

EVAN DACOSTA:

Hi, Dr. Richwine, this is Evan.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Hi, Evan.

EVAN DACOSTA:

So thanks for taking our call here. We're doing this –

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

How is my voice? Is it clear? I've had trouble with this phone before.

EVAN DACOSTA:

No, no, I can hear you perfectly.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Oh, good. Okay, good.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Yeah, so thanks for doing this. This is a podcast here that's been sponsored by the student government. And our first episode here is about DACA and immigration, so I'm really glad that we could get you on the line here.

So I guess we'll just jump right into it, if you're ready?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Sure.

EVAN DACOSTA:

So can you just run us through your views on DACA? I mean we'll get into temporary protection status later, but just for now your views on DACA.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Sure. I'm not a big fan of DACA, but I do appreciate you having me on your program, though, because I think that a lot of times probably your audience and a lot of other people don't get to hear both sides of it. It's amazing how the media are able to frame issues in ways that are favorable to their own views. You would think that I would have been somewhat

jaded by now after doing this for a while. But nevertheless, I still continue to be amazed at how the picture that the media portrays of the DACA issue is so different from the reality.

And so I guess what I could start by just talking about some misconceptions regarding the DACA issue. And the first thing that we have to note is that DACA is not the same thing as Dreamer. So DACA is a group of people who are about seven hundred thousand or so people who receive this deferred action during the Obama administration.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Now the Dreamers are a much larger group of people, maybe two to three million, who would be part of an amnesty deal through what was called the DREAM Act, originally. This was very different groups of people.

And so when President Trump kind of announced that he would be phasing out the DACA Program, he had said that he wanted some kind of DACA fix. And then that's why we're having this debate now.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Quickly what happened was we kind of switched from DACA to Dreamer. It was kind of a bait and switch in a sense. So a lot of the discussions on Capitol Hill are suddenly about Dreamers, which is a much larger group of people. So that's one thing to keep in mind.

The other thing to keep in mind is that the population of DACA beneficiaries are really quite a heterogenous group. And when we hear them described as a people brought to the US against their will as young children, they're unfamiliar with their birth country, they're completely fluent in English, they're completely law-abiding, they're going to college, these things, of course, are true for some DACA beneficiaries, but certainly not all. It's important to understand that this is a much larger group than necessarily would be considered sympathetic in the public mind.

Just to start with the idea of having been brought to the US as a young child, under DACA young, illegal immigrants could cross on their own. They could cross the border at the age of 15 and if they live in the US for five years then they could have received DACA at the age of 20. So there are certainly a significant number of DACA beneficiaries who did indeed, you know quite knowingly, and by their own volition, violate US immigration laws.

Furthermore, I mean the idea that they're unfamiliar with their birth countries is probably pretty unusual for the typical DACA beneficiary. During the five years of the waiting period

before they could get DACA they're actually allowed to visit their birth country. They can make three trips without this qualification.

And furthermore, when you think about the fact that something like 80 to 90 percent of DACA beneficiaries are Hispanic, mostly from Mexico, certainly there is a very active and substantial Mexican-American cultural (*inaudible* * 0:04:45.5) in the southwestern part of the United States. The idea that they would be unfamiliar with Spanish or not at all familiar with Mexican culture in general would be, I think, a stretch.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Yeah.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

It is not like deporting me to China.

EVAN DACOSTA:

I mean I don't think it's so much that they're not familiar with Mexican culture and the language. I think it's more that they just have an established life here in the United States. I think that's what the talking point is.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

And for some, again, and for some this is certainly true. For others there probably is a connection to Mexico, certainly familial, which is one of the reasons why they're making brief trips back for weddings and such. But also culturally. And so, again, it's not that it would not be hardship to go back, certainly it would be for most of them, but the idea that this is, as I said, you know like deporting me to China suddenly. It's not quite the same thing.

But regarding language, again, it's often stated they're fluent in English. In fact, DACA beneficiaries are not required to speak English. There's nothing in the program or in the bill that requires them to speak English. In fact, the DACA application for, I've read it, actually has a space where the person filling out the application for DACA can note the interpreter's name, you know the English interpreter they use to help them fill out the application form.

I've looked at some data on English literacy skills. This is a big dataset that was put together back in 2012. And if you look at the group of people who took that test whose age and year of entry as immigrants roughly matches the DACA applicants, well, that dataset shows a quarter of all those people scored below basic in English literacy, which some people refer to as functionally illiterate. It's not that they don't speak any English; it's just that they don't have the English language skills to kind of function effectively on a daily basis.

