Will Jason Richwine's 2009 Retrograde Harvard Ph.D Dissertation, "IQ and Immigration," Cause Crimson Faces At Harvard University?

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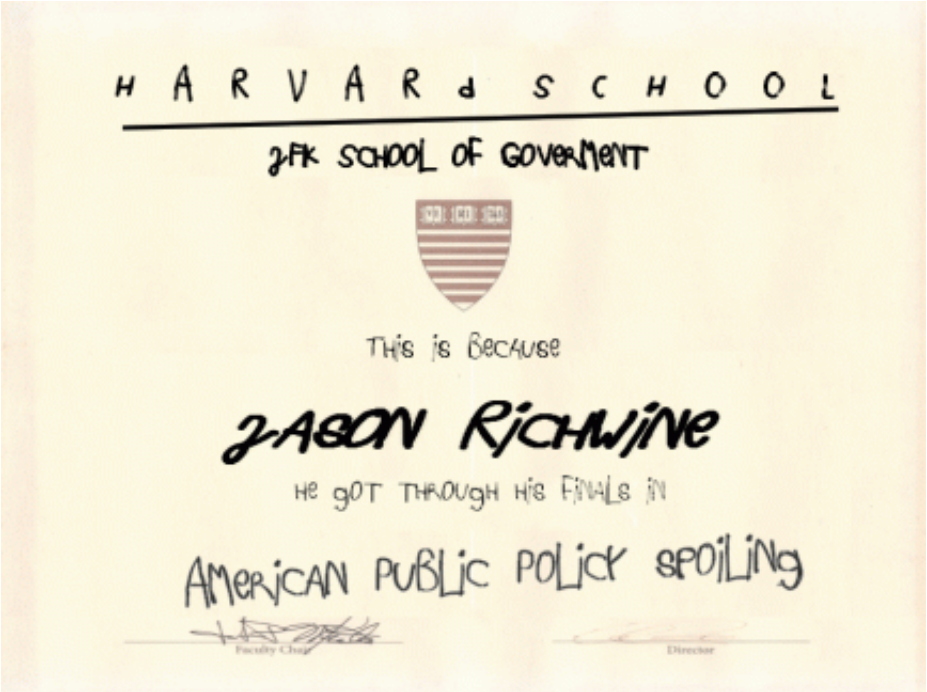

Michael Matthew Bloomer, May 9, 2013

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Thanks to Harvard Kennedy School graduate Josh Richwine, it's a bit harder to "Rah, Rah, Rah!"

these last few days . . . [Click image for larger clearer version][/caption]

Ten Thousand Men of Harvard want victory today
For they know that o'er old Eli
Fair Harvard holds sway.
So then we'll conquer all old Eli's men,
And when the game ends we'll sing again:
Ten thousand men of Harvard gained vict'ry today.

"Ten Thousand Men of Harvard" Harvard's fight song

Enter Jason Richwine, a reputed Harvard-trained Ph. D, now experiencing his 15 minutes of infamy. Surely, as fervently as a New England Congregationalist might, folks associated with Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) hope Richwine's notoriety quickly fades. You see, his debut on the national stage via the right-wing nut factory The Heritage Foundation will likely result in a nasty bit of paper shuffling and Committees of Excuse *Us* at the Big Crimson. Why? Well, for starters, Mr. Richwine is a racist. And a rather stupid racist, which is a stretch. Moreover, he's considered smart by the same people who consider Newt Gingrich an intellectual. People like Heritage Foundation brainiacs, and apparently HKS, which awarded him his doctorate in Public Policy in 2009.

Richwine, now (still) a Heritage Senior Policy Analyst, Empirical Studies, was co-author (with Robert Rector) of The Heritage Foundation's just released immigration screed, *The Fiscal Cost of Unlawful Immigrants and Amnesty to the U.S. Taxpayer (* if you care to read it). It delivered all the usual Heritage Foundation humbug and right-wing hyperbole, and then some. "Then some" being Mr. Richwine's Harvard Ph. D dissertation, *IQ and Immigration (*if you care to read it*).*

I've read the document, and here's a very fair representation of his work from the Introduction, followed by his overall conclusions.

> [Excerpt, Introduction, pg. 3] The major finding here is that the average IQ of immigrants is substantially lower than that of the native population, and the difference does not disappear by the second or third generation. The result is a lack of socioeconomic assimilation, and an increase in undesirable outcomes such as underclass behavior and loss of social trust. The upside is that calling attention to this problem may help focus policy of attracting a different kind of immigrant - the poor with great potential.

