



## Episode 989: James O'Keefe on the Lying Media

Guest: James O'Keefe

**WOODS:** I've been very interested to talk to you. I was interested to find that I guess maybe neither one of us realized we were Facebook friends, so I thought, "Ha! I can get to that guy."

**O'KEEFE:** [laughing]

**WOODS:** So I've had a number of requests to talk to you, so let's start with your background. Before you were doing what you've become notorious for, what were you doing?

**O'KEEFE:** I was trying to be a normal person. I was trying to have a normal life. I tried law school for a year. I tried business school. I tried to be normal, but you know, I guess I was always thrust into doing the videos. I would sneak out of the law library and go back into the video lab at Cal State Fullerton, and I would start producing those Planned Parenthood videos. But ever since I was in college, I had a deep-seated resentment towards the media, and I was so upset and frustrated by what I saw as the media's biases, the media's contamination, their corruption, and it always just enraged me. It always motivated me. And ever since I was — I graduated from Rutgers 10 years ago, and I would read *The New York Times* every day, and I was upset by what I read, and I decided to start my own little newspaper. So I've been doing this since I was a teenager, essentially, and I guess there's nothing else for me to do so I'll keep doing it.

**WOODS:** So now these days, you're obviously involved in letting us know about some of what goes on behind closed doors with the media. You're confirming a lot of our suspicions to show that we're not crazy, that really these people do hate us. Let's put it that way. There's no getting around it. These people actually hate a great many of the people who consume their product.

Now, before we get into some of your triumphs — in fact, let's start there. What would you say is the biggest expose or the particular accomplishment you're proudest of?

**O'KEEFE:** I think the last year has been the biggest in my career and what we're doing. The Democracy Partners story during the election was a magnificent triumph because it involved so many moving parts. This was the story where we exposed violence at Trump rallies and the Hillary Clinton campaign's people were taking credit for inducing the violence and Bob Creamer resigned, Scott Foval resigned. Bob Creamer was one of Barack Obama's best friends and a community organizer in Chicago.

So there was a lot of — I mean, that was credited with making an impact on the presidential election. We had eight people undercover inside the Hillary Clinton campaign for an entire year. And we had gone from a model where we were sort of walking into these bureaucrats' offices wearing a hidden camera, exposing the Abu Ghraib of the Great Society, of just sort of walking in and out, and then we shifted to this sort of intelligence-based model, where we're kind of journalism meets intelligence operation, where we spend months if not years building relationships with people undercover. So that Democracy Partners story we did back in October was a huge triumph. And I think the CNN story we did two months ago where we caught that producer saying the Russia stuff is just BS was a huge triumph as well.

**WOODS:** You obviously have people who are helping you who — I mean, in fact, you had one media person — I can't remember his name — who fell for this twice. He said it to a second one of your people. *Yeah, I was interviewed by somebody and it turns out I was recorded.* I mean, how you could be that dumb is just completely beyond me. But you obviously have a team working for you, but do you have or have you considered the possibility of outsourcing some of it? If people were to somehow do some of this on their own and send it to you, would you be concerned about quality control or you can't control their ethical background, their tactics? How would you view that?

**O'KEEFE:** I think that's a great — I mean, first of all, that's a great question. We have thought about outsourcing. I think we're so busy doing the work now that — I mean, one of the main things people don't realize, or maybe they do realize given the product, is that I have an enormous team — and internal. We're not in D.C. I avoid D.C. like the plague. I have a 24-hour rule. I will not be in Washington, D.C. for more than 24 hours. Most of the people who are in politics or engaged in advocacy are in the bubble of Washington, D.C., and I have personally said if I have locate myself and my team in that place, I would be contaminated by the people of D.C. And there are some good people, but even on the conservative side, a bunch of people angling, a bunch of people that want power. There's all these leakers in D.C. There's leakers at Breitbart.com. I don't want any part of that. So I'm located in a remote section of New York State, and I hired, trained, and recruited people outside of the political world to become what they do.

And I think we're so busy doing the sort of deep-dive, forensic investigative work. The crowdsourcing model is something I want to do eventually, like an Uber for citizen journalism where people can upload stuff. And the quality control factor is just making sure that you have producers on hand, you have researchers on hand who can really vet this stuff and check it out. So it's going to require a lot of work to verify the information you're getting is accurate. But I've found that very few citizens are going to be willing or have the balls to or have the resources and the know-how and the legal support to do this stuff on their own. You need to have a team. You need to have lawyers and producers and researchers and undercover people who've been trained and vetted to really successfully pull one of these things off. The amount of things that you need, it's not something that's going to happen organically.

