The Impacts and Futures of Affirmative Action in the US and Brazil

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In the US, the future of affirmative action hangs on a Supreme Court decision expected by summer 2023, which could end affirmative action policies, as they have been implemented in the US. In Brazil, where more than half the population identifies as Black, more ambitious affirmative action policies have reserved half the seats in federal universities for low-income students and required the representation of Black and Indigenous students to match their share of the population in each state. These policies have also faced legal and political challenges. However, in 2012, Brazil’s Supreme Court ruled that class- and race-based quotas were constitutional, and the result of Brazil’s recent presidential election points to renewed government support for affirmative action policies. This symposium will examine comparatively the impacts and possible futures of affirmative action policies in the US and Brazil.