

Joan D. Gussow, EdD, RD

Dr. Joan Gussow has been credited as one of the early leaders in the *eat locally, think globally movement*. She has carried many labels throughout her life including mother, wife, educator, gardener, writer, advocate, and nutritionist. The California native finished her pre-med studies at Pomona College in 1950 and moved to New York to begin a position as a researcher with Time magazine. During her time in New York, she married and started her family. The birth of her children took her and her husband out of the city and into the suburbs. It was here in the suburbs where Joan noticed changes in the supermarkets, “You know, we'd gone, as I have said, from 800 to 18,000 items in the supermarket and they were mostly junk.” Consequently, Gussow shifted into the nutrition field to address the major issues she witnessed. “I was so upset about the food supply and the bad quality of the food supply. And so, I really almost went into the field in order to be able to intelligently critique the food supply. You know, I sort of thought, well, I need to.”

In 1969 she returned to school to earn her M.Ed and Ed.D. in Nutrition Education from Columbia's Teachers College. Early on her career spoke to a congressional committee, wrote, and published the testimony criticizing television food commercials that targeted children; “I was just new in the field and suddenly I burst into it with this article about the horrible television advertising to children.” This was unheard of in the early 1970's, “I think you're allowed now to say negative things about the food supply, but in those days you simply weren't.” To her surprise, the testimony was very well received, “I was out in public, you know, with all my clothes off {figuratively} and I was terrified of what was going to happen and I got I think 35 letters from dietitians thanking me.”

Dr. Gussow showcased her wonderful sense of humor and self-proclaimed “strong opinions” during our brief talk while discussing her time with the Society of Nutrition Education and Behavior (SNEB), formerly Society of Nutrition Education (SNE). Her earliest SNE(B) memory was of the physical atmosphere of the annual meeting, “Either that meeting or the next meeting the weather was incredibly hot and the air conditioning was incredibly cold in our room, so that's my first memory.” She was speaking of the 1972 Annual Meeting in Des Moines, Iowa. She continued to spend her time investing in the organization and surrounding herself with well-matched colleagues who supported and at times challenged, her vision of a sustainable and nutritious food system. She moved up in the society becoming president elect in 1979 and the SNE(B) president in 1980. Her presidential speech took place in Montreal and focused on, “how we allowed ourselves to be intimidated about being critics of the food supply.” This speech was consistent with her passion and strong track record of advocacy for a better food system, starting at the supermarket.

Dr. Gussow was integral in shaping SNE(B)'s history, helping inspire the formation of the Division of Sustainable Food Systems. Dr. Gussow has hoped that her exemplary nutrition career and time with SNE(B) has changed some people's minds about the food supply. Her advice to SNEB members moving forward, “Well, I would just urge the members of SNEB to be true to themselves, not to be bullied by anyone, not to decide that they have to change their opinion, because most of the other people have. But to be true to themselves and what they believe about the field, because we are in the field.” Dr. Joan Gussow's rich history of experience, knowledge, and leadership that she has shared with the Society of Nutrition Education and Behavior is invaluable. She was the SNEB 2020 president award recipient in which she was credited by many as a thought provoker and strong influence in the way they

approach nutrition. Her advice wisely extends beyond the field of nutrition, “So I guess I would just advise people, to at least be in touch with the real world around you. Look at the physical world around you and pay attention to it. Don't keep staring at that little screen. That little screen is not going to tell you the truth.”

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