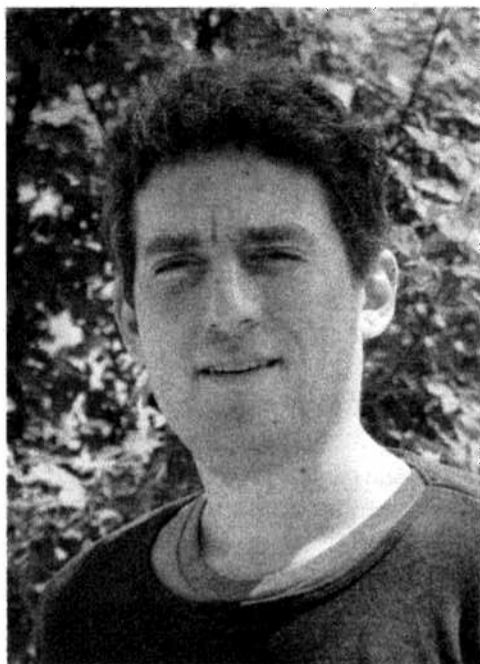


ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Peter Schwartzman

A scholar & activist visits the heart of the industrial ag Midwest



Over 20 people from Galesburg ventured to Western Illinois University Tuesday to hear one of the most thoughtful and well-written scholars on water and agriculture. Exhibiting an infectious exuberance for life and the power of humans to live in harmony with their surroundings, Dr. Vandana Shiva spoke to a gathering of over two hundred people in the Student Union at WIU. Her focus was on agriculture, its history and its future. She didn't mince words. She articulated a very strong position on the need for a complete abandonment of modern industrial agriculture, the type that we see surrounding us here in Western Illinois. Her arguments were thought-provoking and her warnings stern. However, she envisions a day when Big AG is no more and every day people once again grow food intentionally and peacefully.

An author of many famous books and articles (the book titles include: *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution and Profit*; *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply*; *Soil Not Oil*; *Earth Democracy*; *The Violence of the Green Revolution*), Shiva has become a household name across the world. Holding a PhD in physics and having extensive international experience in the environmental justice arena, she is a scholar that demands respect for her scientific acumen as well as her ability to translate that knowledge into practical and humane solutions. Shiva asserts that the world currently needs to undergo an agricultural revolution in order to stem the tide of the violent assault that modern industrial agriculture and, in particular, the major agricultural corporations, are making on the land and its people. She blames this industry for many things, including:

- the massive suicide of farmers (~200,000) in India when large corporations have forced people off their lands after having manipulated them to accept new "advanced" farming techniques—ones heavily dependent on artificial fertilizer, pesticides, and genetically modified seeds;

- the resulting infanticide of millions of girls whose labor has become redundant due to the introduction of these technologies;

- the patenting (and subsequent profiteering and monopolization) of seeds produced by centuries of biological selection by rural farmers in the Global South (an act referred to as biopiracy);

- the reduction of our global food crops to basically eight varieties, when the number was in the thousands not to long ago—greatly reducing the diversity of the planet while promulgating large monocultures worldwide;

- the great expansion of water needs because industrially treated crops destroy soils and make them unable to regulate water levels;

- the flooding of "cheap" (highly subsidized) food on developing nations which forces farmers to leave the land (and their self-sufficient lifestyles) and become dependent on foreign aid.

This is just a short list of all the problems she sees with our current form of agriculture. Additionally, she states that the idea (which is promoted by our media and Big Ag) that we need these "advanced" forms of technology in order to feed the people of the world is patently false. She points out that major international studies have confirmed that non-GMO seeds grown in small diverse, polycultural farms is the most productive form of agriculture and the least damaging to the land. These are shocking claims but ones that are largely supported by a series of documentaries that have been released recently, including: *Food, Inc.*; *Fresh*; and, *The World According to Monsanto*, as well as several well-research books.

But for all the criticism that Shiva puts forth, she is a doer as well. Her accomplishments are too long to list here but she has sued large corporations and won (against huge odds) and she founded an organization to save seeds (see: www.navdanya.org). She continues the struggle and firmly believes (in response to a question I asked her) that we can contribute to the improvement of situation by: (1) buying local foods from farmers who grow with little or no synthetic chemicals; (2) growing our own food in this way; and, (3) demanding that our food and clothing comes from fields and factories where workers and other life forms are treated with dignity and respect. Won't this cost more money? Shiva responds, if you counted all the "hidden" money used to pay large industrial farmers today (so that they can continue to overproduce a few "special" crops) and all the health costs associated with our bad eating habits, we would understand how inexpensive local, healthy food really is. She is a firm believer that if we all pitch in, we can make change. That's something worth thinking about, at least three times a day.

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