

Tularosa Basin Downwinders Consortium

At 5:29 am on July 16, 1945, the first plutonium based atomic device was detonated at Trinity Site in the Tularosa Basin of Southern New Mexico. At the time it was unknown exactly what the blast would produce, and some of the physicists working on the project thought the atmosphere would be ignited. What is certain is that a cloud of radioactive debris stretched far into the atmosphere and from first hand accounts, settled out days later in the form of ash that coated everything in the communities that surrounded the test site and in every direction. Life was forever changed for the people living in these communities.

To maintain secrecy, the government had no plans to evacuate the people living in proximity to the test site. The government had only unsophisticated means for measuring and evaluating the fall out. The placement of their survey teams was, I believe, strategic in nature in that none of the teams were placed near the communities of any population. The idea that the plume somehow only extended in a north-easterly direction over unpopulated areas of New Mexico missing all the surrounding communities is absurd and beyond comprehension.

I was born 50 years ago in one of those communities. Tularosa as the crow flies is about 40 miles from ground zero. Me, my family, and all the other members of my village were unknowing, unwilling, uncompensated participants in the world's largest scientific experiment with devastating consequences.

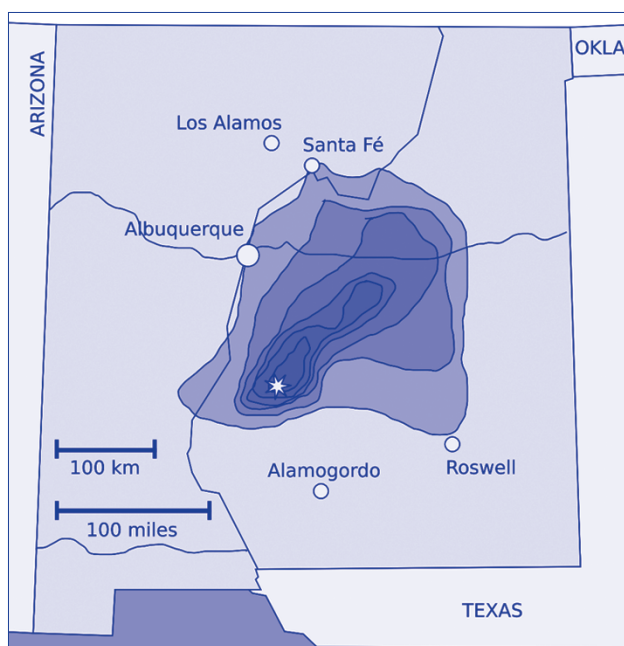
I developed thyroid cancer 12 years ago and my father has had both oral cancer and prostate cancer. Most of the women in my

the cancer rates in the counties surrounding the test site are as high as 8 times the national rates. It will be 65 years this summer and the U.S. government has never undertaken an epidemiological study of what happened subsequent to the test. The U.S. government, our government, has been negligent in its responsibility to the people of the Tularosa basin and New Mexico.

In 2005 and in conjunction with other residents of Tularosa the Tularosa Basin Downwinders Consortium



First atomic bomb being readied on a 100-foot-high tower at the Trinity Site.



Fallout from the Trinity Test. Darkest areas are highest amounts of radioactivity.

family have thyroid disease and so do most of the women from my community. The numbers of cancers, rare tumors and auto immune diseases in Tularosa is unprecedented. Many people there are working class and either underinsured or uninsured. When they get sick many of them do not have the means to receive the necessary care. There is little to no opportunity for screening, so often times the cancers are advanced when diagnosed. Once diagnosed, many are sent home to die.

We know that we were exposed to radiation and people continue to suffer the effects. Studies show that

