

## **Miss Evers' Boys**

*The film tells the story of the Tuskegee experiment, a U.S. Federal Government secret medical experiment on poor African American men in the years 1932-1972, designed to study the effects of untreated syphilis. The story is told from the perspective of the small town nurse Eunice Evers (Alfre Woodard) who is well aware of the lack of treatment, but feels her role is to console the involved men, many of whom are her close friends. In 1932 she is sent to help Dr. Brodus and Dr. Douglas to help them "treat" rural black men in the town of Tuskegee, Alabama. She is sent around town to tell the people that the government is funding their treatment for free, but unbeknownst to them the government will soon run a study that requires them to go without any form of real treatment. She then comes across three men in an abandoned schoolhouse: Willie Johnson, Bryan Hodman, and "Big" Ben Washington, who agree for treatment. The study selected 412 men infected with the disease and promised them free medical treatment for what was called "bad blood". The movie shows Miss Evers' as suggesting the term as a strategy to withhold information about syphilis from the men. The men received fake long term treatment, which involved giving them mercury and placebos even after penicillin was discovered as a cure. When Caleb Humphries (one of the test subjects who left the experiment) joins the Army during World War II and is treated and cured by penicillin, he returns to tell how he was cured and tries to get help for his friend. But none of the hospitals would help because the test subjects were placed on a list that stated they should not receive medical treatment because they were participants in the experiment. The survivors of the study did receive treatment and financial compensation after the US Senate investigated in the 1970s.*

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