

Tony Federico: Hey, Paleo Nation, I'm Tony Federico and you're listening to a Paleo Magazine radio special report. When Nina Teicholz, author of the international best seller, *The Big Fat Surprise*, was invited to participate in a panel discussion at the 39th Annual National Food Policy conference taking place this week in Washington, D.C., she was excited for the opportunity to bring her ideas about food and nutrition to the big table.

This conference brings together the food policy insiders who create position statements that have far-reaching consequences for how our nation eats. It's hard to argue against the fact that we need to eat better. We're fatter, sicker, and unhealthier than ever before. When Nina's co-panelists found out that she would be participating, they threatened to drop out of the conference unless she was dis-invited and so she was.

On today's show, Nina and I discuss the events leading up to her invitation and subsequent removal from the food policy panel, how she felt about receiving the news, and what she's doing about it. Spoiler alert, she's not taking this injustice sitting down and neither should you. This is a call to action for all of us to get involved because if you care about your right to eat real food, you're already being affected and enough is enough.

All right, Nina, you're the author of *The Big Fat Surprise*. It was a book that was acclaimed by the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Economist*, *Forbes*, *Mother Jones*. I see on your Web site that 1 of the editors of the *British Medical Journal* said that you did a remarkable job analyzing the weak science involved in some of the conventional nutritional wisdom.

Obviously, we're here today not just to talk about your book, but specifically to talk about what is unfolding right now with the National Food Policy Conference and specifically the action that was taken against you in terms of your involvement. Do you mind giving us a little bit of the back story and then we can get into what's going on right now with the petition and the effort to reinstate you on the panel?

Nina Teicholz: Sure. First of all, thank you for having me on your show. I think any of us who are in this field of research know that what we're saying is controversial and goes up against the main nutrition policy in the world, which is the USDA dietary guidelines. It's truly the most influential policy. Most other countries follow our guidelines. They inform all the school lunches, military rations, programs for the elderly, WIC, and they inform everything that every single person on the front lines, what they're taught, every nutritionist, dietitian, doctor. They're really extraordinarily important.

This conference in Washington, DC is the key conference for people in government and policy makers on food agriculture. I reached out to the conference organizer who's new this year. The conference has been going on for nearly 4 years. He's new this year.

I said, "Look, I've been involved in writing about policy and would you have me on your panel for policy?" He said, "No, we don't have a spot right now." I said, "Can I send you my book." So I sent him my book.

He wrote me back and he said, "Wow, this is a very compelling book.

Thank you for sending it to me." A little later he wrote and said, "There's a spot that opened up on this panel and would you like to join?" I said, "Yes."

Tony Federico: Everything's good at this point?

Nina Teicholz: Everything's good. This is early February. I then asked, "Who else is on the panel?" He said, "The head of the 2015 dietary guideline committee, Barbara Millen", the scientific advisor, I can't remember her exact title, at The Center for Science in the Public Interest.

Some people may know, I wrote a very controversial article in the British Medical Journal that criticized that 2015 report and said that it really had not done a rigorous, proper examination of the science. CSPI organized a letter calling for that paper's retraction. It was signed by Barbara Millen and all the other 2015 dietary guideline committee members. I'm pretty much public enemy number 1 for those ....

Tony Federico: Can you just give us a little bit of a brief rundown on what the angle of your article was regarding Center for Science in the Public Interest, the 1 that got them all worked up?

Nina Teicholz: The article, I did a very thorough examination of the 471 page report. It's prepared by an advisory committee of 14 members that are selected, appointed to review the science. That report is used as the basis for our dietary guidelines which are issued once every 5 years. A new version came out earlier this year. This is the report upon which they're based.

When this report came out, it says things like, "A plant-based diet is best." It recommended reducing meat and processed meat. It recommends low fat dairy. For any of us .... It continued its strict cap on saturated fats. For those of us who've been following the science, we know that this .... I couldn't understand where these recommendations come from. The science that I know and read does not support that conclusion.

Tony Federico: It's like this, pardon my interruption. It's this institutional inertia. It's just they've been saying it for so long that the status quo has a strength just based on the fact that it's been repeated so often. This really is the conventional information that's been really coming at us since the late '60s, early '70s. It seems it's just a continuation of that. We're not really seeing any evolution, no pun intended there, regarding the dietary guidelines.