So again, there are some DACA beneficiaries who are completely English fluent, just like you or me, but there are others who struggle with it and it's important to keep that in mind.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Again, completely law-abiding, again, not true. The rules say you can have up to two convictions. Not arrests, but convictions for certain misdemeanors, so you could have people who just plea down from a felony charge and they can remain eligible.

And lastly, attending college. Again, not true at all. You need not attend college.

EVAN DACOSTA:

That's actually – now, I'm actually gonna have to stop you there. I have some statistics here from the Cato Institute.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Okay.

EVAN DACOSTA:

That says 36 percent of DACA recipients older than the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree. Further, on top of that, another 32 percent are pursuing a bachelor's degree. So that's a total of 68 percent of DACA recipients either pursuing a degree or who have a degree. And roughly 30 percent of Americans, Native Americans – not Native Americans, excuse me, native-born Americans have a degree. So their rate of college education is significantly higher than the native population.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

You have 36 percent have a college degree?

EVAN DACOSTA:

Have a bachelor's degree, yeah.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

I question the dataset. What is the data that they're using?

EVAN DACOSTA:

I'll pull up the – it's from, I believe, the National Academy of Sciences. I'll pull it up here again.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

No, it's not from the National Academy of Sciences. There's nothing about DACA there.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Cato Institute, let's see. Sorry, I'm just gonna have to pull up the link again. I just had it written down here.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Okay.

EVAN DACOSTA:

All right. Where did it go? Shit. Sorry, excuse me. This is – I had this –

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Well, I'll tell you what, while you look for that I'll just – I'll continue with (*inaudible* * 0:08:44.9).

EVAN DACOSTA:

Yeah, yeah, please do. Sorry about this.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

So the point is the requirement to attend college is not there. And so you might say, well, the people who are attending college, yeah, we want them, you know they're highly-skilled. And so whatever the percentage is, we might say we want them. But the fact is that DACA does not apply to only college -- people with college degrees. In fact it applies to anyone who is involved in some sort of training, so you need not even have a high school diploma. You can just take – to sign up for a class, you don't even have to pass the class, you just have to sign up for it, and then you can get DACA.

So again, it's not like – my point is not that there aren't some people who would make very good Americans and such in this DACA population.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

But it's the fact that it's a broad brush that you're painting with here, which means that you're not getting necessarily the people you want to get from an immigration policy. And also that you're gonna be taking people in, rewarding people, essentially, free of legality, you know without a great justification.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right. So I did find this dataset here.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Okay, sure.

EVAN DACOSTA:

It's from a study done by Tom K Wong, an associate professor of political science at UC San Diego. And it was written for AmericanProgress.org, and that's what the Cato Institute cites.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Is this the one where he just gets a voluntary sample? He just goes out and says, are you – did you receive DACA and therefore answer my survey? Sort of the obvious problem with that, there's lots of DACA statistics going around out there and they are hard to pin down because we don't necessarily have data on people who are actually DACA recipients.

The Wong thing, I believe, is the one where it's just a convenient sample. It's whoever answers ends up being the people who –

EVAN DACOSTA:

Well, as with any survey, yeah.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Oh, no, not with any survey. I mean a good survey is one that it is a random subset of the population. And you can do that with something like the census or the current population survey. With his I think it's just whoever answers. It's not really any attempt to get a full explanation.

But anyway, that's actually somewhat beside the point because as I said, I'm only arguing at the fact that there's some kind of requirement for college. In fact, there is not. There's not even a requirement for a high school diploma. You just have to be involved with (*inaudible* * 0:11:11.6).

EVAN DACOSTA:

Well, I was on the DACA application website the other day and I was reading through the checklist of requirements. And it did say that you need to have a high school diploma or GED equivalent or have been honorably discharged from the military.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Or be involved in some sort of training, which you sign up for a class. Now you sign up for an English language class and then that counts.

EVAN DACOSTA:

I didn't – where did you see that? I'm on the website now and I'm reading through the – it says you must currently be in school, have graduated, or obtained an equivalent certificate of completely from high school, successfully obtained a general education development certificate, or must have been dishonorably discharged from the armed forces.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Well, I mean I'm sure that I'm correct about this. I can look through the website right now if you'd like, but I mean I've read through this quite thoroughly. Are you sure you're on –

EVAN DACOSTA:

I'm on the US-Immigration.com.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Okay.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Yeah, Prepare Your Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Application Online.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

All right, so do you want me to look through this now or should we continue with the interview?

