

“We look to the skies with tears in our eyes and pray for miracles.”

Bush points the media and the public to look overseas for weapons of mass destruction. We know where they are. They are here, buried here in the dirt, in his own home state.

...and he personally knew about it when he was just the governor of Texas.

Over six years ago, Maria Ester Salinas stumbled upon a major discovery that would dramatically change not only her life, but the lives of thousands of people in the deep South Texas town of Mission. She uncovered a massive plot by the federal, state, and local agencies of government, who were working in conjunction with each other, to hide the largest human and environmental disaster in North America.

In the 40's, bodegas (warehouses) were built in the middle of the Mexican-American side of town. Railroads were built through the neighborhoods to ship and deliver to and from these bodegas. These plants housed and mixed the most potent of chemicals, in their purest form, then shipped them out to be used for war as well as for pesticides, but the community was not made aware of this. Initially, residents naturally supported the idea of a factory being built in the community since it meant an opportunity for a stable job just down the street. Little did the community know what implications such an establishment would have on their lives and the lives of their children and descendants to come.

Since 1980, EPA has known about these sites and has scientifically proved its toxicity. One of the sites made the federal registry as a Superfund site and the other made the state Superfund registry as being the #1 most contaminated site in the entire state of Texas. A superfund site is a chemically contaminated area hazardous to humanity which is supposed to have a special allocation of funds available for cleanup and community assistance/intervention. No funds have been spoken of or received for this community of modest means. The Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC) now TCEQ (Texas Commission on Environmental Quality) has known about the sites for years as well.

Thousands were and have been born mutated, disabled, sick, chemically burned, that is if they survived birth at all. According to statistics in 1999 alone, **66.28%** of all deaths in the county were caused by ailments listed on medical research studies shown as being effects of chemical/volatile contamination and exposure. This is in a county where **88.35%** are Mexican and Mexican-American. Hearing stories of cyrosis of the liver, high rates of spinabifida, multiple and raging cancers, hemaphrodites, lumps, tumors, physical deformities, mental problems, early unexplainable deaths, sterility, babies being born chemically burned, and other more severe health issues are considered normal for this area. Grass does not grow, the trees and vegetation are mutated and deformed as well, if living at all. No one knew why but the answers are being made public, thanks to the efforts of individuals like Ester Salinas.

These ecological (environmental and human) catastrophes coincidentally occur in areas that are predominantly Mexican-American and/or along the southern border regions of the U.S., all which have been ordained by the federal and respective state governments. This case in particular has international implications, however. Twelve of the 54 chemical contaminants that are present in this small Texas town were banned by the United Nations in May 2001, being referred to “the most hazardous contaminants known to man.” Ester Salinas has since evolved into a community activist and her fight is reaching a nationwide audience, which now includes two Congressmen who have personally met with her and visited the sites as well as the homes of

the residents. Congressman Ciro Rodriguez visited late last year and Congressman Lloyd Doggett made an appearance this past January. George W. Bush was made aware of the situation when he was governor, and sent TCEQ to “investigate” in the late 90’s. Local city officials have ignored and publicly fought against the residents, since the local economy is based on tourism. Ester Salinas and the affected communities have since formed alliances with each other as well as with La Raza Unida, United Farm Workers, and the National Council of La Raza.

The disaster in Mission has led to the claim of genocide by the outraged community, due to the severe dangers and effects on human health caused by exposure. This claim can be justified, being that the affected population:

1. Was and is purposely targeted for exposure:
 - a. By having such a chemical factory as the ones in Mission be placed within an *already existing* Mexican-American community
 - b. By having no assistance from federal or state authorities for the individuals that comprise communities in the present day in regards to their health nor the contamination of their properties, although scientific tests and reports have been conducted and produced by those authorities which confirm the severity of the situation
2. Was and is intentionally exposed in various manners
 - a. Workers of the bodegas not made aware of any dangers to human health, which harmed them individually as endangered every member and future member of their families
 - b. By smoke stacks of the bodega building being only two stories high, with an oscillating fan at its end, where it curved and laterally blew and emitted potent and hazardous substances directly into the air, land, and population of the barrios (instead of a typical smoke stack that releases directly upward)
3. Is comprised of “contaminated” individuals who transmit the chemicals and their effects via sexual contact and conception, since the chemicals are in the bloodstream (which leads to an abnormal populations of biological descendants as generations continue, if exposure has not already lead to sterility)

****The African-American/Black community that once existed there has since become extinct, having suffered from sterility caused by the contaminants)*
4. Suffer abnormal rates of rare diseases, cancers, early deaths, all of which are suffered by all ages and confirmed in vital statistic reports of the city and county

The environment and population in Mission was initially poisoned in the 40’s but continues to be, as the chemicals spread via air, water, erosion, and time. The chemicals move laterally as well as seep downward through the ground. According to reports by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), a “greyish-green sludge” was detected 28 feet from the surface. The city, county, state, and federal levels of government are well aware of the situation, yet they refuse to help or even advise the locals and visitors of the dangers. Millions of tax-payer dollars have been wasted on illogical and meaningless “remediation projects” on *some* contaminated areas, over ten million dollars to be exact. “We are over that estimate right now. I currently have invoices that we were reviewing and paying,” said Kelley Cook, the project manager for TCEQ in a radio/video interview past October. In these “remediations” soil samples are taken in residential lots, measuring from the surface and down six inches into the soil. The lots were tested in two parts, with the individual lot having been divided into two parts,

front and back. These small lots (currently) are valued around \$17,000 and TCEQ claims that it cost \$30,000 to test the front yard and another \$30,000 to test the back yard, total of \$60,000 charged to Texas taxpayers for a lot only large enough to hold a small one or two bedroom shack or small house. Furthermore, TCEQ acknowledged that not all lots and properties surrounding the bodegas were tested or remediated. If contaminants were present, the soil was removed and tested until no chemicals were detected. This, however, leads to the following questions and answers:

Where was the contaminated soil placed, and were the surrounding communities of that location made aware?

