To the HKS community,

We are deeply concerned with the academic integrity and the reputation of Harvard Kennedy School and the University as a whole. It has been recently made public by the Washington Post and the New York Times that in 2009 the Kennedy School accepted a dissertation written by Jason Richwine which claims that "Immigrants living in the US today do not have the same level of cognitive ability as natives" (Richwine Dissertation, 26). Richwine goes on to state that "the prediction that new Hispanic immigrants will have low-IQ children and grandchildren is difficult to argue against" (Richwine Dissertation, 66) and argues for an immigration policy based on IQ. Central to his claim is the idea that certain groups are genetically predisposed to be more intelligent than others. In his troubling worldview Asians are generally at the top, with whites in the middle, Hispanics follow, and African Americans at the bottom (Richwine Dissetation, 74). To justify his assertions he cites largely discredited sources such as J. Philippe Rushton whose work enshrines the idea that there are genetically-rooted differences in cognitive ability between racial groups.

We condemn in unequivocal terms these racist claims as unfit for Harvard Kennedy School and Harvard University as a whole. Granting permission for such a dissertation to be published debases all of our degrees and hurts the University's reputation.

Let us be clear that we believe in academic freedom as it is crucial to the functioning of a university. However, we also believe that putting forth claims of racial superiority based on inherent genetic advantage to be on par with those who have used pseudo-science throughout history to justify state-based hate. Richwine continues this troubling trend by using such flawed research to influence the national debate on comprehensive immigration reform. In any healthy democracy there is always disagreement, but such plain racism cannot and must not be tolerated.
Even if such claims had merit, the Kennedy School cannot ethically stand by this dissertation whose end result can only be furthering discrimination under the guise of academic discourse.

Over 23 student groups have come together to formulate a clear and unified response to these disturbing claims and to demand a public response from HKS. If you support this cause and are interested in receiving updates please sign up here to keep informed on our evolving response.

Regards,

HKS Latino Caucus
Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy
Argentina Caucus
Brazilian Caucus

HKS Latin American Policy Journal
Colombian Society
HKS Latin American Caucus
Harvard Kennedy School Student Government President Rohit Malhotra
Israel Caucus
Palestine Caucus
LGBTQ Caucus
LGBTQ Policy Journal
Progressive Caucus
The Africa Caucus
Jewish Caucus
The Black Student Union at the Harvard Kennedy School
Women and Gender Caucus
Women's Policy Journal
The South Asia Caucus
The Arab Caucus
The Asian Pacific American Caucus
Asian American Policy Review Journal
Middle East Journal
Democratic Caucus