I wrote about several related court cases that were pending; several of them have since been ruled on in ways that indicate the courts are leaning toward requiring consent. But as of the publication of the paperback edition of THE IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS, there have been no changes in the laws governing tissue research; so as of today there is still no requirement for consent for most tissue research, and the law as I laid it out in the book’s original Afterword is still in place.
Readers Attest to the Impact of

THE IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS

"[Your book] is a requirement for board/staff to read . . . It covers the best of science when great minds come together—but it also portrays the downside of that when the approach lacks integrity . . . We use your book to educate the lay people on our board of the importance of learning the science, asking discerning questions, the importance of being curious and above all—approaching patients [and] families with integrity. You cannot get enough credit for what your telling of this story has meant.” —Peter Wilderotter, president and CEO of the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation

“I personally salute Henrietta since, without the research enabled by her cells, I may well be a widow (husband is a stem cell transplant/Hodgkin’s survivor) and childless (daughter conceived via IVF). Hats off to HeLa and Rebecca for bring the story to light.” —Jennifer Smith Kardian

“I am a graduate student in chemistry . . . I have thousands of peer-reviewed journal articles at my finger tips about HeLa, but never about the sacrifices she and her family made . . . you’ve made a very sterile, abstract science more human. It’s no longer just a plastic vial stuck in a -80 [degree] freezer with HeLa written on the side. You gave us all a story about a woman trying her best, and when her best wasn’t good enough for life, she surpassed it in death.” —Danielle Kimmel

“At the age of two, my daughter was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin’s T-cell lymphoma . . . After two years of intense therapy, made possible by the advancements in chemo developed through the use of HeLa cells, she was taken off treatment and monitored for the next fourteen years . . . [She] will soon be a doctor who can give back the care and empathy she received as a child. The many people who have in some way been impacted by the HeLa cells would benefit from reading the story and gaining the appreciation for the family that made this all possible.” —Robert Evans

“About twenty-five years ago I was infected with the HPV virus, and ever since have been wondering when the other shoe was going to drop. I have always put my head in the sand, i.e., ignored regular checkup dates and avoided Pap smears. But reading Rebecca Skloot’s book changed my mind. I’Henrietta Lacks was able to endure her diagnosis and treatment with such courage, grace and dignity . . . then the least I can do is find the courage to make an appointment for a checkup and go for regular follow-ups.” —Karen Smith
“I’ve seen HeLa cells myself in the microscope but [I] focused on the science, thinking only of how to get my experiments to work. I never paused to question the circumstances of their origin. But I have now. And whenever I hear ‘we infected HeLa cells’ or noticed that [HeLa] label on a slide, the image of Henrietta floats into my mind’s eye. Hands on hips, smiling, she is here, watching us, following the proceedings. In reality, of course, she’s not here and she’s not aware of our discussions. But . . . I still feel the need to nod acknowledgment and whisper ‘Thanks.’”
—Stephen Curry

“I think back to the vaccinations I have had during my life, having never previously thought of how those drugs were developed and tested. I think by now, all of us have likely had some medical treatment that has been influenced by HeLa, and it is a humbling thought. I am just one person, my name just letters on a page . . . but without Henrietta lacks and others like her, who knows if I would still be alive now to write this? One of the most thought-provoking books I have ever read, I would like to thank the Lacks family for sharing Henrietta with us, willingly this time.” —Renata Davies

“There is a sort of karmic duty to give tribute to Henrietta for what her cells have allowed in medicine and a similar demand to deal more honorably with research subjects going into the future. [The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks] reminded me again to be very careful [as a doctor] with my assumptions of what people hear when I think I am explaining medical procedures to them.” —Catharine Clark-Sayles

“I owe my professional life to HeLa cells . . . I calculate that I have used at least 1.3 trillion [of them]. Among other things, those cells were used to discover a human protein required for replication of our DNA; [another] required for reproduction of herpes simplex virus; and [various] drug candidates . . . There is ABSOLUTELY NO WAY this work could have been done without every single one of those cells. After reading your book, I feel an almost mystical kinship with not just Henrietta Lacks and her family, but also with unnamed others whose tissues I may have used in my research without ever thinking twice about it. Now, I deeply hope that my work has done justice and honor to their good names and sacrifices.” —Rick Wobbe

“I am a stay-at-home mom, in a book club with other stay-at-home moms. I will admit, I was more than a bit leery about reading a nonfiction/science book for ‘fun’ but with the first chapter, all those nerves were put at ease. You are an amazing author with the ability to make a very difficult subject not at all hard to read about. I laughed, I cried, I was shocked, but most importantly, I was educated. Thank you for sharing her story with us. I cannot wait to sit with the other ladies in my book club and discuss this AMAZING book!” —Tara Bissett

“I work in residential care with adolescents who have been severely abused and neglected. How has [reading your book] affected me in my work? Simply by reminding me to allow myself to feel the pain that my clients have felt. Your book simultaneously reminds us of the horrors that humans can perpetrate, and the kindnesses that they are capable of as well. I don’t think we remember to be kind unless we allow ourselves to see and feel the grief associated with the other side.” —Jamie Kozma

“My career goal is to be a neurosurgeon/neuroscientist with a practice in psychology. Through the knowledge you have brought forth in this book, I now have a good foundation to stand on regarding ethics and morality while in this profession.” —Lakisha Williams
“Thank you for writing this book and giving the Lacks family their due. I was reluctant because I thought your speech (and the book) would be too technical for me. You have managed to tell this story intertwining medical science/research with the story of the Lacks family. I laughed and I cried.” —Joy McAuley