**WOODS:** Wouldn't you be shut down in an instant if the states you operated in required both parties to be aware of a recording?

**O'KEEFE:** There are 12 states that make it illegal to record without the other party's permission, but there are 38 states which do not. And in the 12 states that do make it illegal — like California's the biggest place — I have been sued. But I don't film people in private; I film them in public. So there is an exception to that law. It's the two-party consent law. The exception is that you do it in a place where there's no expectation of privacy. So if I'm recording you in your bedroom, that's against the rules, that's against the law, and frankly, I think it's unethical. But if I'm recording you in a government office with the door open, I would argue in court that you have no expectation of privacy. By the way, I think we should be filming all government workers and what they do because they're on the public dole.

But I got sued once in California by ACORN. So if you Wikipedia me, the first thing you'll see is *O'Keefe is a liar and settled for \$100,000*. Well, actually, that settlement was because the person argued I invaded their privacy rights by filming — this is an ACORN employee telling me how to start a brothel — because I filmed them in private. Well, that has nothing to do with me lying; it has to do with the fact that I filmed them without their permission. But the media likes to conflate these two issues in order to just sort of brand me as a liar.

So these issues, we're fighting them in state courts. We've sued the Massachusetts state court. We're fighting them in federal court to overturn what I think are these unjust, antiquated two-party consent laws.

**WOODS:** All right, that brings up another point. I asked you about something that you're particularly proud of. Well, you're in the public eye and you're doing a lot of high-profile, controversial things. You're bound to make a misstep once in a while. Is there anything, looking back on it, that you're not proud of?

**O'KEEFE:** The things that I'm not proud of are not the things the media would say that I shouldn't be proud of. For example, the number one thing, again, if you Google me — the rub on me is I'm a "convicted criminal" for a class B misdemeanor for walking into a federal building in 2010. I was going in as a telephone repair technician. I was undercover inside of a federal building. You might think, *Oh my God, he's a terrorist. Tim McVeigh*. First of all, I walked in using my real driver's license. I showed my real driver's license. So there's no false pretenses. Second of all, I opened the door because it was open during business hours. Any constituent can walk into the senator's office during business hours. Third of all, if you want to convict people for their mental state, then you might as well convict all the lobbyists and politicians in Washington, D.C. for entering their federal building using false pretenses.

But none of that mattered because the feds had me by the balls. They arrested me on the spot. They were going to let me go because I was just making a YouTube video, but when you found out, *Oh, you're that guy who did this ACORN stuff with the pimp and hooker and you shut ACORN down?* Then they put the screws to me. And I wrote a whole book about this. There's an entire book written about this one incident. It's called *Breakthrough*. It's a *New York Times* bestseller. And it talks about just how petty the retribution was against me. I mean, these people literally just invented a crime. And I think that's the deterrent to doing this type of renegade investigative work, because the state can just shut you down arbitrarily. There are so many laws, they can just make one up. And if they had just prosecuted me on the false pretenses

misdemeanor, that would have been a conversation worthy of a debate. Should it be illegal — is it unethical to use pretenses? That's fine.

What the state did, what the feds did is they charged me with a felony and they said, "You tried to shut down her phones." I don't try to shut down phones. I'm an undercover guy. If I pose as a Muslim Brotherhood agent or a pimp or a telephone technician, I don't actually intend to pimp out the underage girls; I'm just saying that for purposes of eliciting a conversation. But what the government does is — it just took me a few minutes to explain all that [laughing]. They make it so that, Well, he was obviously trying to do something as a telephone technician.

So I don't regret what I did because I don't think I did anything illegal. But I regret — I understand better how the media works and how the government works to frame people, to frame innocent people. And I think actually, Tom, I think there's actually a blessing that I went through all that, because I think it made me smarter. I think what doesn't jail you makes you smarter, right? I have seven attorneys now looking at everything. I don't only think about what's illegal; I think of what's optically bad if I got pinched, if I got into a situation where I was discovered or burned prior to doing this story. So that's the first part of it, is what I don't regret.

Now, what I do regret are some things you don't see, some things that haven't been made public, some lessons I've learned. But that's the short of it.

**WOODS:** All right, there are other things I want to ask you about some of the work you've been doing, but let's clear the air as long as we're doing this about a couple of things.

**O'KEEFE:** Sure.

**WOODS:** First one is this John Bonifield thing about CNN and what he had to say about the bias there. And you got into some trouble because they say, *Well, he's a low-level health-and-fitness guy. What's he going to know about the inner workings of CNN?* How do you answer that?

