

Black community tackles vaccine hesitancy in Alabama but Trump supporters resist | The Guardian

By Oliver Laughland

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Omar Neal had every reason to be skeptical.

Here in Tuskegee, Alabama, where roadways are dotted with signs that read “Vaccinate Me. Stop the Spread”, the history of racist medical abuse weighs heavily.

For four decades, between 1932 and 1972, the US government sponsored a biomedical study coercing 600 Black men, all sharecroppers, into a study on the effects of untreated syphilis. The male subjects were not told they were part of the research, and instead were made to believe they were being examined for “bad blood”. Many died. Others spread the disease to family members, partners and their newborn children. None were offered proper treatment.

Neal’s uncle, Freddie Lee Tyson, was one of those men. He grew up in the house next door to his nephew and would occasionally share how it felt when the study was exposed in the early 70s.

“There was shame. And there was disbelief. Disbelief that the government would do that,” Neal recalled. “How could you? How dare you use my humanity for such an egregious activity.”

[...]

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