

labor for the corporations, for they can be looked upon as saviors of the masses since these corporations provide jobs and income, a situation existing in Taiwan and South Africa. In this way, the corporations do not directly repress but benefit from the repression perpetrated by others.

Forbes is basically pointing out that, given a chance, any in-group will persecute any out-group, especially when the reward is more wealth and power, or a continuation of current power. This observation suggests that fascism is part of and similar to all the other "isms" that plague the world today. These "isms" include racism (the oppression of groups supposedly on the basis of so-called "racial characteristics" and sexism (the oppression of females by males). These "isms," including colonialism, imperialism, and fascism, all relate to the systematic oppression of some groups by others, and their presence and practice is almost universal. One reason that Forbes finds "fascist tendencies" everywhere is due both to the wide spread of empires and to the overlap between the "isms," such that it is often hard to tell which particular "ism" brings about which particular kind of repression.

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### Critique\*

Forbes's analysis of fascism reveals that fascist tendencies are dormant seeds of exploitation that resurface and flourish under conditions of greed or when exploitive systems are threatened and opposed by those they oppress. Because fascism is more than politics and shares a symbiotic relationship with supportive and enduring cultural values, he is correct in directing our attention to those historical and cultural antecedents that give rise to omnifarious forms of fascism in this country and elsewhere. Cultural values and their symbiotic connectedness with political decisions are perhaps the single-most important feature of fascism considered in this timely and cogently discussed issue.

Using culture as a point for departure, some compelling issues can be raised with respect to the current rise and resurgence of fascist tendencies in our society. For instance, is there a relation between the traditional American values of laissez-faire capitalism, States Rights, the protestant ethic and racism, and current pronouncements for “supply-side economics,” the “new federalism,” volunteerism, and anti-social welfare initiatives to get America back on its feet? Do opinions emerging as salient represent certain segments, certain regions, and certain institutional sectors of society or is there growing unanimity around these values? Are we in a quiescent stage of fascism where a “superficially rational form of oligarchical government” is slowly disenfranchising the poor and minorities in this country?

The implications are profound, if not foretelling. For notwithstanding the fact that much of our constitutional form of democracy still survives and countervails full-blown fascism, it is obvious that these same constitutional guarantees were in place, yet usurped, when past *de jure* and *de facto* discrimination disenfranchised racial minorities in this country. The implications of some of the more obvious fascist-like tendencies are discussed below.

### **Emerging Trends with Historical Referents: Implications for Racial Minorities**

It cannot escape the attention of even minor scholars of history that the Compromise of 1877 which ended Reconstruction and ushered in Jim Crow segregation and fascist rule over southern black Americans bears a close resemblance to the current policy of “new federalism.” Like the former, “new federalism,” seeks to return power and governance to the states in exchange for political control of the presidency and one house of Congress to the Republican party. For example, what difference is there in deferring to the quest for “States Rights” in 1877 and promising “to give government back to the people” in 1980? Is there any difference in 1874 newspapers that carried slogans such as “emancipate the whites” and the growing charges of “reverse discrimination” in the news media of the 1970s and 1980s? Coupled with the president’s supportive war on federal regulations, it is clear that there is now a similar move to dismantle civil rights and affirmative action legislation that

benefit minorities just as there was over a century ago in this country.

Take, for example, the administration's claim that the consolidation of health and social service programs into block grants to states will reduce federal fiscal responsibility for social programs; however, because of budget cuts, the same initiative also shifts funding responsibility to state governments which means that accountability for federal funds is reduced along with the assurance that these funds will be used to support national goals. The National Association of Social Workers has warned that "turning the distribution of funds over to states multiplies by at least fifty the risk of discrimination and political influence" over which programs, which areas of the states and which population groups will benefit from federal funds. Accordingly, the conservative Republican governor from Vermont agrees that "some populations will be seen to be abandoned" by budget cuts that fall heavily on social programs.

In the guise of returning power to the states, key support has been sought for an economic program that benefits the wealthy at the expense of the poor. To obtain this support, the more affluent are offered tax cuts, new stock options, and other benefits by the Congress and the administration that are not available to less privileged groups.

Moreover, in a period of economic decline, one might ask how congressmen who earn \$60,662.50 per year can pass a bill to take restrictions off their earnings and reduce the burden of dual home ownership by making them tax-deductible? Does the average American support these actions?

Poll and election data show that the working and middle classes perceive themselves in fundamental competition with the poor over benefits from a stagnant economy. This perception permitted Republicans to siphon off significant votes in the last election. The dynamics of fascist tendencies were at work in this process: Did not the powers of media persuade Mr. and Mrs. Average American that the exorbitant waste in tax revenues was due to "welfare fraud" and "welfare chiselers" who could work but would not work as long as they could live at the expense of hardworking taxpayers? Is there not support from right-wing conservative groups who abhor "liberal" social programs and whose

opposition has clear racial implications? Even right-wing academicians have been involved in this public propaganda educational process. For example, the whole notion that “liberal” social programs do not work is partly tied to the biological racist notions of academicians such as Arthur Jensen and William Shockley who for over a decade have tried to promote a pseudo-scientific argument that IQ heritability is racially linked and that the lower achievement test scores of blacks are due to their inferior intelligence. Shockley, in particular, has captured a wide media audience by appearing frequently on national television and espousing this view. However, in addition to his “theory,” Shockley has proposed a “voluntary sterilization bonus plan” which would save the unfortunates from a life of misery and *reduce their numbers on the welfare roll.*

Hegemony at home, furthermore, suggests hegemony abroad, i.e., the geopolitical concerns of the world are closely connected with domestic issues. Budget cuts that fall heavily on social programs but inflate defense spending are not overlooked by Europeans who view themselves as pawns caught between an ever expanding conflict between U.S. and Soviet power. Increasing American military strength is not viewed by Europeans as a defensive move to protect the integrity of democracy. Instead, an increasing number of Western Europeans “regard President Reagan as a bigger threat to world peace than President Breshnev.”

In examining reality and resolution, history tells us that the intentions of current policy non sequiturs are not only to reinstitute wealthy-class dominance and further disenfranchisement of powerless groups, but also to silence those whose ideas work against powerful commercial-class interests. Among those perceived as opposing these interests are social and behavioral scientists.

### **Implications for Social and Behavioral Science**

In the quest for conformity, those in power attempt to reduce ideological differences to countervail and contain those forces that allow for a more inclusive participation by a society and its people. For scholars in all disciplines, eradicating the competition of ideas has serious implications for producing and communicating essential information for

social and political egalitarianism. For instance, social and behavioral scientists are seen as the prime movers behind Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" policies that are said to have brought us to a calamitous point in our history. Current anti-intellectual forces in Washington no longer welcome their contributions as solutions to contemporary problems. Thus, there are severe budget cuts in federal funds for behavioral and social research which not only reduces support for research pointing to social change, but in many cases discontinuance of funding ignores the import of projects that are longitudinal in nature.

It is clear that the poor and racial minorities are not the sole targets of fascist tendencies but all groups that support egalitarian interests that are at variance with the interests of those in control. This issue is raised with the distinct conviction that growing intolerance for diversity is a momentous problem and its resolution will best be served by scholars who speak out with intellectual clarity against policies that disenfranchise all but those who support exclusionary cultural and corporate interests.

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\*The Original title for Dr. Brown's critique is "Forbes on Fascism: Current Implications."