**O'KEEFE:** I would be happy to answer, and I love it when people throw at me these absurd criticisms because I'm going to shoot them down like clay pigeons in the sky. John Bonifield was a senior producer for CNN at Atlanta. *The Washington Post* wrote, *Well, he's just a health producer*. But that doesn't matter whether he's the cleaning lady. He was testifying about what the CEO of CNN said to him. That's Jeff Zucker. He was saying in our undercover video that CNN sent out an internal memo. The CEO said you must not do this investigative work. Only focus on Russia, Russia, Russia for the ratings. This is what John Bonifield said. Now, it doesn't matter whether John Bonifield produces health stories, whether he's producing Shark Week. It doesn't matter. The fact is he's testifying about what the CEO said. So this logic is absurd.

It doesn't follow that — Like, I say to — Jeremy Peters of *The New York Times* and I were talking about this. And Jeremy goes, "Well, he's just a health producer." I said, "Jeremy, when you have an anonymous source inside the Oval Office who's the cleaning lady and that cleaning lady gives you a confidential memo off Trump's desk,

does it really matter whether she's mopping the floors or she has a national security clearance? What matters is whether or not Jeff Zucker did what he did." And that's why that story was so impactful, because we're talking about the culture of CNN, which is all about ratings for money. And we've found this time and time again. It's not an isolated incident. We have more tapes that are going to come out in the fall along the same lines. The media does something in order to generate profit for shareholders, which is fine, but let's call that out for what it is. They don't care about accuracy. They don't care about journalism. They don't care about informing the public. They care about saying whatever is necessary in order to profit, including this Russia narrative, which they admittedly say is not true.

**WOODS:** Okay, and one other thing and then I want to get to some juicy stuff, just to clear the air about it. Think Progress doesn't like me and it doesn't like you, and I have not found them to be fair on anything they've dealt with me on, not even remotely. So I take this with a grain of salt, but they're talking about your 2012 video on voter fraud and non-U.S. citizens voting, and they say, *Well, all we had to do was a Nexus search and these people showed up and they were citizens.* So what was the story there?

**O'KEEFE:** We've done a lot of voter fraud stories, so I want to make sure I'm addressing the correct one. You're talking about the one — was it North Carolina?

**WOODS:** Oh, I don't know. I don't remember what the — I read the thing earlier this morning.

**O'KEEFE:** Okay. Well, we've done probably, I don't know, 30 stories on voter fraud. In the most recent case — let me just talk broadly about what we have accomplished because there is so much misinformation. We did a story in October on Democracy Partners where Scott Foval was literally saying, "We bus people across statelines using fake IDs." Think Progress didn't have anything to say about that. I will say *The Nation* magazine actually was so impressed by our work, they said the effects of our voter fraud work was "particularly jarring." Dave Weigel of *The Washington Post* wrote in *Slate* in 2012 that, "Jame O'Keefe has had more of an impact on the 2012 election than any other journalist." These are not fans of mine. Rachel Maddow said that, "James O'Keefe is right, like a broken clock, twice a day when it comes to some of his voter fraud work." That was Pat Moran resigning — the son of Congressman Jim Moran resigned because he was telling people how to vote multiple times for President Obama.

So have we made corrections? Yeah — have we made errors once or twice? Yeah, we've — and I think we amended or corrected that story in 2012 in North Carolina, where the guy may or may not have been a United States citizen. But we've caught people on tape time and time again bragging over and over about how they commit voter fraud. George Stephanopoulos says voter fraud doesn't exist, and the problem is, when you do this kind of work that we call *cinéma vérité*, where you expose the reality of the world around you and that reality runs so counter to the narratives that the media are invested in spreading, they will go down with this ship. They will believe that Russia is a thing. But when you show them evidence that is so starkly contrast to that, their heads explode. They don't know what to do. It's like pouring water on a robot. They malfunction and they call you names and they put out all this crap. But the good news

about Project Veritas is that we don't editorialize or opinion or bloviate. We just show the tape, and the tape speaks for itself every time.

**WOODS:** Let me ask you about something I seem to recall seeing. I thought I saw you on Twitter or somewhere tauntin somebody at MSNBC about, *Hey, what if we have stuff on you guys?* Now, I don't think any of that, if you do have stuff, has come out, but we already know MSNBC is in the tank for a particular point of view, so what could there be to find there? Are you allowed to give me a hint?

