



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on December 12, 2023

## Report: Harvard President Plagiarized Doctoral Thesis

Just as Boston University refused to revoke Martin Luther King, Jr.'s doctorate after a panel of scholars confessed that he plagiarized a significant part of his thesis, Harvard University has not fired President Claudine Gay despite similar accusations with hard proof.

On Sunday, conservative writers Christopher Rufo and Christopher Brunet revealed that Gay had either paraphrased other scholars or directly quoted them without attribution in her thesis.

But Gay and King have something else in common beside their light-fingered scholarship: she's black.

Thus did conservative university professor Carol Swain, also black, deliver this verdict: A white guy or white woman would have been in the unemployment line by now.

### The Crime

[Rufo and Brunet delivered](#) their verdict on Gray's 1997 thesis, *Taking Charge: Black Electoral Success and the Redefinition of American Policies*, at Rufo's Substack page.

Like King's scholarly sins, Gay's are scarlet.

"First, Gay lifts an entire paragraph nearly verbatim from Lawrence Bobo and Franklin Gilliam's paper, *Race, Sociopolitical Participation, and Black Empowerment*, while passing it off as her own paraphrase and language," the two wrote:

Here is the original, from Bobo and Gilliam:

Using 1987 national sample survey data ... the results show that blacks in high-black-empowerment areas — as indicated by control of the mayor's office — are more active than either blacks living in low-empowerment areas or their white counterparts of comparable socioeconomic status. Furthermore, the results show that empowerment influences black participation by contributing to a more trusting and efficacious orientation to politics and by greatly increasing black attentiveness to political affairs.

And here is the language from Gay's work:

Using 1987 survey data, Bobo and Gilliam found that African-Americans in "high black-empowerment" areas — as indicated by control of the mayor's office — are more active than either African-Americans in low empowerment areas or their



AP Images  
Claudine Gay



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white counterparts of comparable socioeconomic status. Empowerment, they conclude, influences black participation by contributing to a more trusting and efficacious orientation towards politics and by greatly increasing black attentiveness to political affairs.

Though Gay does provide a reference to the original authors, she uses their verbatim language, with a few trivial synonym substitutions, without providing quotation marks. This constitutes a clear violation of Harvard's policy, which states: "When you paraphrase, your task is to distill the source's ideas in your own words. It's not enough to change a few words here and there and leave the rest; instead, you must completely restate the ideas in the passage in your own words. If your own language is too close to the original, then you are plagiarizing, even if you do provide a citation."

Rufo and Brunet showed that Gay repeatedly violated that rule and also robbed three others, "which she reproduces nearly verbatim, without quotation marks."

Gay pilfered Swain even more blatantly by lifting material from Swain's *Black Faces, Black Interests*, "without providing a citation of any kind," the [two wrote](#).

Here is Swain:

Pitkin distinguishes between "descriptive representation," the statistical correspondence of the demographic characteristics ... and more "substantive representation," the correspondence between representatives' goals and those of their constituents.

Here is Gay, "with with slight modifications to the diction and punctuation," [Rufo and Brunet wrote](#):

Social scientists have concentrated ... between descriptive representation (the statistical correspondence of demographic characteristics) and substantive representation (the correspondence of legislative goals and priorities).

Gay also copied Swain verbatim without credit:

Later in the paper, Gay also uses identical language to Swain, without adding quotation marks, as required. "Since the 1950s the reelection rate for House members has rarely dipped below 90 percent," reads Swain's book, which is the same, excepting an added comma, to the language in Gay's dissertation: "Since the 1950s, the reelection rate for incumbent House members has rarely dipped below 90%." According to Harvard's rules, this would be a violation of the policy on "inadequate paraphrase," which requires that verbatim language be placed in quotations.

But Harvard requires students to "give credit to the author of the source material, either by placing the source material in quotation marks and providing a clear citation, or by paraphrasing the source material and providing a clear citation."

### **Swain Speaks**



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Such academic misconduct should be enough to end anyone's tenure at Harvard or any other university. But alas, Gay has black privilege, Swain says.

"From all indications, she was always a fraud," Swain told Breitbart radio. "She should resign." Gay "is an embarrassment, and she was advanced because of her pedigree," Swain said. "She went to the right school."

At first, Swain gave Gay the benefit of the doubt, she told the network, and figured Gay was just sloppy and forgot some quotation marks.

But she changed her mind when she learned that "it was not just one thing, it was a whole career path, and it was not just me, there were other people that she plagiarized."

The [former Princeton and Vanderbilt professor](#) also told Breitbart that Gay would have been fired if she "were a white male, or even a white female, caught in the scandal that she's caught in."

Gay's escape from academic justice reprises King's.

The [BU panel refused](#) to rescind King's doctorate after his theft was discovered.



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