

The Power of a Seed

By Elaine Cimino

There is something very profound happening, a movement is afloat and it has to do with something simple, a seed. The Seed and Sustainability Project is currently working on protecting the ecological and human right to grow crops from seeds free from genetic modification, cloning and patenting in New Mexico. In this past NM Legislative session a coalition of groups supported Senate Joint Memorial 38 and House 84 a.k.a the 'Monsanto Memorial' to protect against the modification of seeds in NM.

The coalition to the legislature consisted of the 8 Northern Pueblos, the Pueblos of Tesuque and Pojoaque, the NM Acequia Association and organic farmers in the Espanola Basin and all those working on protecting the cultural landscape including the land grants under the Treaty Guadalupe de Hidalgo and from the NM County Commission's of Rio Arriba and Santa Fe. These formidable groups made it through three committees on each side of legislature and at the last moment were stopped on the House floor by Rep. Andy Nunez, who gutted the memorial and usurped the right of farmers to protect themselves against corporate invasion, to ensure food security and impinged on their ability to make a living by the removal of all provisions nullifying corporate rights. What these memorials did was to flush out the sloth of corporate lobbyist's and show the grassroots that they do not have protection from corporations in NM Legislature.

This issue is of importance to the small farmer because of what these corporations are doing when modifying seeds with terminator genes that kills crops of organic or non modified genetic seed. Not only will the seed genes invade a field and kill non modified crops, the genes are patented in the seeds. So when the wind blows and cross-pollination occur the non modified crops mutate, then the biotech industries and corporations like Monsanto sue to force the farmer to pay for the seed and crops and/or the courts fines from the farmers for the impingement of their patent. These are stolen crops and lands from the small farmer. Not only is this an economic boon to Monsanto, the corporations then work within the USDA and give vast research funding to universities agriculture departments, i.

e. NMSU, to propagate the mission of genetic modification, cloning and patenting to students and the farming community. In the Southwest marketing drought resistant seeds obscures hidden costs of the biotech industry which is about denying fundamental rights to food and water—through the commoditized biotech seed crops and privatized water.

As recent as February, 2007, the Seed and Sustainability Project, who were already at the Legislature on these issues, were given scholarships to go to the Daniel Pennock Democracy School, which helped to reframe activism, not only the groups working at the legislature, but several groups in New Mexico. This reframing shows us that no matter what the issue, water, mining, or seeds, it comes down to two points: The first, the Right of Nature to exist unimpeded and second, that corporate rights must be nullified in order to protect Nature and humanity. The corporations have now usurped the 1st, 5th, and 14th Amendments our right to due process. Currently under corporate law, the corporations have more rights than do people and the communities they live in. We have to change this in order to survive. If we are able to remove the corporate right to “human” right we will be able to start to have a true democracy not yet seen in America. What the Daniel Pennock Democracy School teaches is the historic roots of democracy and law of the US Constitution long before adopted by colonial America. The US Constitution protects property, even people as property. The teachings of the school shows how movements have been historically formed and the cultural transformation that is needed to modify governmental and grassroots actions, especially when facing the crisis of climate change, privatization of water, hard rock mining, coal fire plants or the commodification of seeds and GMO’s threatening food security, which effects all of us.

Now comes before the Democratic Party Counties of New Mexico a resolution to Support the Right of Nature that will nullify the corporate rights in order to keep our right to ecological democracy, clean air, water, and land. It is written that the Democratic Party of New Mexico acknowledges the problems of the corporate state. Without this acknowledgment of fundamental changes adopted by our local communities and states there can be no true democracy only continued corporate commodification controlling over our

daily lives. It is a form of Corporate Fascism, Capitalism corrupted and we have a duty to change it. We as a community should have the right to say “No” to a corporation. Democracy is based in the power of the people to shape their destiny not the power of the corporation to dictate our destiny.

It would not be prudent to go down this path without a discussion of the opposition to this resolution. The opposition will say that it is against the law to encumber a corporation’s right to turn a profit, or that it will raise taxes or that this is just nonsense. The caveat here is whether our elected officials, whether our grassroots, understand and have the strength to uphold our rights and will stand firm against threat of law suits. The pressure will be enormous on the leaders and Counties not to pass this resolution and subsequent ordinances. This will not raise taxes. Taxes will go up for many other reasons one is to pay for the war and the opposition will want to blame it on anything but the war. This is the first step to changing the law. It is a necessary first step. Ultimately this issue is a clash between two cultures: one that sees life as a duty to restore and preserve, cultures based in the soil, with diverse ecosystems and water sustenance, or another that seeks resources to commodify, privatize, own and trade as fundamental corporate rights.

We, the communities along the Rio Grande, civilizations that have been here thousands of years and the new comers in the last hundreds of years are in a global economic struggle along with many other countries and communities that are fighting economic insecurity, eroding cultural diversity and assaulting their personal freedoms and identity.

We are being faced with is called, “corporate terrorism.” Corporate terrorism brings destructive technologies and development and that is what we have here.

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It is time now for grassroots support and to invest in indigenous land based knowledge by protecting the rights of local communities, to protect their food security, to protect themselves from genetic modification, to support the right of nature, nullify the corporate “human” right and change the US Constitution to reflect more equitable and sustainable ways to ensure water and food to all. Supporting this resolution is supporting Democracy in the true

sense of the word.