



Kari: You've been called the new Rachel Carson and a poet with a knife. In 1962, Carson wrote *Silent Spring*, which has been credited for helping to spark the modern environmental movement with its warnings of the dangers of pesticides.

Fifty years later, the dangers of toxic chemicals, and particularly their health effects on kids, is still an issue and one that you address in your book, *Raising Elijah*. Why are there dangerous chemicals still on the market? What is broken and how can we fix it?

Sandra: Well, of all of the transformational laws that came as a result of *Silent Spring*, mostly in the '70s—Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, all of this sort of great legislation around the environment—the weakest one of all is the one governing the production and use of toxic chemicals, so-called TSCA—the Toxic Substances Control Act. And from the beginning this law was really set up to fail. It was structured very badly in that it represented the government's first attempt to get a handle on the tens of thousands of toxic chemicals that had come on the market since World War II without any requirement for advanced testing for safety as a pre-condition for marketing.

And instead of doing the right thing, which would have been to say that the burden of proof for demonstration of safety belongs to industry and that as a pre-condition for introducing these things safety was a required result of careful testing, instead, the law gave a pass to this inventory of 65,000 chemicals already on the marketplace and then required some very low bars for testing any new chemicals. So you can see right away that is a disincentive to innovation in chemistry because it's always going to be easier for the industry to fall back on that inventory of 65,000 old chemicals for which they don't need to show anything at all

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