

BACKGROUND - PROJECT VERITAS

Summary

“Being hated is a sign of respect.”

– [James O’Keefe](#)

Project Veritas (PV), led by James O’Keefe, has produced a string of fraudulent video products and campaigns that rely on deceptive editing, out-of-context clips and exaggerated and false claims.

- *Deceptive editing* 19 months after the PV video sting against Democracy Partners, which resulted in [widespread condemnation](#) and [calls for criminal investigations](#), the Republican Attorney General in Wisconsin determined – after [two](#) investigations – that the PV videos offered [no evidence](#) of criminality and that the “raw” footage O’Keefe claims to have provided as evidence was edited. ([WI DOJ DCI Case Master Report 17-4176](#)).
- *Media bias:* [The Washington Post Staff](#) won a [Pulitzer Prize](#) for their investigation into Roy Moore’s relationship with underaged women and exposing a Project Veritas sting based on a ruse of a fake Moore victim. Dean Baquet, Executive Editor of The Times, [called](#) Project Veritas’ work writ large “despicable.”
- *Restraining order:* A federal judge in Michigan issued a [temporary restraining order](#) against Project Veritas related to the infiltration of AFT Michigan in September 2017; the restraining order was [vacated](#) in December 2017. Later, in May 2018, AFT Michigan filed a [motion for a temporary injunction](#) but was [denied](#).
- *Voter fraud* Project Veritas claims it receives ballots fraudulently; however, the organization has never received a single ballot – instead they are given an affidavit to sign, which O’Keefe [says](#) they do not sign because it would be illegal.
- *NPR videos doctored:* Project Veritas [edited a comment](#) that NPR made about restaurant reservations while meeting with fake donors to make it appear as though NPR was endorsing Sharia law. The 2011 video resulted in NPR [firing](#) its executives.
- *Felony charge:* In 2010, O’Keefe was [arrested on felony charges](#) at the offices of Sen Mary Landrieu for “[entering federal property under false pretenses for the purpose of committing a felony](#)”; he later pleaded guilty to a reduced misdemeanor charge.
- *ACORN videos doctored:* An investigation of O’Keefe’s ACORN sting by the California Attorney General [found](#) that O’Keefe “did not act as a journalist objectively reporting a story” and described O’Keefe as a “partisan zealot.”
- *Litigation settlement payment:* Litigation filed by [Juan Carlos Vera](#) of ACORN was settled by Project Veritas for [\\$100,000](#); Vera objected to violations of state recording laws and sought damages for the impact of the deceptively edited videos.
- *The Trump Foundation* Project Veritas has [received funding](#) from the Trump Foundation, among [other conservative funders](#).

Targeting public school students and teachers

Project Veritas has been conducting a 8-year anti-teachers union and public education campaign that relies on deceptive editing and unlawful secret videotaping. A federal court in Michigan issued a [temporary restraining order](#) to prevent Project Veritas from publicizing illegally obtained material it obtained during a 2017 undercover sting. The restraining order was [vacated](#) in December 2017. Later, in May 2018, AFT Michigan filed a [motion for a temporary injunction](#) but was [denied](#).

- James O’Keefe “[want\[s\] charter schools](#)” and plans to release a large quantity of anti-teachers’ union videos. O’Keefe has referenced [teachers unions](#) as obstacles to Education Secretary Betsy DeVos’ reforms.
- The Chair of the Board of Project Veritas is Colin Sharkey, [whose full-time work](#) is anti-teacher union advocacy under the umbrella of the Association of American Educators.
- Since 2016, Project Veritas has publicly released around 85 unique minutes of secretly recorded footage targeting teachers’ unions, selectively edited from dozens of hours of secret recordings.
- The 85 minutes of anti-teachers’ union secretly recorded footage was subject to at least 177 cuts and splices, plus additional deceptive video, such as staged scenes edited in with hundreds more cuts to create misimpressions and out-of-context conclusions. PV has never made full footage of its anti-teacher stings publicly available.
- Project Veritas’ anti-union tactics have included at least two incidents of infiltrating a public school during the school day, including interrupting schoolwork with a secretly filmed [bogus awards ceremony](#).
- O’Keefe mischaracterizes some portion of the content of anti-teachers’ union videos in every instance.