Nina Teicholz: Exactly. The question is how do they sustain these recommendations if they're supposed to do systematic reviews of the scientific literature? If you do a systematic review of the literature on the low carbohydrate diet, for instance, you'll find there are more than 70 randomized control clinical trials on altogether thousands of people. Some of those trials lasting, several of them lasting more than, or at least 2 years, which is the gold standard to see if there are any adverse affects.

The dietary guideline committee said, "We searched for some trials, but we couldn't find any of the literature, so we didn't review that." That is indefensible. I don't know how you do a literature search and not find 71 trials.

There are so many examples like that. There's been a number of major review papers on whether or not saturated fats cause heart disease. Looking at all the clinical trial evidence, there's actually been a massive number of large clinical trials on altogether over 75,000 people. It's been a widely, deeply tested hypothesis because, of course, our government policy has been based on it for so long.

Those review papers, they almost uniformly show that saturated fats are not associated with heart disease. Saturated fats do not have any affect on cardiovascular mortality. Yet, how does the dietary guideline committee continue its cap on saturated fats?

I analyzed that. I realized they didn't actually do a systematic review of the literature at the last 5 years, which is their mandate. I documented all this and about 20 other things. They recommend reducing red and processed meats. Did they do a literature review on red and processed meats? No.

They did a bunch of reviews of epidemiological studies that combine meat with cheese, dairy, eggs, nuts. That's not a proper review of red meat. Things like that, that really pissed them off.

Tony Federico: How did they counter your ...? Obviously, if you're bringing to their attention studies that have been done that run counter to their status quo message, how do they then come back against that? What was their response? How do they critique your critique?

Nina Teicholz: As it normally happens with any paper that's published in a scientific journal, people write in rapid responses in the online comments page. That's what happened. There were a number of comments that were submitted. I replied to all of them. That reply, like the article itself, was peer reviewed and fact checked. It was a very, very rigorous process because we're dealing with such controversial information.

The letters came in from members of the entire dietary guideline committee submitted a rapid response. After that, when that didn't have an effect, because really there was 1 correction that was hardly a correction. Actually it was that I mis-stated in summarizing 3 review papers, I mis-stated it in a way that I actually understated the effect. It was such a minor thing.

None of the allegations were reversed. Then CSPI, Center for Science in the Public Interest, which is the longest standing, it is the 800 pound gorilla in Washington that is supposed to speak out on consumers, to defend consumers and probably on many issues it does. On nutrition, it's been very, very closely allied with the government's view.

In fact, some bloggers did some FWIA requests, which is Freedom With Information Acts asking for emails and found out that the CSPI leadership was all emailing back and forth with government officials at HHS and the dietary guideline committee members, so they're very close.

CSPI is long, long, like the government defended the limits on saturated fats. In fact, CSPI was primarily responsible for driving up trans fats in

the food supply in the [1980s 00:11:23] because they so much wanted to get rid of saturated fats that they said, "Trans fats are a better bargain for your heart than saturated fats." That's why we got so much partially hydrogenated oil containing trans fats food supply thanks to CSPI.

They have their legacy to protect. They've been in this business for a very, very long time. They wrote up a letter asking for retraction of my article based on 11 alleged inaccuracies in my article, several of which they already mentioned in the rapid response online and I had already replied to.

Another 1 was there was not point of fact. They're trivial. They're very flimsy. I think that their 1 that might be is questionable is whether I claimed that their review of saturated fats had not been done in a systematic way. It's so complicated.

I wrote a blog post on it that's on my Web site on the bigfatsurprise.com if anybody's interested in getting into all those details.

Tony Federico: Really just to sum it up, there was this policy paper that was put out. You did a thoroughly researched critique highlighting the science that runs counter to it. They didn't like it. They were upset. Now we're back at the conference. You're potentially going to be sitting on a panel with some of these actors, some of these individuals who are involved in this particular situation.

Nina Teicholz: I'm involved with, yeah, with me on a panel with the CSPI science woman, Margo Wootan, Barbara Millen, who's the head of the dietary guideline committee panel that I critiqued, and Angie Tagtow who's at USDA and in charge of the dietary guidelines.

Tony Federico: You're walking into the lion's den.

Nina Teicholz: Yeah, basically. As soon as I learned that they were the other members of the panel, and I see the head of the ... the organizer of the conference fire off an email to them that I'm cc'd on, "I just want you to know I have Nina Teicholz as the fourth member of the panel." I just looked at that and I knew that .... I told my husband, "They're just going to ... that's going to set off a firestorm."

