

TESTIMONY ON MEDICAL EXPERIMENTATION IN HOLMESBURG PRISON
PRESENTED BY JOSEPH SMITH
BEFORE THE PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE'S
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIMES AND CORRECTIONS

My name is Joseph Smith. I live at 6249 Addison Street, Philadelphia, PA 19143. I am 70 years old. I was in and out of Holmesburg Prison between the years of 1956 -- 1965, never spending more than one year at a time in the prison.

During my stay at Holmesburg I participated in 5 different experiments. Another inmate in the prison told me about these experiments. I'd give the pharmacy guys -- a group of inmates who worked in the pharmacy -- packs of cigarettes so they would sign me up on a list to do experiments.

One experiment I participated in was the patch test. I did this experiment three different times -- once on my arm, once on my back, and once on my leg. The only thing that they told me before the test was that they were going to put some gauze on it with my initials. They said that that way they would know if I didn't keep the gauze on me, and then they wouldn't pay me for the experiment. Then, they applied patches to my skin that resulted in a lot of pain. At night I would lie in my bed with my arm in the air just shaking it so that it would ease the pain. Some of the guys would take the bandages off and put them on the wall -- and then it would eat the paint on the wall.

Another experiment I participated in was one in which I took injections once every three hours for a period of three months. The people administrating the test never told me anything about what was going on. I didn't know what substance they were injecting or what they were trying to find out. Usually they injected me in the buttocks because that was the easiest, but they also injected me in other places as well. These injections made my buttocks swell up like balloons, which was very painful. Sometimes, though, because of all of the injections my buttocks would be numb. I kept going back for shots because I received approximately two dollars for each shot.

A third experiment I participated in was the Army LSD test. For this experiment I was taken out into the Army trailers. I wasn't told that the substance they gave us was LSD, but I assumed that that was what it was because of the effect it had on me. They also never told us what the LSD would do to us. I assumed it was like marijuana or heroine and that the drug would affect me for a while, but wear off eventually. I remember sitting on a bed in the Army trailer watching TV. I don't remember much else of what happened -- I don't even remember eating during that time. I knew that I wasn't right in the head, however.

Another experiment in which I was a subject was one that I

call the 'sight' test. Four dots were put on my shoulders and then my eyesight would go almost completely blind. Just as this happened they would give me a shot and it would bring back my eyesight.

The last experiment I recall participating in was a toothpaste test. Before the experiment they told us that they were trying to figure out which toothpaste worked the best. I had to brush my teeth with the toothpaste they gave me. The toothpaste tasted like mouthwash and I had to dilute it a little so it wouldn't tingle in my mouth quite as badly.

During all of these experiments I never saw a doctor. Inmates who wore nurses' jackets were the ones who administered the tests. They looked like they were official because they were wearing the white jackets, so I didn't question what was going on. I signed a consent form before each experiment, but I never understood what it meant. They did not explain to me before each test what they were going to do or what effects I should expect. I thought that signing that form meant that I allowed them to do the experiment on me. At the time I just felt lucky to be doing the experiment because it meant I could earn some money.

The money was the biggest reason I participated in these experiments. I wanted to get all of the money I could to send home to my mother; she was a widow and had a hard time. I also

used the money to buy things at the commissary -- such as cigarettes, ice cream, or candy. Sometimes my mother would send me a little bit of money when she could, but really the money from the experiments was my only income.

I also participated in these experiments so that I could get out of sweeping and mopping in the block. Doing the experiments meant that I could get away from the guards and other inmates and just be left alone. I also thought it was special to get to watch TV for a while -- which is what we got to do in the Army trailer during the LSD test.

After I got out of prison my mother finally took me to Embreeville State Hospital. At the hospital Dr. Leroy N. Foster, a psychologist, examined me. This was on August 26, 1964. The doctor said that I had mild schizophrenic schizoid characteristics and that I lacked an adequate sexual identification. He said I was lost under moments of stress and he suspected impulse problems.

Because I am a veteran of World War II and the Korean War I have attended the VA Hospital in Philadelphia. My other medical records regarding things such as my eyesight are there. I never saw the prison doctor while I was in Holmesburg.

I have been out of Holmesburg Prison for over 30 years. I think about these experiments and what they did to me all the

time. In this time I have never really been able to keep a job because my mind drifts and anything can upset me. Before the tests I considered my self a pretty happy person. I was talkative and friendly. Now I have bad nerves and I'm not really happy. I believe my lack of attention and bad nerves are because of the LSD test I participated in while in Holmesburg Prison. I can still see the places where the patch test was administered on my arms, legs, and back. My skin there is discolored and it is insensitive to touch. My teeth started falling out in 1969 and now I wear dentures. I believe this is because of the toothpaste test I was involved in Holmesburg. I also have glaucoma that I believe is related to the 'sight' test that I was given while in prison. Since the tests my stomach has hurt every day.

Now I can't believe how foolish I was to participate in experiments like these. I never thought about taking any action against the prison or the University of Pennsylvania before now because I figured nothing could really be done. Since the time I answered Mr. Hornblum's article in the newspaper I have learned that there are other people who are in the same situation as me because of the University of Pennsylvania's experiments. Now I want to know what happened to me during those tests; in particular I want to know what was in the shots that I was given during the experiments. I want the University of Pennsylvania

and others to know that they shouldn't have done what they did.