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"Sorry, I et my lead pencils.' [Click image for a larger and clearer version.][/caption][Excerpt, Conclusions, pg. 134] As the previous chapters have discussed, today's immigrants are not as intelligent on average as white natives. The IQ difference between the two is large enough to have substantial negative effects on the economy and on American society. The deficit cannot be dismissed as meaningless or transient. It is transferred across generations - whether via genes, environment, or both - in a manner that we do not yet know how to prevent. Although this is a depressing conclusion, it does not help us focus on a new opportunity. On trying to reverse the cognitive decline of immigrants, we could begin to seek out underprivileged people who have the raw mental ability to achieve personal success, while still helping ourselves at the same time.

[Worth noting, Immigration and IQ, Theoretical Difficulties, pg. 130] Visceral opposition to IQ selection can sometimes generate sensationalistic claims - for example, that this is an attempt to revive social Darwinism, eugenics, racism, etc. Nothing of that sort is true. Group differences in intelligence do exist, but, as I emphasized throughout the text, that does not mean that any individual should ever be judged on the basis of group membership. An IQ selection system could utilize individual intelligence test scores without any resort to generalizations.

Unfortunately for the final excerpt above, his dissertation is a case study in "social Darwinism, eugenics, and racism."

And, oh yes, his work did generate "visceral opposition." Katy bar the door, did it ever. Here's how *Atlantic* senior editor Garance Franke-Ruta described him yesterday in Jason Richwine's Racial Theories Are Nothing New:

> The co-author of the Heritage Foundation's big report arguing against "amnesty" for undocumented immigrants didn't just write his 2009 Harvard Ph. D. dissertation on IQ and immigration policy, arguing that "No one knows whether Hispanics will ever reach IQ parity with whites, but the prediction that new Hispanic immigrants will have low-IQ children and grandchildren is difficult to argue against." He didn't just expound these theories in a panel in 2008, saying, "I do not believe that race is insurmountable, certainly not, but it definitely is a larger barrier today than it was for immigrants in the past simply because they are not from Europe." And he didn't just write two articles in 2010 for a website Yahoo's Chris Moody described as "founded by Richard Spencer, a self-described 'nationalist' who writes frequently about race and against 'the abstract notion of human equality.'"
>
> Back in 2009 when he was a research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, Jason Richwine also penned a book review in *The American Conservative* taking issue with Richard E. Nisbett's book *Intelligence and How to Get It*. As it turns out, Richwine's belief that intelligence is determined by biology and genes, which create culture and history rather than the other way around, is something he's been peddling around conservative institutions in Washington, D.C., for years. [for the complete *cris de couer*]

OUCH!

Never Heard Of The Guy! The Heritage Foundation quickly tried to distance itself, measurable in light years, from Mr. Richwine:

> [Excerpt] Dr. Richwine did not shape the methodology or the policy recommendations in the Heritage paper; he provided quantitative support to lead author Robert Rector. The dissertation was written while Dr. Richwine was a student at Harvard, supervised and approved by a committee of respected scholars.
>
> The Harvard paper is not a work product of The Heritage Foundation. Its findings do not reflect the positions of The Heritage Foundation or the conclusions of our study on the cost of amnesty to U.S. taxpayers, as race and ethnicity are not part of Heritage immigration policy recommendations. [for the full enchilada]

American Enterprise Institute (AEI), another right-wing nut factory as well-known as Heritage, also denied any particular knowledge of

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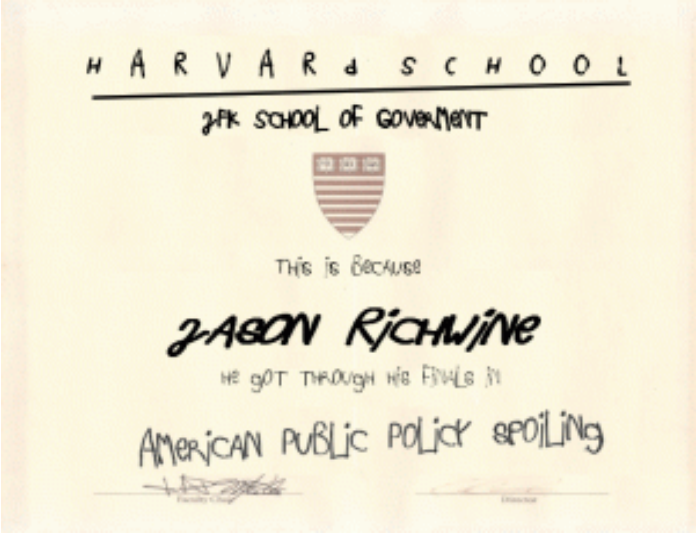

