

DeSmogBlog: Climate Activist Site Smears Freeman Dyson and Other Scientists



By Alex Berezow, PhD — March 23, 2020

The website's strategy is clear: Throw ad hominem attacks as early and as often as possible. Why? Because it works. And the people most eager to spread the lies are self-proclaimed skeptical scientists and journalists.



DeSmogBlog smears scientists like
Freeman Dyson

Scientists and science writers are urged to participate more in public debates. However, when we do, we often get libeled and slandered.

Previously, I [wrote](#) ^[1] about growing incivility at the University of Washington, where two instructors were ruthlessly cyberbullied and defamed because they dared to express opinions that were unpopular on campus.

For the thought crime of opposing a carbon tax, atmospheric sciences Professor Cliff Mass was called a “blatant misogynist,” a “scary, dangerous person,” and a racist. For the crime of writing an essay about why women aren’t as attracted to computer coding as men, lecturer Stuart Reges was called an “obnoxious mole” who should be whacked. Students tried to get both fired.

These aren't one-off events. If you're a scientist, the internet is an extremely dangerous place. Indeed, there are entire websites dedicated to defaming scientists and spreading disinformation,

even on such crucial issues as public health and COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus.

DeSmogBlog Smears Scientists Like Freeman Dyson

One of these sites, called DeSmogBlog, is operated by Executive Director Brendan DeMelle and Managing Editor Ashley Braun. The website's stated aim is "clearing the PR pollution that clouds climate science." In reality, it's little more than a vehicle to assassinate the characters of any scientist that they dislike.



Skeptical Science

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On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that the outbreak of novel coronavirus 2019, which causes the disease COVID-19, was officially a “public health emergency of international concern.” At the time, there were cases confirmed in 19 countries and deaths in China had reached 170.

The very next day, the American Council on Science and Health (ACSH) published an article titled, “Coronavirus in the U.S.: How Bad Will It Be?”

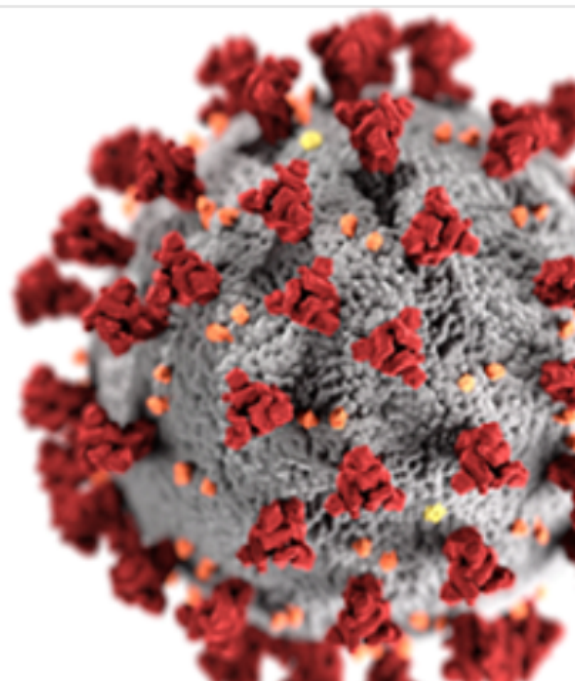
“Is coronavirus worse than the flu?” it began. “No, not even close.”

“It already has spread from person-to-person in the U.S., but it probably won't go far,” ACSH added. “And the American healthcare system is excellent at dealing with this sort of problem.”

ACSH is one of several organizations promoting climate science denial that are now spreading misinformation on the coronavirus, with potentially deadly consequences.

- Sharon Kelly, DeSmog, Mar 16, 2020

<https://www.desmogblog.com/.../climate-science-deniers-downpl...>



The site [recently targeted me](#) [2], perversely twisting my two months' worth of articles on COVID-19 out of context to accuse me of “downplaying” threat and “spreading misinformation on the coronavirus, with potentially deadly consequences.” It also called me a climate science “denier” –

though I support nuclear power as a solution to climate change – and implied I was a racist.

These lies went viral on social media and were subsequently parroted by other outlets, such as Skeptical Science, which is operated by George Mason University Professor John Cook. (See image on right. I contacted Dr. Cook, explained its gross inaccuracy, and asked him to remove it. I was ignored. Such is the state of the "skepticism" movement.)

But I'm hardly the only scientist that DeSmogBlog has ruthlessly smeared. Nobody is safe. For instance, the website went after the late Dr. Freeman Dyson, the widely beloved "Renaissance man" whose expertise included just about everything from mathematics and quantum physics to astronomy and nuclear engineering. He probably should have won a Nobel Prize for some of his work.

How could such a magnificent figure draw the wrath of DeSmogBlog? Though Dyson accepted the reality of [man-caused global warming](#) [3], he thought climate models were inaccurate and he [did not believe climate change constituted an emergency](#) [4]. That was enough for DeSmogBlog to hang the moniker of "denier" [5] around his neck – a label typically reserved for people who deny the Holocaust.

The site has also gone after Dr. Roger Pielke, Jr, a professor of environmental studies and science policy at the University of Colorado. Dr. Pielke is perhaps best known for his evidence showing that [climate change doesn't make hurricanes more dangerous](#) [6]. For heresies such as this, DeSmogBlog says he is "playing footsie with denialists and right-wing ideologues."

The list goes on and on. DeSmogBlog has "rap sheets" on several high-profile academics, including psychology professor Jordan Peterson and atmospheric sciences emeritus professor Judith Curry. What they all have in common is that they have an opinion – climate change-related or otherwise – that upset the sensibilities of the people who operate DeSmogBlog. Therefore, they must be shamed and their reputations destroyed. Truth, incidentally, is usually destroyed in the process.

The website's strategy is clear: Throw ad hominem attacks as early and as often as possible. Why? Because it works. And the people most eager to spread the lies are "skeptical scientists."

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Links

- [1] <https://www.bizjournals.com/seattle/news/2019/01/17/at-uw-hostility-to-dissent-is-spreading-silence.html>
- [2] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2020/03/17/desmogblog-intercept-spread-lies-about-acsh-covid-19-14641>
- [3] <https://www.edge.org/conversation/heretical-thoughts-about-science-and-society>
- [4] <https://www.nationalreview.com/2020/03/freeman-dyson-humanist-and-climate-change-heretic/>
- [5] <https://www.desmogblog.com/freeman-dyson>
- [6] <https://www.forbes.com/sites/rogerpielke/2019/11/15/no-hurricanes-are-not-bigger-stronger-and-more-dangerous/#58bb50f64d9e>