**O'KEEFE:** Um, yeah. I don't think MSNBC is —

**WOODS:** Like I know Rachel Maddow's on the left already. I already know that.

**O'KEEFE:** No, I don't — Maybe I said something along the way. I think, for example, there was something in — I mean, I agree with you. I'm not thinking, *Let me go after MSNBC*. That's not my — I think that's punching down. I don't know who watches MSNBC —

**WOODS:** Okay, good.

**O'KEEFE:** We have 100 million viewers on our YouTube videos and Twitter in the last couple of months, and like 600,000 people watch MSNBC. But there was one instance where I was going after — Oh, I know what it was. There was NBC News, which is NBC's — MSNBC's owned by NBC News, and I think it was Jay Reid or Jay something, one of these commentators. She was tweeting, "Trump gave James \$10,000 in 2015; therefore, he's bought and paid for by —" I mean, our budget's in the seven figures. I've got a staff of 40 people. I don't have any people who have fiduciary control over me. I don't have any advertisers. And I was upset at her because I was saying, You guys are controlled by your advertisers. I don't have any advertisers. And Trump's \$10,000 donation a few days ago didn't dictate the editorial content of an investigation —

**WOODS:** Yeah, of course not, of course not. How are you raising seven figures? Just the sheer output you've got, people are impressed by it?

**O'KEEFE:** Yeah, we have a lot of output. Most documentarians may put out a movie a year. We put out a major investigation, we try to do it once a month. And it's going to be more frequent. But how do we do it? We have a lot of people across the country, like people who listen to this broadcast, and you have a pretty prolific and popular broadcast — and I say, "Hey, everyone, please send me \$100." And you'd be surprised. We have thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of — and sometimes, the people who give us \$100 will write a check for \$5,000 and I call them up and thank them. We're a foundation. We raise money. It's a lot of work. I work really — we work really hard. But we raise money to pay the bills. And I don't take it for granted. I know that the feds could shout me down in an instant for arbitrary reasons. But we got our tax exemption in 2011. Lois Lerner, that's the IRS commissioner who got into trouble for targeting Tea Party people. She actually approved my IRS exemption. I joke that maybe Lois Lerner was asleep that day. Maybe she thought that we were a Latin book club. It says "Veritas." She didn't know what we were actually going to be doing. So we're a tax exempt nonprofit organization, and we exist because of donations. And

that means I have complete independence to pursue the sacred cow investigative work that the media can't do.

**WOODS:** At the time that these CNN clips just kept coming, almost on a daily basis, I heard from — Well, I follow a website called TargetLiberty.com, run by Robert Wenzel, and he kept saying, "Listen, folks, there's a lot, lot more where this came from. He is just getting started." And then almost unceremoniously, the videos stopped coming out. So what's the truth to that? Do you have a whole bunch more to come? And if so, why not now?

**O'KEEFE:** Why not like this week? Why not August? Because everyone's on vacation. Because you have to time the news cycle just right. Notice that when we released those videos, some of them we had had for a month or two and some we had just gotten days prior. In the news business, you have to time things perfectly. You have to time things right. There's a hurricane happening right now. There are people dying in the streets in Houston, and that needs to be given proper attention. When we released those stories, Scaramucci — this is the former White House guy that Trump hired — was — there were three retractions at CNN and people resigned. We released the story the day after. That was not a coincidence. We have a lot of stuff in the can, and it's like dropping bombs. It's like you're in a bomber and you're dropping bombs, and we need to time that just right.

Now, this fall, this fall we're going to be launching so many cruise missiles and so many bombs at the media, I'm calling it "the fall of fake news." That's pun intended, "fall of fake news." We have a number of stories coming and these are big, and they involve — we're exposing these people in a way that you've never seen. I mean, we're not just talking about media bias. We have gone undercover and built relationships with people in the media, like literally wearing a hidden camera for months. And we're going to expose what they're motivated by

**WOODS:** Yeah, no, of course. I realized that as soon as I said it.

**O'KEEFE:** I mean, listen. Look at the body of our work. We did an investigation into Antifa in January and three people were arrested at DeploraBALL in Washington, D.C. Some of your audience may know what that is, DeploraBALL. They had tried to put acid gas in the vent shafts. The FBI, the Secret Service, and the D.C. Metro Police arrested them because of our video showing them conspiring to do this. The natural progression from the shields, and I mean, it looks like these guys are playing wizards and dragons with their shields and their sticks and their batons — the natural progression is bombs, is terrorism. That's what they're going to start doing. I mean, that's what happens when you endorse violence as an ideology. I don't even know what their ideology is. I guess it's nihilism or something. I've read *The Coming Insurrection*, which is sort of their bible, I guess. It's a French translation. And in this *Coming Insurrection* handbook, they actually quite say that we're protesting "the very idea of man." That's a direct quote. The idea of man. It's like Jordan Peterson says they're sort of protesting the idea of being. These guys are sick. I don't know what they are. I don't even know if they're leftists. They're anarchists. They're rebelling against humanity, and the natural progression of their sticks and batons and assaults is weapons of mass destruction.