It's not homemade, it's home-inspired! [Click image for larger and clearer version.][/caption]Mr. Richwine's dissertation topic during his 2008-2009 residency there through an AEI National Research Initiative. Pema Levy of TPMLivewire reported:

> When pressed on the fact that AEI must have known the subject of the dissertation when they offered Richwine his fellowship, the official responded in an email:
>
> He came recommended by an elite institution and proposed to study immigration for his HKS dissertation. He received a 2 year non-renewable fellowship. After completing the fellowship and receiving his PhD, he began his public policy career in DC.
>
> The official then added that the fellowship had actually lasted a year and a half.

These unsurprising denials approach surreal because, if truth be told, Richwine *does indeed* represent their interests and viewpoints. We already know the story at Heritage, but at AEI, a "Jason Richwine" search yields dozens of references to his work. There, as a co-author with AEI's Andrew G. Biggs, Richwine's target was those "overpaid & over-unionized public employees." As recently as November and December 2012, Richwine and Biggs tossed off these gems: The underworked public employee, and The truth about federal salary numbers. So, is Richwine wondering,

"Et tu incepto American Instituti?"

No Self-Satisfied Giggling Yale, You May Be Next. . .

"Harvard makes mistakes too, you know. Kissinger taught there."
Alvy Singer (Woody Allen), to a couple on the street
Annie Hall, screenplay by Woody Allen and Marshall Brickman (1977)

As for Über Harvard and its progeny the Harvard Kennedy School, as of this writing there's been not a peep. But a public outcry quickly began, for example, writing in Huffington Post, J. Mijin Cha, a Senior Policy Analyst at D?mos asks This Passes for a Harvard Dissertation?, and answers with a solid *NO!!*

> Consider Harvard's standard for public policy Ph. D dissertations:
>
> The dissertation is expected to represent a significant contribution to knowledge in a policy area, or to yield insight aimed more broadly at improving the functioning of government. Most dissertations involve the application of analytic techniques to the solution of a substantive problem.
>
> . . .
>
> Richwine's dissertation, which was submitted to the Department of Public Policy, aims to improve immigration policy by employing discriminatory standards that have no intellectual merit. What does this contribute to the academy? Moreover, what happens if you replace "Hispanics" with "Italians" or "European Jews" in the sentence below? Would his dissertation still have been written?
>
> Richwine's work should have never been approved not because it is politically incorrect, but because it is academically weak and falls far short of what should be considered doctoral level work.

At Daily Kos, a diarist named Empty Vessel, was a welcome blunt instrument:

> I can live with dumb people getting PhDs for dumb things. It's always happened and it always will. But a PhD for what is basically a low-budget version of 19th and early 20th century eugenics? No, that is too fucking far. That is beyond what is acceptable.

Nonetheless, as Alvy Singer said some 35 years ago, "Harvard makes mistakes." Here's a selection drawn from the graduate level:

- Jeffrey Keith "Jeff" Skilling (MBA)
- Paul Bremer (MBA), first head of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad
- Bill O'Reilly (MPP)
- George W. Bush (MBA)
- Mitt Romney (MBA)

The above, of course, are my very own aggressively progressive choices, and, in fact, none are strictly comparable to Josh Richwine, an academic, although an anemic one. Harvard survived George W. Bush and Bill-O; they'll survive Josh Richwine as well.

Nonetheless, would it not be interesting to hear what Harvard has to say about it all? My guess? Get ready for the sound of silence. Who knows, perhaps Yale will dare to inquire - *no offense intended* - . . . No. That's unthinkable. *Isn't* it?

Hard luck for poor Eli,
Tough on the blue!
Now, all together,
Smash them and break them through.
'Gainst the line of Crimson,
They can't prevail.

Three cheers for Harvard!
And down with yale!
Rah! Rah! Rah!
Down with yale!

"Our Director"
F. E. Bigelow

Amen!

Anyway, why should *I* care? I graduated from Western Illinois University, the Yale of middle western Illinois . . .