Tony Federico: Some of the alarms were going off at that point.

Nina Teicholz: Alarms are going off. This is in the afternoon. Sure enough, 9:30 the next morning, I get a call from the conference organizer who says, "Nina, they're, all 3 of them refusing to be on the panel with you. They're going to walk if you are on it." He said, "If it was just 1, or 2, but we're coming up on the conference. It's really soon. I can't get 3 other people to do it so I have to dis-invite you."

He is a super nice guy. I felt very badly for him. I did say, "I think this is the wrong thing to do because it will look bad. It looks like you're silencing and trying to shut down debate on important issues." Of course, that's what it is. What are they afraid of?

Anyway, I was dis-invited. I suggested to them, I said, "Understanding that I'm a controversial figure, I've written this article." 1, I gave them 2

names, a Harvard M.D., a former member of the 2010 dietary guideline committee is a PhD. I said, "Why don't you invite them? They also have questions about the science. It's not me." They didn't invite them. They invited somebody from the potato industry.

Tony Federico: Hardly a dissenting voice.

Nina Teicholz: Hardly a dissenting voice. Then Politico reported on it, which is a big, DC based news site. I was the lead item. "Teicholz's dis-invited from food panel."

Tony Federico: Yeah, I'm looking at that article right now.

Nina Teicholz: That's on Politico. Then that kind of thing just makes me queasy. I didn't really send it around. A fan of mine in Ireland, maybe you know him, he's the fat emperor. He does a terrific blog. He started a petition saying, reinstate me to the food panel. I wake up last Saturday morning to this petition that's been started. Overnight there's 200 names on it. Now there's more than 3,500, several days later. It's extraordinary.

If you want to see the energy and passion for change, you just go in and read those comments. It really is heartwarming to see how much people care and how passionately they feel that debate should not be silenced. There really is no reason.

If they're so confident in their opinions, then let them be discussed. This was supposed to be a topic for the panel, how to respond to claims that the food policy is not keeping up with the science. It's 1 of the topics they aim to discuss.

There are people all over the world who believe that that's what needs to be discussed, not the same troika of government insiders and somebody from the potato industry.

Tony Federico: It seems like the anger that people signing the petition and maybe even if they're not signing the petition that they're likely feeling when they see these types of things happening is very similar to the anger that's being expressed in the political sphere. It seems like there is just this stereotypical battle of the entrenched interests, usually with deep financial pockets, with a greater power differential going up against people that are fighting for, I'm going to just say it, truth.

When you have scientific evidence that suggests that the conventional wisdom is not the total story, or the whole story, that there's at least strong suggestions that it is partially, or completely incorrect, it's really a travesty when that is ignored and voices that are trying to bring that to our attention collectively are silenced just because it doesn't fit the world view, or the financial prospectus for the interests involved. It's really a shame.

I do think the main reason why I wanted you to come on here today and to talk about this is because we have a new situation now with the Internet with distributed access to content creation. For example, we're able to get on a podcast today and talk about this. People are able to start a petition online and talk about it. People are able to share that petition on Facebook, through social media.

Despite the fact that we might not get accurate reporting from outlets aligned with some of those interests, or these institutions might shut voices such as your out, we do have a new situation now where we can be heard. I think that that's the most important aspect of it.

What are your hopes? What are your thoughts? Do you think there's any chance that they're going to bring you back on at this point, or is it more a protest, a statement just to let them know, "Hey, we're here. We notice what happened and we're not going to just let you off the hook for continuing your cadre of pro carb and grain-based agriculture."?

Nina Teicholz: I just want to say 1 thing about this idea that our voices are heard. That is that since I've come to be a bit of a student of how the policy is made inside Washington, I have to say that I'm a little cynical about the idea that they have their radars tuned to what is happening out there in the wider world of science and on the Internet.

It is a very small conversation that happens in Washington amongst insiders and industry trade groups. They really do not hear much from .... There hasn't been a voice to represent the views of scientists and others who don't agree with the government's position on nutrition policy.

That's why when I first started actually trying to meet with people on the Hill and in Congress, I started this group called the Nutrition Coalition that everybody should join. That is to collect this group of M.D.s, PhDs, practitioners, knowledgeable people, people who just care about health who want to see alternative views be heard and who care.

The principle aim of this group is not to endorse any 1 diet. It's simply to say that we need policy based on rigorous science. That's all. Wherever that science leads, we should go, but the current system whereby clinical trials are not reviewed, epidemiological evidence is relied upon, it's just not proper science.