EVAN DACOSTA:

I would like to know where – I mean I'd just like to know where your point is about being enrolled in a training course.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Okay, give me a second.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Okay.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Okay, if you go to www.uscis.gov and then /archive and then /frequently-asked-questions with hyphens between the words. Frequently-asked-questions.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Okay, I'll pull it up now.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Okay.

EVAN DACOSTA:

All right.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Okay. And so question 33, if you go down to that.

EVAN DACOSTA:

33. Okay.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Okay. Who is considered to be "currently in school" under the guidelines? Look at the second bullet point.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Education, literacy, or career training program that has a purpose of improving literacy, mathematics, or English or is designed to lead to placement in postsecondary education, job training, or employment and where you are working toward such placement.

So you do have to be working toward the employment placement then? So it's not that you're just in the training program. You have to have an end goal.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Okay, that could be anything, right?

EVAN DACOSTA:

Well, yeah, but it's not – it's not, though, you're just enrolling and then just hanging out with that. And to even apply you have to have graduated high school, according to the USCIS website that I was just on.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Well, the currently in school thing would seem to argue against that, wouldn't it?

EVAN DACOSTA:

Well, let's see, yeah, I mean I guess so. Have graduated or obtained a certificate. Yeah. I mean, well – yeah, I mean, have obtained a general – yeah, I guess that is a – I didn't realize that.

Going back to another point that you made earlier about immigrants coming in being well-aware of the fact that they're breaking the law and they're 14, 15 years old. I was on the FactCheck.org website that said the average age of first arrivals for DACA recipients is 6 ½ years old. So this – I'd be interested to see how many people came in at an older age. I mean it's obviously hard to find numbers, but –

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

As I like to say, the median is not the message.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Yeah.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

I mean it's always, again, speakers to my broader point about the fact this is a very heterogeneous group. So if the median is six – and I've seen that particular statistic. I'm not clear that's accurate, but if it is true, I mean nevertheless the question then remains, why is the cutoff 15? You know if the idea is we're only bringing people who were brought by their parents with no active decision on their own to come to the United States, why make it 15? That's my point, is that we have to be a lot more exacting in who we define as the most sympathetic.

EVAN DACOSTA:

So if you were to – well, here, I'll put it, if you were to have the ear of the president now during this whole discussion about DACA, what would you advise him for policy?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Ah, okay, so I'll give you a little bit of a long answer. But what I would start by saying is that I do not believe that DACA beneficiaries have a legal or a moral right to stay in the United States. I agree they're sympathetic, but I don't believe that that comes to the point of being a right to stay. And I'll explain why.

The fact is that although DACA beneficiaries, at least some part of them came without making the active decision, they're still in possession of something that does not belong to them, which is namely the ability to live in the United States legally. And so generally

speaking, you know even if someone acquires something through no fault of their own, if what they have has not been legally given to them, then you have to give it back. It's much like if someone robs a bank and then gives an innocent person the money. It's – well, you have to give the money back even though it wasn't your fault that you took it.

And so that to me is the main reason why there is no legal or moral right. It's that Americans themselves have the right to decide who comes to the country and who does not. And if someone breaks that law, someone tries to cease that ability themselves and then gives it to someone else as sort of a side benefit, that does not entitle the person of the side benefit to keep it.

But that aside, I do agree that this is a highly sympathetic group of people, in general, and that there should – and that we can have a compromise. You know we can have a situation where we allow people to stay if it comes with very significant attempts to mitigate the harm that comes from giving them amnesty.

And there's really two major harms that amnesty produces. One is that it encourages further legal immigration. And the other is that it allows for what has been called chain migration or in other words, allowing today's immigrants to decide who tomorrow's immigrants are by bringing not just their spouses and minor children, which everyone agrees should be allowed, but also brothers and sisters – adult brothers and sisters, adult sons and daughters, and parents which create these chains of immigration over time. And so you have to address both those things if you're gonna give any kind of amnesty.

And so I'd be open to an amnesty that said, okay, we're going to have Universal E-Verify, which is the government tool which allows employers to quickly determine whether or not their employees are legally eligible to work.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

If you had more border wall funding –

EVAN DACOSTA:

Would you advocate for an IQ test as part of the requirements?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Well, IQ test was part of my dissertation, of course. I don't think it has to be part of this particular compromise. But in general I was gonna say border enforcement and also reforming the chain migration system, meaning getting rid of those categories of adult sons and daughters, adult brothers and sisters, and parents and the like.

