

Our Bodies, Our Environment

by Nancy Price

Our bodies are a "natural" environment, a complex ecosystem of many separate systems (nervous, hormone, immune, etc.), beneficial organisms (digestive bacteria), and the array of chemical molecules that run the complex messaging system that turns on or off the 20,000-plus genes in each of our cells to make them function.

Toxic Trespass Without Our Consent

Corporations have no right to harm these natural systems of our bodies. Yet, armed with corporate personhood, they do so with impunity.

After WW II, corporate/political corruption caused the failure of the federal regulatory system. Since then, tens of thousand of chemicals in the products of modern life have not been tested for toxicity. In the process of manufacture, use and discard, these chemicals pollute our air, land, water and food. And they are mainly stored in our fatty tissue creating a serious "body burden."

Since Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962, we know a great deal about how pollution affects our "personal" environment, lives and health. She outlined the basics that prevail today: How business and industry, along with "their" scientists, engage in suppression or falsification of information, cover-ups, lies, and intimidation; How federal and state regulatory agencies are hi-jacked, not least by the revolving-door between government and the private sector; How corporate control of science, especially alliances with universities, undermines objective research to study links between toxic chemicals and disease; How deceptive advertising shapes consumer understanding and choice, and deflects "bad" news; How doctors and authority figures peddle untested products giving them a gloss of approval.

Even knowing the effect of lead poisoning in children in 1906, National Lead launched their lead-white "Dutch Boy" brand paint for homes and children's rooms to make them bright and clean, and "help guard their health." In the mid '20s, General Motors and DuPont, knowing the hazards, marketed leaded gasoline .

In the mid '30s several chemicals that mimic the natural hormone estrogen were shown to produce cancer in both male and female bodies. Scientific research now shows that trace amounts of these persistent hormone-disrupting chemicals and heavy metals (lead, mercury) can cause life-threatening diseases and disrupt our normal cognitive and neurological development from conception to grave. Sandra Steingraber and Theo Colborn (see book list) show how a mother's "body burden" affects the development of the fetus and content of

breast milk. Our accumulated body burden—even many years after exposure—also creates a "precondition" for: cancer; serious male and female reproductive and fertility problems; faulty immune systems; and diseases of older age like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

The Cure—Civic Action

We, the People, must assert our fundamental and inalienable right to be free from involuntary invasion of our bodies by corporate pollution. We must harken back to the early regulatory thinking that used precaution to protect the public good. There are two clear steps for community action. The first is to use the Precautionary Principle Ordinance as adopted in 2003 by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, which states that the City may act with "precaution" to prevent harms to the environment and protect public health even when full scientific evidence about cause and effect is lacking. The second is passing a "Chemical Trespass Ordinance," like that of Liberty Township in Pennsylvania, which prohibits chemical bodily trespass within Liberty Township. It also establishes strict liability and burden of proof standards for chemical trespass and subordinates chemical corporations to the people of the Township.

Suggested reading and resources:

Living Downstream: An Ecologist Looks at Cancer and the Environment, by Sandra Steingraber, 1997.

Our Stolen Future, Theo Colborn, Dianne Dumanski and John Peterson Myers, 1997. Also www.ourstolenfuture.org

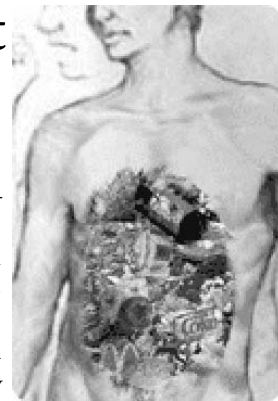
Deceit and Denial: The Deadly Politics of Industrial Pollution, by Gerald Markowitz and David Rosner, 2002

The Cigarette Century: The Rise, Fall, and Deadly Persistence of the Product That Defined America, Allan M. Brandt, 2007.

Google San Francisco Precautionary, there are many good articles

Go to Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund, www.celdf.org and on left, under *New Ordinances*, scroll down to Corporate Chemical Trespass Ordinance.

Nancy Price is the Co-chair of the National AfD Council and the Western Coordinator of the Defending Water for Life Campaign.



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