Where do I think it'll go from here? I do not expect at all to be reinstated on this panel. Since the petition was started and because it did so well, I think that gives us an opportunity. We are going to, on Tuesday afternoon, have a press conference in Washington, DC, which will be me, but also we're going to have 2 M.D.s and 2 PhDs talking to show precisely the reality which is that this is not me. This is a broad network of many experts who believe these views.

There'll be ... I don't know if you know Sarah Hallberg, who's a terrific doctor. Mark, I can't pronounce his last name, [Kutchitella 00:21:28], another M.D. Osama Hamdy, who is the medical director of the Joslin Diabetes Center at Harvard and then Paul Marantz who's a professor of epidemiology at Albert Einstein College.

This is just to show. These are just the people that we happen to have right now at short notice. There are many experts who believe that the government committee is out of touch with the current scientific reality. We're going to have that press conference. I think the petition gives us the chance to be heard simply because there's clearly concern about this. That's what we're doing.

Tony Federico: You're certainly up against a large and what it sounds like a very insular group of individuals that are making big, far reaching decisions. It's a fight. It certainly isn't 1 that has an easy solution, but I appreciate what you're doing.

It's great that you're giving people an opportunity to get involved through things like the Nutrition Coalition. We have the grass roots petition that came up to let people know maybe let people know, "Hey, this is something that more than just 1 person is interested in." It's a tough thing.

I am hopeful, over time, the truth will win out. We're here at a junction in our society where, like I mentioned before, we're seeing similar movements politically and in the nutritional world. My hope is just that, like I said, the truth will eventually overcome this resistance and this motivation that's based more on profit and protectionism, and ego and whatever else, what other forces are keeping us stuck in the past and preventing us from moving forward.

Again, I appreciate the work that you're doing, Nina. It's important work. I'm glad that you're willing to join the fight and it's inspiring others to join with you.

Nina Teicholz: Thank you for that. I just want to say the reason that it's of concern to everybody. People figure out how to get healthy. Those are often difficult journeys and then they get to a place where they know what to eat.

The reason that this larger battle is important for everyone is that when you go to a hospital, when your child gets a school lunch, when your elderly parent is in a nursing home, when you go to a cafeteria, when you're military is serving you, all of that food is determined by what's in the dietary guideline.

The cost, the crippling cost of diabetes, and obesity, and heart disease in this country, is so overwhelming. We all bear that burden together. I feel like that's why everybody should care and participate. If nothing else, then just sign a petition. Let your voice be heard.

I do think that now, maybe 30 years ago when Gary Taubes first ... sorry, 10 years ago, when Gary Taubes first started writing about this, sorry correct myself again, 15 years. 15 years ago when Gary Taubes started writing about this, there really was not the science to move things along. Now, the cumulative body of clinical trial research has grown to be so large that I think that we really can step up for change in a way that is backed by good and rigorous science.

So sign, you can go to the [nutrition-coalition.org](http://nutrition-coalition.org); you can go to to sign up if you want to. Otherwise, sign the petition.

Tony Federico: Yup. I'll be including links in the show notes for this episode for people to check out the Nutrition Coalition, to learn more about you and your book, *The Big Fat Surprise* and, of course, to sign the petition.

Just 1 last parting thought. I think of the story of Ignaz Semmelweis often times in these types of situations. Obviously, he was the doctor

who first advocated for washing hands between working on dead bodies and helping women give birth. He was completely shot down by his peers. He was put into an insane asylum. Obviously, now everybody knows germ theory, washing your hands, et cetera.

Even though right now it might seem daunting and even though right now it might seem like these entrenched interests have all the power and they have all the control, I think that there is going to be a change. It might be small steps. It might be gradual. It might come all at once in a revolutionary way, but change is happening. You're part of it. Thanks again, Nina for being on the show and doing what you do.

Nina Teicholz: Thank you, Tony, for having me. It's a pleasure to talk to you.

Tony Federico: That was Nina Teicholz, author of the Big Fat Surprise; Why Butter, Meat, and Cheese Belong in a Healthy Diet. To sign the petition, check out Nina's book, or to watch the press conference that she'll be holding today, Tuesday, April 5th from 2:00 to 3PM Eastern time, go to our Web site, [paelomagonline.com](http://paelomagonline.com) and click the radio tab. There you will find all the links to get all the information you need to get involved.

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