

Title: "Reimagining the Stay: A Historical Examination of the Stony Brook Retreat Sanatorium in Keene, California, 1918-1968."

By: Olivia Garcia

Research Mentor: Alicia Rodriguez

Description of Proposed Activity: The Stony Brook retreat was a Kern County tuberculosis facility that was established in 1918 and was in operation until 1968. The sanitarium treated patients suffering from tuberculosis. Over time, the facility and its medical treatments changed, thanks to medical advances that allowed medical researchers to better understand the disease and how to treat it. Tuberculosis, referred to as the "disease of the masses," was a great killer of Americans at this time in the history of the United States, and Stony Brook represents one of hundred of facilities in the nation which aimed to isolate and treat contagious patients. Thus, Stony Brook, a creature of the Kern County Board of Supervisors, is a microcosmic example of American macrocosmic public health policy in the first half of the twentieth century. The purpose of my project is examine the origins of the facility in its broader public health context, to appreciate how changes in medical science influenced changes in patient practices at Stony Brook, and to explore the effect that the facility had on patents housed at Stony Brook. My research question is thus, what role did the Stony Brook retreat play in the history of public health policy in Kern County, and what impact did the facility have on the lives of patients who were treated there?

Expected Outcomes and Deliverables: The goal of my research project is to better understand the impact of the Stony Brook retreat among Kern County residents and to contribute to a better understanding an important facet of history of Kern County. There is surprisingly little scholarly work on the history of Kern County, and very little focuses on the history of public health policy. This research will contribute to a deeper appreciation and understanding of the history of this region, and a goal of this study is to have the results written as a scholarly article that will be published in a peer-reviewed journal.

If selected as an awardee, I will meet with the Graduate Student Center, attend workshops, and participate in monthly meetings with my mentor.

Background/Project Significance: Tuberculosis was a significant killer of Americans during the early and mid-twentieth century. Public health officials used sanitariums to isolate patients and provide them with the care and treatment. There has been very little scholarly work written about the Stony Brook retreat although its significance is large. My goal will be to research the facility using a variety of under utilized archival sources, including newspapers, Census records, and oral histories to capture a better sense of the impact of the tuberculosis facility and its patients. Oral history, recording the stories and experiences of those who lived in the Stony Brook sanitarium, will also provide permanent access of otherwise unavailable material to future scholars who wish to study the history of Kern County.

Faculty mentor statement:

Bibliography

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