



For Immediate Release:
November 16, 2010

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**Author Rebecca Skloot Delivers a Fitting Finale to
YWCA Bergen County's 90th Anniversary Celebration**

BERGEN COUNTY, NJ—Author Rebecca Skloot chatted with fans, signed books and spoke at length about issues ranging from racism and poverty to medical science and ghosts during her appearance on Thursday, November 11, at the YWCA Bergen County's fall fundraiser. The event, which was held at the Teaneck Marriott at Glenpointe in Teaneck, NJ, capped off the organization's year-long celebration of its 90th Anniversary.

Skloot's book, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, was named to several high-profile "best of" lists in the days leading up to her exclusive area appearance. Amazon selected it as the #1 Best Book of 2010 and Publishers' Weekly sited it as one of their Top10 picks of 2010. It was also awarded the 2010 Wellcome Trust Book Prize (www.rebeccaskloot.com). The YWCA chose Skloot as its keynote speaker because her book was so closely aligned with its mission of eliminating racism and empowering women.

The author mingled with guests during a VIP reception before reading several selections from *The Immortal Life* and sharing anecdotes about her 10-year journey to write it. She then answered questions from the crowd, which was as interested in her relationship with the Lacks family as in the story of a poor, black tobacco farmer whose cancer cells, taken without her knowledge, became one of the most important tools in medicine. "My biggest challenge—besides getting the family to talk with me—was wading through the overwhelming volume of medical research," she said. "I had a hard time containing it and distilling it into something that would hold a reader's interest." She was also intent on creating a balanced view. "Getting Henrietta's story out there—and the scientists' story out there—was really important to me. The family wanted their story told, and trusted me to tell it in a respectful way. I also didn't want people to read this and think tissue research was a bad thing."

The event was sponsored by PNC Bank, Roche Pharmaceuticals, Capital One Bank, National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc., Bergen/Passaic Chapter, Hackensack University Medical Center, Morgan Stanley Smith Barney - Evan Steinberg, Teaneck Marriott at Glenpointe, and The Valley Hospital. Bookends in Ridgewood, NJ also partnered with the YWCA, donating 20% of the sales for each book

purchased in-store and at the event. Proceeds will benefit YWCA scholarships for after school care and summer camps, special needs recreation programs, and the county's only 24/7 Rape Crisis Hotline.

Photos courtesy of YWCA Bergen County Public Relations Dept.



PHOTO 1: Rebecca Skloot (right) signs a book for Linda Bowden, regional president for northern New Jersey, PNC Financial Services Group. PNC sponsored the VIP “Meet the Speaker” Reception.



PHOTO 2: Guests at the “Meet the Speaker” reception included (L to R) Vicki Bruni, YWCA volunteer, trustee, The Valley Hospital, and director, Hudson City Savings Bank; Monica Roers, YWCA CEO; Lisa Kender, former president, YWCA board of directors; and Megan Fraser, vice president, communications and marketing, The Valley Hospital.



PHOTO 3: Rebecca Skloot (fourth from left) thanks high school volunteers from the mentoring program run by the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc., Bergen/Passaic Chapter, one of the event sponsors. The students, who helped with everything from greeting guests to distributing gift bags, were joined by several Coalition members, including president Deborah Jackson (third from right) and mentor committee chair Jeannette Curtis-Rideau (second from left.)



PHOTO 4: Rebecca Skloot (holding her book) is welcomed by (L to R) YWCA board president Nisha Cordero, YWCA CEO Monica Roers, and YWCA development director Jeanne Patrican.

About YWCA Bergen County

YWCA Bergen County (www.ywcabergencounty.org) is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. We are the area's largest provider of child care services, a recognized leader in health and fitness programs, and operator of the county's only Rape Crisis Center. Celebrating nearly a century of commitment to our community, today we improve the lives of thousands of women, girls, and their families.

About the Author

Rebecca Skloot (www.rebeccaskloot.com) is an award-winning science writer whose articles have appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*; *O, The Oprah Magazine*; *Discover*; *Columbia Journalism*

Review; and elsewhere. She is a contributing editor for *Popular Science* magazine and has also been a correspondent for NPR and PBS. A former vice president of the National Book Critics Circle, she is on the faculty at the University of Memphis. Oprah Winfrey has teamed up with HBO's Alan Ball (creator/director of *True Blood* and *Six Feet Under*) to produce the film version.

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