Secretively taken photographs of the trucks removing and transporting the dirt reveal that the contaminated soil was moved to a small Texas town, Robstown. They also portray and reveal the fact that the soil was not properly covered or contained, which meant that as the trucks drove from Mission to Robstown that roads and areas in between became contaminated.

What about the health dangers imposed upon the residents and neighbors of the particles that became airborne as and once the soil was moved?

They were not advised nor told to leave temporarily as the “cleanup” occurred. Many became ill during that time, or soon thereafter.

What about the implications such contamination would have on human health?

No mention was made.

How was the community made aware of the overall situation and its related matters?

They were not. Selected lots, addresses, and individuals were sent letters of notice. This was confirmed by Kelley Cook.

Furthermore, the ten million dollar *plus* recommendation TCEQ made to the community, or rather, certain individuals of the community, as a result of the confirmation of hazardous ecological poisoning, was the following:

1. Do not track dirt from the outside in
2. Wash your hands thoroughly
3. Water your lot continuously
4. Do not eat any vegetation from your yard

Do these multi-million dollar recommendations seem appropriate for residents (remember, some, not all) of an area contaminated by chemicals specifically outlawed by the United Nations?

Are you a tax payer? Is this proof of your hard-earned tax dollars at work?

As far as EPA, it defines itself as such and states the following:

“Our Mission:

EPA's mission is to protect human health and to safeguard the natural environment – air, water, and land – upon which life depends. For 30 years, EPA has been working for a cleaner, healthier environment for the American people.

“What We Do:

EPA leads the nation's environmental science, research, education, and assessment efforts.”

Just recently, EPA released a statement to the local newspaper stating that the *remediated* site is “several times higher than what is considered safe for human exposure.” They also made mention of two options to deal with the situation, to cap the area with blacktop and to recap the areas formerly blacktopped during the last remediation. This statement was published in an English-only paper in an area where 75.9% of residents speak English less than very well (which makes the percentage of people comprehending and reading in English very low.)

Questions:

If it is unsafe for human exposure, why do the options being proposed not have any relation to the humans that HAVE BEEN exposed and ARE BEING exposed?

If the issue is human exposure, what is being done for the HUMAN BEINGS that reside in those areas?

How is EPA handling the environmental education of this public, since it is a Spanish-speaking one? Is it?

Ester Salinas had the following remarks:

“Justice to the people, where is it? There has been none, in no manner, shape, or form. There has been absolutely no community involvement. As for options, I have more than two options:

1. How about health exams for the community?
2. Biomarkers
(*blood tests to determine contaminants in the bloodstream*)
3. Intervention for the residents of the areas where the trains that brought in the chemicals derailed
4. Medical vouchers
5. Establish clinics
6. Counseling for those who have suffered mental anguish that being a contaminated population has caused
7. Education on the overall situation and its repercussions for the community and public
8. Compensation for the lowered property value
9. Compensation for the mental and physical anguish that this contamination and its remediation has caused
10. Meet human needs

“The buildings still stand. The state and the EPA threw and throw out millions of dollars with their remediation. Who is over-seeing how this tax-payer money has been and is being spent? They are a bunch of *crooks*.

“Why is there discrimination against the people in the Superfund areas? We demand to know why they have betrayed the people and failed to take care of the citizens and their property, knowing the severity of the situation. TCEQ and EPA continue to be negligent.

“EPA claims to be the “guardian protector.” Of what, their staff and personal paychecks? We need documentation and results of the testing done on these sites since the investigation began in the 80’s. If EPA is comprised of community educators, scientists, and doctors, where are they? Are we being treated this way because we are of Mexican descent? We continue to be discriminated and to suffer and die by their continuous lies.

They profit from personal financial gain at the expense of the health, sanity, lands, and lives of our people.”

The community continues to fight and gain more and more public attention. An exclusive documentary is currently being filmed about the tragedy in Mission. Although a lawsuit has been filed with over a thousand plaintiffs against 34 companies, it has been six years since it began and since the plaintiffs are primarily comprised of low-income individuals, fighting billion dollar companies like Union Pacific and others has been an uphill battle with the companies as much as with the attorneys of both sides. The group has made contact with the United Nations and a petition has been started that will be sent to the UN listing the crimes against humanity caused by this genocide that bore and bears the approval the United States government.

For further information, please refer to the following:

www.larazaunida.com/lrugreen

This site has reference to:

- *list of chemicals involved and their effects on human beings*
- *list of defendants in the lawsuit*
- *vital statistics*
- *transcript of the interview with TCEQ (which is also available on video)*
- *press releases, articles, and some news coverage on the topic*
- *pictures*

For video requests of the TCEQ interview or the documentary, or for any further pictures, questions, or comments, please email adelita@mission-texas.com.

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