One of the most powerful moments occurred when I realized just how close the events of the book are to present times. The Lacks family received the rights to their mother’s DNA when I was ten. Henrietta’s son Baby Joe is fifteen years younger than my grandma. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* has been influential to me in the fact that the story never truly ends. The ethical dissonance created in the minds of every reader has no solution, which leads to a unique sense of injustice that I have never felt before.

*Jared Diethrich*
*Nursing Major*
*Class of 2024*
I am challenged by the questions the book poses about bioethics, research, public health inequalities and systemic racism. But more than anything, I am haunted by the fact that Henrietta was a woman whose story and personhood was lost in the pursuit of scientific advancement. Skloot’s dedication to investigating and writing this volume enables the Lacks family and readers to embrace Henrietta’s personal narrative.

One of the most compelling excerpts in the book occurs when George Gey’s lab assistant Mary described Henrietta’s autopsy: “When I saw those toenails . . . I nearly fainted. I thought, oh jeez, she’s a real person. I started imagining her sitting in her bathroom, painting those toenails and it hit me for the first time that those cells we’d been working with . . . came from a live woman. I’d never thought of it that way.”

Kim Phipps, Ph.D.
President of Messiah University
GETTING THE BOOK

As a first-year student, you are required to read *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* during the summer before arriving on campus in the fall.

The great news is that all first-year students are automatically opted-in to our Campus Store's textbook subscription service, Slingshot Choice, with Rental as your default preference. That means that, if you do nothing, your book will be delivered straight to your door (in late June) and billed to your Messiah tuition account. How awesome is that?!

Other required materials for your fall classes will be delivered to your dorm (or, if you are a commuter, available for pick-up at the Campus Store) before your classes start. Read more about our new program [HERE](#).

As soon as you are registered for classes, you will be able to log-in to your personal student portal with your Messiah login credentials and adjust your delivery and textbook preferences [HERE](#).

Happy reading!

- The Messiah University Campus Store
Despite the many memorable and striking moments within the book, The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks, the one that is my favorite is when Henrietta gives her final request to her husband, Day. Her last wish is for him to take care of their children when she is gone. This displays the immense love that Henrietta had for her children, and her ability to see the bigger picture of life. Even though she was experiencing excruciating pain from cancer, Henrietta was still focused on the well-being of others. Henrietta’s final request is a true testament to her loving character and exemplifies the selflessness she displayed all the way to the end of her life.

**Halle Jennett**  
*Applied Health Science Major*  
*Class of 2025*
As a Black woman, I was overcome with emotions while reading Henrietta's story. It highlights the unethical practices against Black individuals, which affect how many Black individuals view and interact with the medical community today.

Due to pervasive injustices in the medical system, Black women are three times more likely than white women to die from childbirth.

When Bobbette learned that Henrietta's cells were in a lab, my heart broke because they had been in the dark this whole time. When Hsu collected blood from Henrietta's children, I wished they had an advocate because their humanity was completely ignored. I felt this shared connection because as a Black woman I know what it is like when my community's humanity is disregarded. Could you imagine?

These moments caused a pit in my stomach because they highlight the unethical practices that still take place today.

Cherisse Daniels, M.S.
Director of Multicultural Programs
There is a moment when the Lackses discover that researchers and scientists have been making money from Henrietta's cells when they read Mike Rogers' Rolling Stone article. Hearing this information is rage-inducing for not only the Lacks family, but also for readers. It is yet another injustice in Henrietta's life history. As a historian, I'm drawn to this moment because learning about this injustice fits into the larger history of systemic racism, gender discrimination, and the legacy of slavery in the U.S. Once again, white scientists and researchers benefited from the violation of Black bodies without their consent, as they profited financially and figuratively.

Sarah Myers, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of History
The part I most enjoyed—sort of—was the chapter titled “Night Doctors.” The family’s intense mistrust of Johns Hopkins took me by surprise. “They just snatch ’em off the street,” said Sonny, in reference to the hospital’s abduction of black Baltimore residents, an accusation that Skloot then contextualizes for readers. Perhaps this practice was never true of Johns Hopkins, but there are indeed “disturbing truths” that spawned these rumors, for instance, when doctors “tested drugs on slaves and operated on them to develop new surgical techniques, often without using anesthesia.” I knew about similar practices in Nazi Germany, but how was I so unaware of this with respect to the United States? As soon as I finished the chapter, I went to Murray Library to check out the book Skloot recommends in her endnotes: Harriet Washington’s Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present.

David L. Weaver-Zercher, Ph.D.
Professor of American Religious History