

Vandana Shiva scandal deepens, as Beloit College botches response to criticism

Beloit College is in an ethical pickle. Last month it announced that it had [conferred](#) a prestigious honor on Vandana Shiva, an Indian environmentalist. The college named her the Weissberg Chair in International Studies, calling her “a recognized expert on agriculture and biotechnology” and touting her “PhD in nuclear physics.”

It turns out that neither representation is accurate.

The [Genetic Literacy Project](#), in articles on the GLP and in [Forbes](#), addressed the swirl of concern Beloit’s announcement triggered among scientists, who view Shiva as an alarmist and a fabulist. The Indian activist has attained global celebrity status for her outspoken opposition to modern technology in agriculture: she consistently misrepresents her credentials, the Green Revolution, the alleged spike of suicides by Indian farmers which she links to GMOs, and the alleged health dangers of GMOs.

As the investigation notes, Shiva has consistently misrepresented herself as a scientist—she maintains she is a physicist while her degree is in philosophy—a fiction that Beloit College, echoing sloppy journalistic accounts, touted in its public relations blitz. But even more damaging is her international campaign to rollback the benefits of modern agriculture, which has saved hundreds of millions of lives through improved nutrition in her native country alone. Her anti-technology views—common among the privileged Brahmin caste from which she hails in India—has resonated among anti-GMO activists, who promote her views, often uncritically.

As David Tribe, an applied geneticist and professor in food science, food safety, biotechnology and microbiology at the University of Melbourne, [points out](#) on his GMO Pundit blog, Beloit sent an email to the GLP’s Jon Entine attempting to defend her misrepresentations as their own mistake.

“Regarding the inaccuracies you reported in Dr. Shiva’s biography, they are entirely the fault of our staff and should, in no way, reflect any intent by Dr. Shiva to misrepresent herself,” wrote Josh Moore, Associate Director Office of International Education Beloit College—contradicting the fact, noted in the GLP and Forbes pieces, that “As we are a liberal arts institutions dedicated to fostering critical thinking and informed action in the world, we expect that, in addition to Dr. Shiva’s remarks throughout the week, critiques of her work will be a vital part of the discussion.”

Tribe carries Entine’s response, which notes that the article provided links to Shiva’s own website which misrepresents her credentials, and that Shiva herself has publicly and consistently misrepresented or condoned misrepresentations of her credentials in interviews and speeches:

Now that you are aware that her misrepresentations extend beyond her credentials to her actual campaigns, and considering your stated public commitment to genuine discourse and liberal education, please address specifically who Beloit plans to bring to campus during her visit to help your students engage in genuine “critical thinking”? What counterpoint speakers

and debates are being offered to the students? What scientists—hard scientists, not philosophers—will be brought in during this critical week of learning to provide your students with factual and contextualized information rather than ideological potboilers?

The GLP has yet to hear from Beloit College as to whether they will withdraw the invitation to Shiva because of her apparent prevarications or whether they will follow through on their commitment to present the science side of the modern agriculture story.**ead full original article:** [Beloit College botches Vandana Shiva invite, confuses fame with scholarship, moralising with logic, and emotion with responsibility](#)