If you do that, I'd be open to the amnesty, I would. Unfortunately, the way the negotiations have gone on this has been really almost in the other direction. I mean we've had a situation where the media have described a certain bipartisan bill as a compromise. This is the Flake and Durbin bill.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

They described it as a compromise, but it's difficult to understand what exactly is being compromised here. In fact, the team includes no immigration restrictions. They just had a Politico story about how Chuck Schumer does not want – you know he said Tom Cotton and other people who actually want to limit immigration, they're not allowed to be on this panel.

And so what happened was they negotiated. I'm not sure how you negotiate when everyone agrees, but what they came up with was not at all a compromise. This bill they came up with goes well beyond DACA. It says not only will we have amnesty for DACA, we'll also have amnesty for the broader Dreamer population. And on top of that we'll also have amnesty for the parents of the Dreamers. We're not gonna give them citizenship. You know the Dreamers can get citizenship, but the parents, they can at least stay, right? In other words, you're rewarding parents, their own illegal activity, which, of course, is completely up to them. No one brought them here.

And then on top of that we're gonna have amnesty for the so-called TPS recipients, the temporary protected status.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Yeah.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

So amnesty for all of those groups, which could be about a quarter of the entire illegal immigrant population in the United States. And in exchange for that, which goes beyond anything that the Trump administration have proposed, the bill will pay for maybe like 10 percent of the wall, but make this minor change to chain migration involving adult sons and daughters. And they will reform but not eliminate the diversity lottery, which is one of the worst aspects of the immigration system.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Well, I have a question about your earlier point, sorry, about incentivizing legal immigration.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Sure, yeah.

EVAN DACOSTA:

So I think the stat that's often cited is that when President Obama announced that DACA was gonna happen, people say that illegal immigration surged in 2012. But there's a lot of immigration that points to the fact that this surge of immigration happened entirely before DACA, in the aftermath of kind of Civil Wars going on in Honduras and Guatemala and El Salvador.

So I was just – the evidence kind of – it says, here, this is from the Cato Institute as well.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Okay, so –

EVAN DACOSTA:

From October – sorry?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Okay, yeah, to address that point. I mean the specific timing of various ways, you know I can't necessarily speak to. I mean can I tie President Obama and the announcement of DACA to a specific wave of illegal immigration? I can't. I mean I don't think anyone can. We just don't have the data to be able to do it.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Yeah.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

But there's a more general point here that I think has to be made. And that is obviously, if you reward people for illegal behavior, obviously you're going to get more of it. I mean the Cato Institute, of all places, should know that. The Cato Institute has – opposes, for example, welfare payments on the grounds that if you give people payments for not working then you're gonna get more people not working. And for them that makes complete sense, but when it comes to immigration suddenly those kinds of basic point about what kind of behavior you encourage through government programs seems not to apply.

I mean just think about the last amnesty we had in 1986. It was the Reagan amnesty and it was a very large amnesty, about four million or so. People got amnesty from that. And that reduced the illegal immigrant population to something like two to three million at that time. And today, of course, it's something like eleven to twelve million.

And so I think it was fairly clear that we weren't very serious about immigration enforcement at the time and a lot of people got the sense that they could continue coming without really any fear of being deported. And then probably eventually there would be another amnesty

and of course those people who thought that were right in that it was only, I guess, maybe the second term of the Bush administration. And amnesty became another major issue that was being pushed by a lot of people.

And I think a good question to ask people who support another amnesty now is when is the next amnesty and the next amnesty after that? When should we schedule these things?

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

I mean the – in fact, if you remember the Schumer-Rubio amnesty bill from 2013 was meant to be – you know this is called comprehensive immigration reform. It was meant to really, if not end, at least put a major dent in the problem of immigration. And you know the CPO report says, well, you know we're still gonna have millions and millions of illegal immigrants ten years from now. And so – and that's after giving amnesty to almost everyone who was living in the United States.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Well, if the object is to avoid just giving amnesty five years later, giving amnesty, and so on and so on, shouldn't you make it easier for people to come legally? Shouldn't you increase legal immigration? Because people are gonna come either way. You know like the –

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Well, first of all, I disagree with that, the idea that immigration is inevitable. I think it's simply not true. There are ways of controlling immigration. Does that mean we can get the illegal population down to zero? No, no, that's probably not possible, but the idea that we just absolutely must live with illegal immigration or illegal immigration that he might propose I think is wrong.

I think if we add E-Verify, I think if we had better border security, I think that if we're willing to enforce the laws on the books already if we were to do more workplace raids, for example, we could easily cut the illegal population down.

