

The plutonium experiment



The Plutonium Experiment Of all the agonies of life, that which is most poignant and harrowing - that which for the time annihilates reason and leaves our whole organization one lacerated, mangled heart - is the conviction that we have been deceived where we placed all the trust of love.

Bulwer

Being the social watchdogs as they are, reporters all over time have had a knack of asking probing questions that ultimately point to the issues at hand and in this case, quite effectively it seems. After winning the Pulitzer prize in 1994 for her series, "The Plutonium Experiment", Eileen Welsome has sifted through various military documents that covered a span of five years and found her story. Between 1945 and 1947, scientists and doctors from the U. S. atomic weapons program conducted experiments injecting plutonium in unwitting human guinea pigs. She reported all her discoveries in the Albuquerque Tribune and it was subsequently denounced by the Department of Energy.

The metal in contention is a silvery-white, artificially created, radioactive element and has a melting point of 641 C, so much higher than water and it undergoes five changes between room temperature and melting point and has 6 different physical forms. It's produced when bombarded by neutrons and is a source of energy in reactors and in nuclear explosions. The hapless victims of these experiments are injected with plutonium remaining nameless people referred to only by code numbers until Welsome's efforts uncovered the incident and brought it to the world's attention. One can't help but wonder "who these people were, what happened to them after they left the hospital with the silvery, radioactive metal circulating in their veins -

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if they ever left at all." This poisoning procedure however left a few loopholes that triggered further investigation into the experiment and cover-ups and denials from the government became a constant in Welsome's research. In choosing the above quote, it shows how it taps into our humanity and asks the basic question of how far could one go to pursue a question unanswered. The human side appeals to all as all humans have the instinct to survive, prolong and preserve human life. This sad incident opens our eyes to the limits we can overcome morally in the pursuit of discovering something "first" and quenching our thirst for knowledge.

History has mead the memory of those experiments just part of that - a part. The nameless victims have all died bringing with them the harrowing stories of pain to their grave. The scientists and doctors who did and oversaw the experiments have eluded punishment socially and the stigma it entails. In my opinion, life however criminal and low or desperate is still sacred and should not be lorded over by other human being's fallible decisions. Another human's limits are his own and should be respected and not challenged to the point of sacrificing another human's life. Science still has its way of being discovered and no amount of human intervention or sacrifice can suffice its triumph.

Works Cited

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