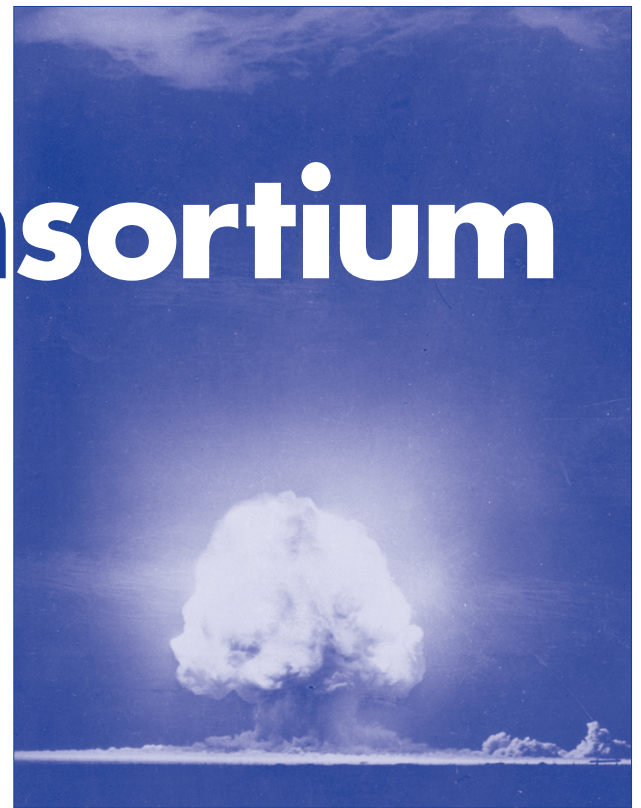
(TBDC) was founded. Our express goal was to compile data on the cancers people were being diagnosed with. We developed a health survey and held town hall meetings where we asked community members to come forward and report their cancers and the cancers of their deceased family members. We have hundreds of surveys and have only scratched the surface. What we found were large numbers of cancers in those who were children at the time and in their children. The first hand reports from those who were alive at the time were profound. One man reported that he was a young teenager at the time and actually witnessed the blast as he was driving with his mother to work that morning. He said his eyesight and his mother and brother's eyesight were permanently affected.

One lady told us how her family were ranchers and that when the cows were taken to market that year everyone was dumbfounded about why so many of the cows were white or half white.

These cows went into the food chain without hesitation because there was no warning given by the government that they might be contaminated. She also said there were many members of her family who had cancer as well as their livestock.

The water, the animals and the crops were all dusted and contaminated by the radiation and we drank the water and ate the food. Radiation settles in the mammary glands of cows and we drank fresh milk from the local dairy. We were all exposed.

Another woman reported that her mom was pregnant at the time and miscarried soon afterwards.



First Atomic Bomb Test, Trinity Site, New Mexico, August 16, 1945, 5:30 a.m.

Her father was walking to work the morning of the blast and he witnessed the entire thing. He died soon after of a degenerative muscle disease of unknown origin. This woman has lupus and fibromyalgia.

The stories go on and on. The number of brain tumors, breast cancers, thyroid cancers, bladder cancers, lung cancers, liver cancers, stomach cancers, leukemias and other cancers is very high.

I am here today to passionately support the efforts of Las Mujeres Hablan and express to Dr. Miller of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) that the time has come for the U.S. government to adequately fund and undertake an appropriate epidemiological study of how the populations have been affected by the immediate dose radiation and subsequent radiation exposure as the result of the Trinity test.

When we had the town hall meetings I listened and I heard the voices of the people who cry out for recognition. It is time for the U.S. government to recognize and acknowledge the sacrifices made by the people in these communities. I guess in some ways I can excuse that 65 years ago with so little known about the effects of radiation our government looked the other way. I hate to believe that our government considered the people living in the Tularosa basin as insignificant. Regardless, today 65 years later and with all that is known about radiation exposure and its significant negative health effects, it is high time that the U.S. government return to screen and treat people for cancer and compensate them for the suffering that they have endured in silence because no one has had the decency to return and to listen to their cries for help thus far.

— Tina Cordova, Statement of January 28, 2010

Las Mujeres Hablan (The Women Speaking) is a network of local activists working in Northern New Mexico, to protect their peoples and lands from the nuclear weapons industry. Las Mujeres Hablan includes: *Joni Arends*, Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety (nuclearactive.org); *Marian Naranjo*, Honor Our Pueblo Existence; *Sheri Kotowski*, Embudo Valley Environmental Monitoring Group; *Kathy Sanchez* and *Beata Tsosie-Pena*, Tewa Women United; *Holly Beaumont*, New Mexico Conference of Churches; *Paula Garcia* and *Quita Ortiz*, New Mexico Acequia Association; *Clarissa Duran*, Community Service Organization del Norte.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
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