EVAN DACOSTA:

So speaking of – well, yeah, yeah. Sorry, I completely just lost my train of thought.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Well, you had asked about just making them legal.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right, yeah. So there's a lot of talk now in Congress about trying to cut legal immigration as well. And I was just wondering what your thoughts on legal immigration are as well.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Yes, so that's a good point. So I agree that although illegal immigration presents certain unique problems including the threat to the rule of law, I do believe that immigration, in general, both legal and illegal, is a problem and that we could be very well served by reducing the numbers to something more along the line of five hundred thousand. Right now we take 1 to 1.1 million illegal immigrants per year and we're rapidly approaching a time when we have the largest percentage of foreign born, I guess, since probably the 1800's.

EVAN DACOSTA:

So just out of curiosity, why is it that you think that legal immigration is a problem as well?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Well, there are a variety of reasons. There's economic, political, social, cultural reasons, but I think the biggest reason is just the fact that right now American is a very divided place. It's very divided along ethnic lines, along cultural lines. And immigration feeds into that. It's when you try to put lots of people together who don't share a history, don't share a culture, and sometimes not even a language. It creates a lot of tension, a lot of conflict.

And we saw that 100 years ago with the great wave from the end of the 19th century and into the early 20th century. And what really helped a lot in terms of getting a certain amount of assimilation and getting us all feeling like we're Americans again was the traumatic immigration slowdown that happened in the 1920's with the 1924 Act. And from 1925 to 1965 immigration was quite low. Of course, there is some other historical factors there obviously involved as well, but America really was transformed from a melting pot where there wasn't melting, where there's lots of different sort of squabbling groups.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Not entirely identified as one people.

EVAN DACOSTA:

More of a fruit salad.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

I'm sorry?

EVAN DACOSTA:

More of a fruit salad than a melting pot.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Yes, right, right, whichever metaphor you want to use. And by the 1960's America really was a much more homogeneous place culturally. And so I believe –

EVAN DACOSTA:

Well, I mean it was white people and it was segregation was the –

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Well, yes. I mean so the white/black racial issue goes back, obviously, hundreds of years before that.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

But really an issue unto of itself. But when I was talking about immigration I was really talking about this sort of intra-white ethnic conflicts that were going on.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Mm-hmm. Sorry, and your earlier point about immigration dividing people.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Right.

EVAN DACOSTA:

I mean, obviously, everyone knows that America is incredibly divided right now. So can you just elaborate on that point?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Well, there's a lot of identity politics.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Yeah.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

And in fact much of American identity politics kind of dominates the landscape these days. And it could be anything. It could be sexual orientation and gender and religion and so forth. But one of the big ones is ethnic conflict. There's a lot of that. There's a lot of people voting and identifying on the basis of their own cultural group, their own language group, and as I said, their own ethnic group, and sort of the voting patterns really sort of bear this out.

EVAN DACOSTA:

So just to clarify, it seems kind of that you're saying immigration is dividing the ethnic homogeneity of most of the United States. So you just keep it kind of white is kind of what I'm understanding.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Well, no. I mean America is already not a white country; it's only about 60 percent white. So you know the idea that you're gonna reduce immigration and suddenly make American 90 percent white I think is not going to happen.

What I mean is you can have a certain cultural assimilation and you can make people think of themselves more as Americans. It's not easy. I mean it's not as if we're gonna end immigration tomorrow and everyone is going to be holding hands and singing Kumbaya.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

It's not that easy. But the idea that the more immigration we have, the more it fuels that problem. It fuels the sense of multiculturalism and sort of constant conflict that people have.

EVAN DACOSTA:

So it comes down to multiculturalism for you then?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

That's ultimately the main issue. I mean, as I said, with immigration there's all sorts of effects. I've written about the economic effects. I think that low skill immigration in particular is bad for low skill native workers because it essentially makes them superfluous.

And then politically it's obvious – in fact, Democrats have made this point explicit that they want to use immigration in a way to change the political landscape of the country. I don't like that either. So there's lots of problems, but I think what it ultimately comes down to is who are we as Americans, you know who are we as a people. You know is America going to

be a place with its own history and its own culture and its own sort of unique place in the world or is it just an economic zone? Is it just a place where –

EVAN DACOSTA:

Well, I mean I would have to argue that America has been a unique place in the world because of our immigration, I mean because we've been the shining city on the hill. Because of the view of the Statue of Liberty immigrants coming into the New York Harbor.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

This is a point that gets brought up a lot, but it's really not accurate to say that America and immigration are intrinsically sort of intertwined. America has not been – America is a country that obviously has had some periods of high immigration, no doubt about it. But America was a settler nation, it was settled by English colonists in the New World.

