

# The Brutality of the DEI Brainwash

by Louis Galarowicz

*Brutal Minds: The Dark World of Left-Wing Brainwashing in Our Universities*, Stanley K. Ridgley, Humanix Books, 2023, pp. 290, \$17.00 hardcover.

In *Brutal Minds: The Dark World of Left-Wing Brainwashing in Our Universities*, Stanley K. Ridgley, a Clinical Full Professor of Management at Drexel University's LeBow College of Business, calls out the brainwashing techniques of education bureaucrats.

A Cold-War era Military Intelligence Officer, Ridgley's critique of DEI begins with a quote from Vaclav Havel: "It is a world of appearances trying to pass for reality." Ridley characterizes the anti-racist or DEI worldview as adherence to a totalizing idea, which is ultimately an insidious oversimplification of the world. DEI's totalizing idea—the endless struggle between racial oppressors and racially oppressed—is an update of older Marxists fixations on class struggle.

Sean McMeekin, in his recent book, asserts that communism, viewing the world in terms of external forces, gains power through the application of force. Ridgley substantiates this claim, expos-

ing the methods of thought reform employed by modern DEI administrators to ingrain racialism into the college-educated class.

The methods on which Ridgley expounds, per the title, amount to a classical brainwash program. Citing Robert Jay Lifton's 1961 *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of Brainwashing in China*, notes there are several key features to all thought-reform programs: milieu control, mystical manipulation, demand for purity, cult of confession, sacred science, loading the language, doctrine over person, and dispensing of existence. The modern DEI movement, as apparent in the extracurricular programming run by college offices of student life, engage in all elements of this program. Ridgley sees this as no accident, as modern DEI is familiar and approves of two classical sources of brainwash.

The first source is belief transformation experiments first conducted by

American psychologists in the 1930s, the most influential being Kurt Lewin's "Change Model." Initially developed to treat addiction, the change model uses a mixture of lecture and small-group discussion to unfreeze, change, and refreeze beliefs and the identities of participants. Postwar the model was adopted by cults and new religious movements to ensnare and keep converts.

The second source, is Maoist *szu-hsiang kai-tao* or "ideological remolding," pioneered by the Red Guard during the cultural revolution for the reform of the intellectuals. "Impressed" and "influenced" by Mao's reeducation efforts, Paulo Freire, today the most cited author in education studies, passes on thought reform or "conscience raising" as education to graduate students of education.

In education schools, idealistic, altruistic, but often mediocre students are armed with doctrine and tools for brainwashing. Receiving cursory training in psychological training and counseling during education school, M.Eds and Ed.Ds advance into student affairs offices, where they conceive of themselves as educators co-equal to the faculty through their management of all things outside of class.

Often billed as "co-curriculum," Student Affairs offices create and implement an ever-expanding regimen of training, preceptorials, small-group activities, messaging campaigns, etc. to "teach" students. The programs entail "pro-social" behavior modification, which, hijacked by activists committed

to "boldly transforming higher education," becomes thought reform regimens. Student Affairs staff run students through activities and exercises that advance "racial consciousness" on campus. Students are taught to question not only traditional values and the enlightenment project, but their pre-held identities and personal beliefs.

Such efforts often explicitly seek to "make students uncomfortable," or psychologically imbalance students. Ridgley claims such activities violate federal statute. He states: "to be clear, antiracist pedagogy constitutes the type of activity that the U.S. Office for Human Research Protections was set up in 2000 to monitor and prohibit—abusive biomedical and behavioral research. It employs specific methods of psychological behavior modification using thought-reform techniques on college students without their informed consent. At times, it was conducted with approval of the appropriate university-monitoring Institutional Review Board (IRB) that serves as the federal government agent to shield human subjects from abuse."

Throughout the book, quotations from Student Affairs types, particularly radicals from the two professional associations, NASPA and ACPA, cement Ridgley's claims of systemic violations of conscience, paralleling fraudulent religious movements. From industry conferences and journals, he identifies bizarre commonplaces, such as discussions about "countering resistance," shouted sloganeering ("the work of becoming antiracist is never done!"), and

narcissistic chest beating (“we are the most important people on campus!”).

Ridgley, to his credit, provides bold, far-reaching redresses, something many academic critics of social ills fail to do. Upfront, he urges all students, faculty, and anyone else subjected to racist thought reform to carefully record materials and experiences of DEI and other administered trainings. If psychological harm was induced, he recommends exhausting all administrative remedies, followed by public disclosure.

For university leaders, he recommends an audit of all administrative employees who interface with students for adherence to antiracism and critical theory pedagogy, followed by basic remedial civics lessons for practitioners, and a sequestering of racials into roles without student contact. He suggests universities ban “struggle session”-type exercises and other training which produce psychic distress in students, and take action against those who have engaged in brainwashing in the past, creating penalties for those who might attempt it in the future. He urges universities to publicly cut ties with the student affairs professional associations, as purveyors of egregious professional malpractice.

Further, Ridgley encourages audit of education schools for research standards, rigor, and degree of ideological capture, making their privilege of teaching higher education administration incumbent on the maintenance of academic standards on par with other professional schools. For ed schools that do not pass muster, their class could pass

to other schools; higher education administration courses going to business schools.

As Ridgley says of his own writing, “I am determined to write a book of the sort we used to see much more often—honest books that called out the fakes in our society. The charlatans, the snake oil salesmen, the cultists, the mystics, the romantics, and the paranoiacs. We have many on the campus.” Over the course of the book, one could try to pick apart Ridgley’s claims, accusing him of overstatement, for at times lacking precision. It would be wiser, however, to view this work for what it is: an expose, in the American muckraking tradition.

This book is not some mere academic exercise, but the heartfelt screed of a citizen deeply concerned for his profession, institution, and country. As he begins in the preface, “this is a story of one of the great subterfuges in American history.”

The book makes this case with a refreshing boldness and candor, a rarity among the tepid criticisms of academics against DEI. One can hope this book receives greater attention, especially from lawyers and government regulators, who might heed its claim that DEI training violates pre-existing laws against psychological experimentation. Ending such abuses would be a great victory for freedom of conscience, and a severe blow to our would-be brain washers.

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