“James O’Keefe is not an ethical journalist...”

O’Keefe’s tactics have been widely [criticized](#) for their deception and are not aligned with investigative journalism ethics. He [describes](#) his work as “one third investigative reporting, one third intelligence agency, cause we kind of are spies, and one third Borat.” The Chair of the Society of Professional Journalists [said](#) that “James O’Keefe is not an ethical journalist if we look at his actions in the context of [the Society of Professional Journalists’ ethics code]...he obviously has an agenda, goes directly to surreptitious reporting methods and has a history of distorting facts or context.”

The Columbia Journalism Review [wrote](#) that journalists “need to slow down” when responding to O’Keefe’s videos, after analyzing troubling editing in the ACORN and NPR video stings.

O’Keefe’s obfuscations include:

- Using a montage of clips that are out of context or re-ordered.
- Inserting staged scenes and stock photos to support his conclusions.
- Omitting critical portions of conversations during editing, including cutting off content mid-sentence.
- Mischaracterizing civic and legal issues.
- Targeting professionals during social events that include alcohol in order to obtain secretly recorded footage that appears unprofessional.
- Creating fictitious identities, organizations and companies ([LLC](#)), often including the use of fake websites and social media accounts.
- Withholding full and source footage so that an analysis of claims are drawn only from the heavily edited footage.

O’Keefe’s years-long campaign to “prove” voter fraud uses smokescreens and falsehoods

O’Keefe claims to have obtained the ballots of a range of people; however, this claim is untrue – he has never obtained a ballot in someone else’s name, only a declaration which, if signed, would have allowed him to obtain the ballot. Signing the declaration fraudulently is against the law, which O’Keefe [explains](#) is why he does not sign it.

O’Keefe [selectively edited](#) footage of an operative asking for the ballot of a recently deceased person, omitting footage where the operative clarifies that he is asking for the ballot of the son of the deceased person. Nevertheless, O’Keefe publicly claimed that he had been offered the ballot of a deceased person.

O’Keefe [claimed](#) in a video that Project Veritas identified non-citizens voting; however, the person PV identified is a naturalized citizen and able to legally vote.

O’Keefe’s antics of looking for individuals who die shortly before an election, asking for their ballots and publicizing their names to further his cause has resulted in [grief](#) for their loved ones. “I don’t even know what to say, except that it makes you feel violated,” [said](#) one widow.

O’Keefe’s donors have a far-right agenda

PV received a [donation](#) from the Trump Foundation in 2015 and subsequently produced sting videos related to [Common Core](#) that included undercover footage with education leaders and highlighted Trump’s position on Common Core, encouraging viewers to ask questions about Common Core during presidential debates.

Breitbart is known to have funded or facilitated funding to Project Veritas operations, including one operation bankrolled and orchestrated by [Steve Friess](#). A former employee claims that they received funding and guidance from [Americans For Prosperity](#). Most of PV’s donations come from major donors and are hidden; the organization has received support from Peter Thiel, Ben

Wetmore, Donors Trust, Bradley Foundation and Eric O'Keefe of Wisconsin Club for Growth, [among others](#).

O'Keefe's close network is comprised of extremists

[Joe Halderman](#), former award-winning CBS Producer, serves as Project Veritas' executive producer. Halderman served a prison sentence for attempted grand larceny prior to joining the PV team following his prison sentence.

O'Keefe supports and collaborates with "Proud Boys" leader Gavin McInnes, "alt-right" leader Milo Yiannopoulos, conservative commentator Mike Cernovich, among other leading right-wing figures. He also works with and defends conspiracy theory bloggers such as [Alex Jones](#) and has [employed](#) radical [Islamophobe](#) Laura Loomer.

Project Veritas campaigns have been exposed in the media at least 11 times.

Exposure of Project Veritas schemes prior to releasing a video have made the news at least 11 times: [CNN](#), [PBS](#), [Michigan AFT](#), [the League of Conservation Voters](#), [the Washington Post](#), [the Economic Policy Institute](#), [Open Society Foundation](#), [Hillary for America](#), [the Feingold campaign](#), [Disrupt J20](#) and [SEIU](#).