And for hundreds of years, I mean if you think about New England, when it was first settled it was about two hundred years before it had any major immigration. I mean it was from Ireland. And the south, the United States south, really since the founding of the country, did not have significant immigration until probably the 1980's.

So the idea that America – the idea that founding principles immigration is just not accurate. In fact even the Statue of Liberty itself is – was not intended to be a symbol of immigration. It was liberty and lighting the world. The poem you're referring to, you know give us your tired, your poor –

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right, right. Yeah, that is unrelated, yeah.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

That was added much later. So I don't think that America has traditionally defined itself as an immigration nation. It's only after the great wave of immigration in the early 20th century did that idea, the nation of immigrants idea, begin to take hold.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Well, your earlier point about low skill immigration, when we were talking about reasons against legal immigration, does that play into your views on IQ?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Well, probably not, actually. I guess it's really two separate points. What I was saying just now was the idea that we have a major labor force participation crisis among the low skill natives in the United States, in that there are prime age men who are simply not working. They're perfectly healthy, they're perfectly able-bodied, and they're not working.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

This was practically unheard of 50 years ago. 50 years ago if you were an able-bodied man in the prime of your life who was not working then something seriously was wrong with you.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

And that's increasingly the case that a lot of those men are not working. And that has all sorts of negative impacts on communities and families and the like. And so to me one of the biggest social issues we face is getting those men back to work. Where immigration comes into play is that it's essentially a Band-Aid over that problem. I mean what immigration does, it says, you know what, we need not really worry about these low-skill natives because we can get the jobs done – we have immigrants. We simply have this nice flow of immigrants coming in.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Well, the idea that immigrants are taking low skill jobs, it's – are you familiar with the lump of labor fallacy?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Yes, but I'm not making a lump of labor fallacy here.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Well, yeah, but I mean the argument that immigrants are kind of pushing native born people out of the jobs is – when the labor force goes up, employment goes up. And I would argue that we have a big problem with that. Well, actually, unemployment is pretty low right now, but I mean I understand your point about – I mean there's the Rust Belt and all of manufacturing jobs are gone. But I mean I would just argue that that's a result of not only globalization, but just technological advancement.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Yes, okay, so a few things (*inaudible* * 0:35:28.7) here. First of all, I am not saying – this is not an argument about the fact that there's a fixed number of jobs and then if immigrants come then they just inevitably push out.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

But that's not the point I'm making. The point I'm making is that natives have been dropping out for a variety of reasons. It's not necessarily even immigration that's doing it. And as you said, I think probably a lot of it, actually, is due to technological differences, skill bias –

EVAN DACOSTA:

Opioid epidemic, probably.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Technological change and such that just make it harder to make a good living as a low skill person anyways, especially relative to a higher skill person. The point is that if you're going to deal with this problem then you have to have some kind of incentive in place to care whether or not low skill natives are actually working or not. And what's happened is as their work ethic has declined for a variety of reasons. As it's declined immigration has been the Band-Aid, immigration has been the fallback that people use in order to continue to keep the plants running and the farms going and all of the other fruit picked while natives are kind of languishing.

My point, if you cut off that flow, if you say, look, no more, you don't have that backdrop, it's gonna force a new conversation among politicians and businessmen and professional thinkers who have to say, you know what, we actually have to face this problem.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Well, if –

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

We actually have to figure out why these men are not in the labor force.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right, but if you said – I mean like you said, if they're languishing and their work ethic has declined, isn't that kind of a – not a personal choice, but isn't it their choice not to work if they're able-bodied and able to?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Oh, yes, it is. I mean that's the problem, actually.

EVAN DACOSTA:

So why – I guess my question is so why punish immigrants who come and want to work in favor of people who are able-bodied and don't want to work?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

I think their choice, and I agree it's a choice, that low skill natives make reflects a major problem with the communities in which they live and is a major problem for the families as well. When you have people not working it creates a whole sort of chain reaction of other problems in society.