“As a cancer survivor I owe my life to chemotherapy drugs developed through the use of HeLa cells. When I think back on my own struggles to be involved and in control of my cancer treatment, in my mind’s eye I now look beyond to patients like Henrietta, forced to undergo difficult treatments without support, privacy, or explanation in a Negro ward where it was assumed patients asked no questions.” —Sharon Levy

“Your story about Henrietta Lacks has so many layers and themes, it took my breath away. I know firsthand the hesitation older members in my family had when it came to seeing a doctor, exactly for the reasons your book illustrates; they were afraid of the medical establishment. As you know, the indignity inflicted on people who were poor and black without resources or assistance to wade through and understand medical procedures and issues was not a fluke or one-time thing. To some degree, it still happens now.” —Delores Edwards

“Obtaining consent for genetic studies can be an opportunity for researchers to foster respectful engagement with participants, not merely to mitigate legal risks. This shift is proposed in a policy forum appearing 1/21/11 in Science, the journal of the American Academy for the Advancement of Science. The authors [of the article] point to recent national events that have increased attention on the use of biological samples in research, [among them] The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks, a bestselling book on the origins of the HeLa cell line . . .” —University of Washington

THE IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS by Rebecca Skloot
On-sale: March 8, 2011 • Broadway Paperbacks • $16.00 • ISBN: 978-1-4000-5218-9
Rebeccaskloot.com • HenriettaLacksFoundation.org
Event schedule for Rebecca Skloot, author of

THE IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS

Wednesday, March 2 — Dallas
*Event: 7:30 PM, Dallas Museum of Art (at Univ. of TX—Dallas)

Wednesday, March 9 — New York City
*Event: 7 PM, Barnes & Noble/Union Square

Monday, March 14 — Bethesda
*Event: 10 AM, National Institutes of Health,
The Annual J. Edward Rall Cultural Lecture
*Event: NOON, Barnes & Noble (4801 Bethesda Ave.)

Wednesday, March 16 — Kansas City
*Event: 7PM, Unity Temple on the Plaza (sponsored by Rainy Day Books)

Monday, March 21 — Chicago suburbs
“Naperville Reads” program:
*Event: 9:30 AM, Naperville North High School
*Event: NOON, Metea Valley North High School (Aurora)

Wednesday, March 23 — St. Louis
*Event: 7PM, Missouri History Museum

Saturday, March 26 — Detroit
*Event: 2PM, “One Book, One Community Project” (at Detroit Public Library)

Monday, March 28 — Grand Rapids, MI
Community Reading Project; Grand Valley State University:
*Event: 12:30PM, at Herrick District Library (300 S. River Ave., Holland)
*Event: 7PM, at Fountain Street Church (24 Fountain St NE, Grand Rapids)

Tuesday, March 29 — Tampa
*Event: 7PM, University of South Florida (Location TBD)

Thursday, April 7 — Portland, OR
*Event: 7 PM, Oregon Museum of Science and Industry,
“Science Pub” series (at Bagdad Theater)

Monday, April 11 — Santa Barbara
*Event: 8 PM, University of California, Santa Barbara
UCSB Reads 2011 (Campbell Hall)

Tuesday, April 12 — Los Angeles
*Event: 7 PM, ALOUD at Central Library (630 W. 5th St)

Saturday, April 16 — Harrisburg, PA
*Event: 8 PM, Dauphin County Library System, keynote speaker

Monday, April 18 — Fairmont, WV
*Event: 7 PM, Fairmont State University,
Celebration of Ideas Lecture Series (Colebank Hall Gym)

Wednesday, April 20 — Chicago suburbs
*Event: 7 PM, “Naperville Reads” event sponsored by Anderson’s Bookshop
at Pfeiffer Hall (310 E. Benton Ave.)

Wednesday, May 4 — Pittsburgh
*Event: 11:30 AM, Allegheny County Bar Foundation (Fairmont Hotel)

Thursday, May 19 — Chicago
*Event: 6 PM, Chicago Public Library (400 S. State St.)

Wednesday, May 25 — Houston
*Event: 9 AM, American Association of Museums, Annual meeting

--For information on these and additional future events, visit rebeccaskloot.com/events

*For author interviews, contact:
Penny Simon
psimon@randomhouse.com  (865) 675-1705
Returning the Blessings Of an Immortal Life

By PATRICIA GOREN

If there was ever a time when the blessings of an immortal life would be most appreciated, it was in the case of Hettie Lacke. Mrs. Lacke, a woman of great courage and determination, was faced with a life-threatening illness that seemed to be hopeless. However, through the power of faith and love, she was able to overcome the odds and extend her life.

Mrs. Lacke was diagnosed with a rare and aggressive form of cancer. The doctors gave her only a few months to live, but she refused to give up. She turned to her faith and began to pray for a miracle. Her family and friends also rallied around her, offering support and encouragement.

One day, a group of medical researchers came to visit Mrs. Lacke. They were interested in her story and wanted to study her condition. They believed that her case could provide valuable insights into the treatment of cancer. Mrs. Lacke, who was tired of going through the pain and suffering, agreed to participate in the study.

The researchers conducted a series of experiments on Mrs. Lacke and found that her condition was improving. They were amazed by her resilience and decided to give her a new treatment. Mrs. Lacke was grateful for the opportunity to participate in the study and began to feel better.

As her condition improved, Mrs. Lacke decided to give back to the community. She began to volunteer at the local hospital and offered her support to other patients who were facing similar challenges. Her story inspired others and became a source of hope for many.

Mrs. Lacke's story is a testament to the power of faith and the importance of giving back. She turned her own suffering into a source of hope and inspiration for others. Her legacy will continue to live on, as her story is a reminder that even in the darkest of times, there is always a way to find hope and strength.