

A Devastating Exposé of America's Colleges

By George Leef, 2 June 2023

A new book examines ideological infiltration by brainwashing radicals.

It has become so generally known that the Left has infiltrated our colleges and universities that people seldom bother to produce the *evidence* of it. Without evidence, many who would like to see a return to depoliticized campuses tend to forget how bad things have become. We need a loud alarm bell to arouse us.

Professor Stanley K. Ridgley has written just the book we need: [*Brutal Minds: The Dark World of Left-Wing Brainwashing in Our Universities*](#). In it, Ridgley, who teaches at Drexel University, blows the whistle on the ugly phenomenon of using college to turn students into zealots who despise America. In the book, we learn about the organizations that are behind this covert operation and the tactics they use. If you are inclined to think that the Left's control over our educational institutions is regrettable but not a matter of great concern, *Brutal Minds* is essential reading.

Here's how Ridgley describes his book: "It's a tale of how one of history's great institutions—the American university—is undergoing an infiltration by an army of mediocrities whose goal is to destroy it as an institution of knowledge creation and replace it with an authoritarian organ of ideology and propaganda."

The American university is undergoing an infiltration by an army of mediocrities.

The word "mediocrities" is carefully chosen. Ridgley shows that the faculty and administrators who are so adamant about imposing their utopian vision of "transformative education" are overwhelmingly the products of our schools of education. Ed schools, long known for their weak students, low standards, and susceptibility to academic fads, have in the last few decades been taken over by a cadre of Marxists who see only bad in America. Worse yet, they have built a pipeline that sends their graduates into faculty and administrative positions in our educational institutions.

Professor Sherry Watt of the University of Iowa is a good example of those academicians. She propounds her Privileged Identity Exploration model, which, Ridgley writes, "prescribes a psychological attack on persons with 'privileged identities' in her classes." Why do that? Because, in her view, many American students have erroneous views about race that must be demolished before they can become "allies" in the fight for "equity."

Some of the brainwashers are found in once-respectable academic programs. Ridgley points to Katherine Thorsteinson, a then-doctoral candidate in Cornell's English department, as an example. In her writing course, she focused on the supposed evils of "white privilege," declaring that "discomfort and confusion can actually be important for the racial (un)learning

process, particularly for white students.” Students who need to learn how to write well are subjected to her obsession with race. A few, with enough “discomfort” thrown at them, might be won over to her views; none, probably, learn very much about good writing.

Most of the brainwashing, however, is not done in regular courses but, rather, in the ubiquitous “student affairs” offices. In years gone by, colleges had a few low-level employees to handle student life outside of academics, such as organizing a karaoke night. They still do such mundane tasks but during the last 30 years or so have decided to take on a new responsibility they call the “co-curriculum.” Ridgley explains, “The co-curriculum is the embodiment of the bureaucrats’ belief that they should be involved in all aspects of students’ lives outside the classroom.”

And they aren’t much interested in the old-fashioned extracurricular activities. They’re intent on using every bit of influence they have to get students to see things through a “social justice” lens. It’s because of this new preoccupation with teaching (as if student affairs bureaucrats were actual scholars) that we now find students having to participate in activities like the Privilege Walk and the Oppression Game.

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Incidentally, student affairs offices were never *given* this responsibility. They just declared it was theirs.

Most of the people hired into these positions have bright, shiny, education-school credentials, often master’s degrees or even doctorates. Earning those credentials, Ridgley makes clear, calls for little more than mouthing the right clichés about social problems. No true research is called for, and the standards are so flimsy that even the weakest student gets his or her degree. One student, for example, wrote about the problem of white privilege in comic books. This kind of *faux* education appeals to people who “see a route to professional advancement with only a minimum of actual expertise demanded.”

Once the eager educator-wannabees obtain their campus jobs, there are two organizations ready to help them maximize their impact with students: the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). Both organizations are controlled by “progressives” who advocate using student affairs offices to promote their ideology.

Here, for example, is an eye-opening statement that Ridgley drew from a NASPA handbook:

Student affairs provide the theoretical foundation and practical strategies to effectively foster the development of social justice allies, specifically addressing pedagogical issues relating to

negotiating sexual orientation, gender, disability and race. We outline critical pedagogical strategies for meeting community resistance in a manner that increases potential for enlisting them in the battle for social justice and equity.

ACPA is just as toxic. Ridgley points to its 2019 document entitled “A Bold Vision Forward: A Framework for the Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization.” Pure leftist ideology.

ACPA and NASPA sponsor conferences and workshops and publish what Ridgley calls “cargo cult” journals, consisting of tendentious articles with a veneer of academic authenticity achieved by citing similar works published by like-minded writers. Here’s a sample of such scholarship:

A critical cultural perspective helps student affairs practitioners understand the power of culture and, in so doing, enables them to dismantle oppressive cultural conditions.

The student affairs agenda is usually hidden behind innocuous phrases like “learning about race,” but there’s no mistaking the cultural Marxism that “practitioners” are expected to push.

Sometimes, the brainwashers overplay their hands and get called out. That is what happened at the University of Delaware. In January 2007, two student affairs staffers unveiled their Curricular Model (CM), which was meant to augment the actual coursework of students with additional learning the staffers regarded as essential. To their consternation, however, details about their project got out and ignited a protest.

Ridgley writes the following about this controversy:

It was exposed as a crude thought-reform effort of psychological coercion aimed at undergraduates. It turns out that almost 200 trainers at Delaware had been indoctrinated in a “Diversity Facilitation Training” session directed by Shaktri Butler, whose material is a mash-up of discredited pseudoscience, prejudice, and racist Newspeak.

Delaware’s CM included mandatory dorm-based programs where white students were browbeaten with accusations until they confessed their undeserved privilege in society.

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The opposition was severe enough that the university’s president had to shut the program down, meekly saying that it went too far. But that was just a slight setback for the student affairs radicals, who learned to operate more covertly. Their programs are now more widespread and more circumspect.

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Ridgley concludes with helpful pointers to students and their families so they can recognize what’s facing them on campus. He argues that public officials need to pay attention to the subversion of true education in their schools and stop funding it.

Brutal Minds should make you angry at the way our educational “leaders” have permitted colleges and universities to be infiltrated by fake academics pushing poisonous beliefs on gullible students.

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