The sociologist, William Julius Wilson, wrote about this. It's called "When Work Disappears" from a community. There's all sorts of reasons. And look, I'll be the first one to say, you know what, I know those jobs out there are not fun for people with your level of skills, but you should go out there and work them anyway because that's what's available and you need to take it.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

I agree that should be part of it. But that's partly not – partly one of the problems is we've lost the ability to sort of articulate that these days. We've become a very nonjudgmental in that regard. And I think to our detriment. But there's more to it than that. You know there need to be a real systematic and large-scale attempt to get them back into the work force, integrate them into the work force. I don't for a second pretend that this is entirely someone else's fault. This is partly their fault, but that doesn't mean we can just ignore the problem.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right, well, I mean I guess it seems that this problem with the native workforce, it doesn't seem, I mean, that related to immigration. I mean immigrants are coming in and they're working and the jobs are there. There's many – I mean not manufacturing jobs, but the jobs are there. And it doesn't seem to me that cutting off immigration would solve that. I mean I think there's gotta be retraining for people who are in manufacturing that have shut down, there's gotta be retraining for coalminers because those jobs are on the way out. I just – it doesn't seem related to immigration to me.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Well, maybe I can put it this way. If we can first start with the point that there is a major problem with low skill men in the prime of their life and not working.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Okay, and we started with that statement, could we possibly say that part of the solution or even just something that's unrelated to it is the fact that we're going to import millions of low skill workers from abroad? Are those two things completely unrelated? I mean it's hard for me to understand how it could be if you're someone who really worries about the problem of lack of employment. You wouldn't want to bring in lots of people to compete with them in the labor market. That's sort of the obvious point. And again, I'm not saying that the jobs are being stolen. I'm saying that this is the backdrop, this is the next stop.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right. But, I guess why preference like a lazy low skill native population than over people who are gonna contribute more to the economy at the end of the day?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Well, now you're getting to the philosophical question of whether or not we should think of ourselves as a nation with interests on a national level and whether we should prefer our fellow members of the community of a nation or we should be kind of – have sort of a globalist perspective.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Where we're all just individuals living in the same world and the fact that we happen to live in a country is just kind of coincidental.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

You know it's just lines on a map. We happen to vote in the same elections, but that's really it. I come down squarely on the nationalist side. I come down squarely on the idea that communities matter, neighborhoods matter, and that peoples – their whole lives, their whole understanding and their place in the world depends very much on their community. You know we are not so atomized that we can live our lives without regard to who our neighbors are.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Would you say that ethnic unity is necessary for that neighborhood community sense?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

There's research by Robert Putnam and others that have found that a neighborhood trust and other kinds of other civic factors are correlated with ethnic homogeneity. Now obviously we don't have ethnic homogeneity, but there's still progress to be made in terms of improving our neighborhoods and improving that kind of trust, which goes back, I think, to the immigration – the problem with legal immigration, in general. The more we have, the harder it is to get people of these very different backgrounds we have now working together and thinking of themselves as one community.

EVAN DACOSTA:

I mean I guess the fix to that would be kind of a neo-segregation. I mean if you just have ethnic groups grouped together because they trust each other more and they thrive more, wouldn't that be the solution?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Well, there's some people who do that voluntarily, right? I mean that's why you have – I mean a lot of neighborhood segregation seems to work that way. I mean there are neighborhoods, especially if you look around the cities with the pictures of old midwestern cities, and you see kind of obvious lines. You know the movie 8 Mile, I guess, is kind of about the line between black Detroit and white.

So I mean people do that voluntarily. I mean I –

EVAN DACOSTA:

I mean I think the argument that they did that voluntarily is not – I mean I think that there's centuries – like, okay, for example, if you take the movie 8 Mile, I mean it's an African-American kind of neighborhood, but that's – it's not that they're choosing – I mean I'm sure if they could choose to live somewhere else they would. It seems – that's kind of just a result of centuries of oppression and racism and so on. I wouldn't say that that's –

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Well, yeah – yeah.

EVAN DACOSTA:

I mean banks refused to give mortgages to black people. I mean it's not a choice to do that.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Obviously, there are many historical reasons as to why that exists, but you need to go to a place like Atlanta. Actually, Atlanta is a good example, all right? Where Atlanta is one of the – has one of the wealthiest black populations in the United States. And there are many neighborhoods that are mostly black. You know there are wealthy, black neighborhoods and

I think it's fairly clear that a lot of those people would prefer to live in such a neighborhood. Again, I mean that's up to them.

