

Editor's note: Unbeknownst to many San Antonians, there is a move in our city against the increasing efforts of corporations to push genetically modified foods into our bodies. Rise Up San Antonio, March Against Monsanto, took place on May 24, 2014 with two marches along Broadway as part of a global effort to put a stop to GMOs. What follows is an account of that day and why we should all get involved in this effort.

by Cynthia Kurkowski, March Organizer

I groan as the first drops of rain spatter across my windshield. The rain shower, no matter how light, will keep people at home. Hundreds will blame the innocent raindrops for not Marching Against Monsanto, again. A second groan escapes my lips as I realize most of my posters will melt in the rain. I shrug. No matter. We have three waterproof banners, two bullhorns and a very committed group of activists who will make up for soggy posters and fair weather supporters. I turn on the Rock Monsanto music video to psych myself up as I drive into town to lead San Antonio's third March Against Monsanto, part of the global march taking place in 400 cities in 52 countries across six continents. In the US, small towns and big cities participated in 47 states. I shake my head as I think: How did I get here?

I marvel at the fact that I am on the frontlines of this historical global fight for food freedom. What began as a conscious effort to feed my family wholesome food has evolved into an acute awareness of how big business is intentionally poisoning our food supply. (Yes, they know. Monsanto knew in 1937. 1937! Let that sink in.)

My first reaction to the news of genetically modified food was excitement. The nerd in me thought about the new varieties of fruits and vegetables and, yes, ending world hunger. Then I heard that genetically modified food involved the unnatural addition of pesticides WITHIN the seed and the environmentalist in me questioned it. The mother in me screamed when I learned GMO corn was created with the sole purpose of **exploding an insect's stomach when they ate the corn**. "Food shouldn't kill." It's a no brainer.

Yes, I know my child is not an insect, but eating pesticide-saturated corn for years will damage the gastrointestinal system. GMO proponents like to point to independent studies. What they fail to notice is that these studies never test for over 90 days. They also fail to notice the paper trail leading from these studies to Monsanto and other agribusinesses.

The grave assumption people make is that the FDA has deemed GMOs safe for consumption when, in fact, they don't even regulate them. GMOs fly under the radar because back in the Reagan era, Monsanto persuaded the administration to declare GMOs produce as natural because they grew from seeds — never mind that the

seeds have unnatural deadly chemicals in them or that **the plants grown from Monsanto seeds cannot produce seeds!** There is nothing natural about GMOs, which is why they call them "**Frankenfoods**." Most GM crops are grown on large industrial

farms and then processed into hundreds of other ingredients that show up in our food as corn syrup, soy lecithin, canola oil, cottonseed oil, or the sweeteners used in soups, spreads, and sauces—even infant formula.

GMOs are not just seeds. The definition of GMO has grown to include any unnatural harmful chemicals and additives in food products. This includes the growth hormones, antibiotics, cancer-causing artificial sweeteners, dangerous food coloring, and industrial-born preservatives to keep food "fresh" or from sprouting/budding, for instance. Bud Nip is a chemical that is sprayed on produce to keep it from budding. Then there are the misleading "health-wise" GMOs. These have healthy sounding names like "antioxidant" to preserve

food or keep foods from turning brown... as certain foods like apples do when exposed to oxygen. That's why the sliced apples in kids' meals never turn brown. The uninformed label reader would view the antioxidant as a good ingredient, assuming that it is the natural antioxidant our body needs and never suspecting the ingredient is a chemical additive.

THE BLAME GAME

When I tell people I march against Monsanto, they automatically assume I am a paranoid conspiracy theorist. I am neither. I am not being paranoid when I think Monsanto is out to harm me or doesn't care about saving the world. They've stated their feelings quite openly on the record. Read for yourself: "Monsanto should not have to vouchsafe the safety of biotech food. Our interest is in selling as much of it as possible. Assuring its safety is the FDA's job" - Philip Angel, Monsanto's director of corporate communications.

Nor am I paranoid about my government dismissing its role as protector of our food supply. Read for yourself: "Ultimately, it is the food producer who is responsible for assuring safety." — FDA, "Statement of Policy: Foods Derived from New Plant Varieties"

In fact, the FDA is deliberately lying and misleading consumers about GMOs. In its online statement, it compares GMOs to plant hybrid breeding and then goes on to say there is no evidence that show GMOs are harmful and the pesticides "do not pose unreasonable risks of harm to human health or the environment." Maybe consumers should start watching their backs. Why, you ask, would FDA lie to us? Why would the FDA protect Monsanto and other agribusinesses? **Because the FDA is a revolving door for Monsanto executives.** They go back and forth between Monsanto and the FDA. Monsanto executives, who most likely have stock in

MARCH
AGAINST
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Monsanto, are writing the rules for NOT regulating Monsanto. What a wicked web they weave!