My point is sort of bringing it back to the immigration. The question is, is to what degree are you going to exacerbate existing cultural tensions. And I think, as I've said several times, you know the idea is we want to try to figure out how we can assimilate our current immigration – our population in general into a group of people who feel like they're Americans, regardless of the background, regardless of where their ancestors came from. But feel like Americans and feel like they're part of something that's more than just their immediate group.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right. Well, I mean I get the sense – I mean this is pretty anecdotal, I have to say, but I mean I get the sense that immigrants that come here want to be American, they want to pay into the system, they want to pay into social security, they want to send their kids to public schools. I think people want to be American. I mean that's the whole American dream thing, right?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

There's something that's referred to a patriotic assimilation that I think is relevant here. Because I mean the examples you gave are very much sort of an economic and based on sort of individual incentives. You know the idea that to become American is just to want to move up in the world. I disagree. I think there is much more to it. I think it's a matter of feeling like you're an American in the broadest sense. It's feeling like American history is your history. It's feeling like American culture is your culture.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Well, how would you define American culture then, just out of curiosity?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Well, there's all sorts of levels of American culture. I mean you could go to Germany and say, you know what's German culture? I mean it's a whole bunch of things.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Well, I mean I guess, yeah, that's a bit of a broad question, but I guess – I mean the underlying principles, what would you – like if someone were to – for example, like you said, patriotic assimilation. If someone were to come over here and patriotically assimilate, what would that entail?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Well, as I said, first of all it would entail feeling like an American, the fact that you feel like you are part of the mainstream culturally. It would mean going beyond feeling like you're

just kind of a subgroup or something out of the mainstream. Again, I mean like any country, we have a history, you know we have a language, we have holidays, we have heroes, we have media. I mean things that we enjoy, like anyone else. And so if we can unify on those things, I think a lot of the problems we see, so much of the sort of poisonous identity politics that –

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

That seem to affect everything. I mean is there anything that's not safe from politics these days?

EVAN DACOSTA:

Yeah, I mean, well, to your point about subgroups and feeling like part of the mainstream, how do you make racial minorities not feel like a subgroup? Does it mean whitewashing?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

I'm not sure what you mean by whitewashing.

EVAN DACOSTA:

I mean does it mean trying to just assimilate? Like does it mean getting rid of, say, African-American culture, Hispanic culture? I mean what does that – how do you make minorities not feel like a subgroup?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Oh, well, yes. So I would like there to be a broader American culture. I would like people to think of themselves as Americans. I think it's the worst thing for people to say, well, okay, I'm white and you're black and you're that. That, to me, is the worst kind of situation you can be in. It invites this kind of identity politics, this kind of constant conflict and tension where you have to worry about whether or not this person's skin color is right for this job.

EVAN DACOSTA:

But wouldn't a broader American culture kind of intrinsically mean accepting more groups of people into the mainstream?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Yes, of course. I'm not sure what you're getting at.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Like including immigrants. I guess that that's what I'm saying. I guess I'm wondering if you're gonna have a broader American culture then wouldn't immigrants not exacerbate the problem, but they would kind of be part of that broader American culture?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Well, I would like the people who are here to do that. The point is that the more heterogeneous the group, in terms of the background, in terms of language and religion and national origin, like the more heterogeneous it is, the harder it is to create that kind of language. My point is let's stop exacerbating it. You know let's deal with what we have right now and let's try to make the best of it.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Just out of curiosity, what would your solution to that be?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Well, it's not easy. It's hard to say. I think after you restrict immigration I think then what you have to go after is the ideology of multiculturalism. And that probably starts with schools, but also starts with the government as well. You know we want a system that encourages us to be one people. And without that, with the current system, with the current multiculturalism, the idea that every group has to have its representation here and there, it encourages people to feel like they're different, to accentuated differences.

Again, you know there's no easy solution here. I'm not saying immigration is the root of all evil and then once we get rid of it we're all gonna be happy, but certainly it's one of the major problems that's contributing.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right. I mean you just said so communities are important. So but why do we need – and communities and neighborhoods are important, so I guess what you're saying really is that we just have to have a nationwide community, but without multiculturalism.

So what is that – I guess I'm just kind of confused as what that would mean. I mean there's so many subcultures in the United States, even if you look at the culture in California versus the culture in rural Alabama, right? I mean what does that entail?

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

What I'd like to have is a broader culture that identifies us all as Americans. In any country, any nation, you're going to have varieties of subcultures within it based on where people live and the like. The same thing with any more easily identifiable culture. I mean no one doubts that there's such things as French culture, but nevertheless obviously Paris is very different from the south of France.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Right.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

So it's not that your existence of subculture is a problem; it's the lack of a unifying broader culture in America or a sense of that, that we need to worry about.

EVAN DACOSTA:

Okay. All right, yeah, that cleared it up a bit. Well, Dr. Richman, I think that's all we have for you today. I really appreciate you taking the time out of your schedule to do this. I really enjoyed the conversation, so thanks again.

DR. JASON RICHWINE:

Okay, no problem.

(END)