WHAT PEOPLE THINK I DO AND WHAT I REALLY DO.

My friends think I run from protest to protest. This spring found us waving signs at the entrance of an agribusiness conference and again in front of the National Organic Standards Board as the chairman exerted his “right” as federally appointed agent to eliminate safeguards protecting the organic standards. But these events are the exception to the case. Most evenings and weekends you will find me on the Internet posting news and studies to educate and enlighten the masses unknowingly consuming toxic dinners. Part of my time is also spent reaching out to other No GMO activists to organize and strengthen our efforts. My goal is to engage people in GMO discussions to educate them and, most importantly, erase the misconceptions and the blatant lies the GMO industry is telling the media and its consumers. Mainstream media is harder to educate. Local news organizations have ignored us. Why? For obvious reasons. GMO supporters are big advertisers.

The entire week leading up the May 24th march, I spent every night emailing and tweeting news reporters our event flyers, press release, news alerts, quotes, interview contacts, and links to our community page, group page and event page. I even sent them the Texas Label GMO petition our group started. We did get 15 seconds of fame this year - literally - but the news footage and article were riddled with errors and the cameraman who we marched past didn't film the group until an hour after the march when many had left. The article was so inaccurate that it didn't even post the correct name for the founder of the national March Against Monsanto. That's just plain negligence and horribly irresponsible reporting. The fact is the news stations and the local newspaper didn't care that residents in the 7th largest city in the United States were marching against Monsanto and fighting to label/ban GMOs.

Don't call me ungrateful. I was very grateful that they screwed up the article because it gave our group the opportunity to set the GMO record straight. The day after, we staged a full attack on the news comment section and challenged the non-believers. I believe we converted a few. That's all it takes. If you can open the eyes of one person, you can convert a family. Once you



BARBARA ORVALLE,
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Monsanto,
San Antonio

WHEN I FIRST LEARNED THE TRUTH ABOUT GMOS, ABOUT MONSANTO, I KNEW THE ISSUE WAS ONE THAT I COULDN'T IGNORE. HOW COULD I? THE HEALTH OF MY FAMILY AND OUR PLANET DEPENDS ON IT. THAT DAY I MADE A PROMISE TO PROTECT MY FAMILY, PROMOTE GMO AWARENESS AND TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE. TODAY I AM SO GRATEFUL TO HAVE MET SO MANY OTHERS ALONG THE WAY WITH THE SAME MISSION.



truly understand what GMOs are and their impact on our health, farmers and our environment, you can't close your eyes to it.

That is what I find most fascinating about the food revolution: Once people see – really see – what's happening to our food supply, they cannot help but get involved or dramatically change how they eat. They can't close their eyes to what is happening. They feel compelled to make changes. They can't watch their children eat Monsanto

sweet corn or GMO snacks.

New supporters are known to throw out food once they realize what GMOs are. That says something about the passion and conviction of this movement. There's no going back for me. I am committed to the cause and working to unite Texas No GMO organizations to work together to introduce GMO labeling legislation. We launched a petition to show our politicians that we are serious. I will not be stopped until I feel my children and grandchildren can shop with ease and confidence that what is marketed as food, is food. I'm not perfect. I try to eat as much organic as I can. It's expensive though. I stay away from the obvious processed foods and I read the labels to avoid buying GMO-laden products. I do crave my Big Red and I do give in to the craving once in a while. But I know the Big Red is bad for me. That's the difference.

GMO food producers deceive consumers by saying they are safe when more and more studies are emerging to prove GMO's harmful – deadly – effects. GMO food producers spend hundreds of millions fighting the labeling of their products. If they have nothing to hide, then I say, label them. Europe, Russia, China and many others have banned GMOs. Yet, the US encourages us to eat them. Consumers need to wake up and look around. Why are we the only nation thinking GMOs are safe to eat?

As one GMO activist said: “If you're aren't angry, you're not paying attention!” Texans need to get angry.

To learn more about the movement, search *March Against Monsanto San Antonio* on Facebook and you'll find the community and group pages. Please, also sign the petition demanding Texas Label GMOs. ♦