And what I want to know — when I say "weapons of mass destruction," I mean bombs, Molotov cocktails, these kinds of things. And what I want to know is who's funding them, what Democratic politician is working with them. And the so-called Astroturf lodged against the Tea Party, it's not a question of whether it's happening, Tom; it's a question of where it's happening. And that's my job. And I'm the only one — we are the only ones who are probably able to do that. So I can't confirm or deny what we're doing, but I think you can figure that one out for yourself.

**WOODS:** Two final things, and you can be as quick with them as you want. The first one might seem melodramatic, but I wonder if, number one, have you ever feared for your life? Secondly, there are people who say about the videos that they are cut and edited in such a way —

**O'KEEFE:** Selectively edited.

**WOODS:** Yeah.

**O'KEEFE:** Selectively edited, right, right.

**WOODS:** Right, yeah. So when I say "nothing burger," I actually mean there's a lot of substance here.

**O'KEEFE:** Right, I mean — ugh. Well, where do I even start? Let me start with the editing thing first, because that's a little — I could be a little more glib about that. All journalism is selectively edited. All journalism is edited in a way. In fact, newspaper reporting is edited severely, and if you could actually open up the reporter notebooks, you could see what the anonymous sources are telling *The New York Times* and you would find that they're not including a lot of things. We actually did — remember that third CNN video where actually a source came to us and filmed CNN's Alisyn Camerota, the full interview? And Camerota cut it to a few minutes, and then I showed the full interview because he audio recorded it in the phone in his pocket, and I juxtaposed it?

The editing done by the media is so bad and so awful that for them to attack me — I will defend every single edit I have ever made. The best they've got is the pimp costume. In a hundred investigations, they're upset because I wore a pimp costume in the trailer for the video, as if that changes what the people said in the undercover meeting. It didn't. What I was wearing had nothing to do with what they were saying. But the notion that we edit severely, you have to look at Katie Couric, who was sued for defamation, and she was resigned from Yahoo News because she edited the gun documentary and edited out people's answers. You have to put us on a level playing field with the media and their edits, because when it comes to selective editing, you have to stand in awe of *The New York Times*. They paint a portrait using words and language to alter reality. And that's why we are where we are. That's why people are upset at the media. It's all about their editing.

So I think they're projecting a little bit. It's not so much that I edit things out; it's that they don't like what I leave in. They don't like what I show. They don't like the fact that people are seeing the voter fraud. In their minds — like with Hillary Clinton losing



the election — they have to come up with some rationalization. There must be some missing context here. But there never is. There never is. When we walked up to Van Jones, there was no edit. We walked up to him on the street, he said it's a nothing burger, and we walked away. And the media goes, "Well, maybe you cut out the part where he said, 'I was just kidding.'" Listen, Tom, I can't debate people who engage in that type of sophistry. There's nothing — I don't even — it's a strange and bizarre rationalization for what we're trying to do, and there's really nothing to do except keep doing what I'm doing.

The second thing: do I fear for my life? I don't. I would never have gotten into this if I did. I reject the idea that I'm trying to be some type of martyr. I think it says a lot about our country and our state of affairs that I get asked that question so much. I find that tragic. I also think that's a testament to our effectiveness if the only way the opposition can deal with us is to try to kill us. Okay. Well, I mean, fine. But I don't think that — I was telling Stefan Molyneux, your hierarchy of needs to do this type of thing, you can't wake up and go, "Well, I'm worried about my safety." You've got to care so much about justice and about the truth that you don't think about those things.

Now, I've started to think about them. We've taken some security measures. We've got a great team. We've got a great facility. You wouldn't even know where we are. So for the opposition that's listening to this, it's not going to be easy for you to take a shot at me in whatever way you try. But I don't want to be glib about it, because I realize there are some twisted people out there with some sick thoughts, and I think you've got to worry about the ones who are deranged more than you have to worry about some assassin or what have you. I think you've got to worry about the type of person that shot Steve Scalise who is just sort of mentally unstable. And we're taking precautions against that, and we are attracting a lot of people to work for Veritas who are willing to sort of give up their careers and give up their reputations and their so-called sacred honor to serve a cause that is greater than themselves. And it really is a war. It's a war on our soil, as Marcus Luttrell said. It's not a war in a desert overseas. That's not where the war is anymore. The war is on our soil to change the hearts and minds and to show people what's really going on, and that is a war. It's a war because of the forces that are working — When they put you in jail and shackle you and defame you and harass you, it's a war. It's a war. And that's why we use the element of pretenses and that's why we go undercover, because we need to use these means in order to expose the truth.

**WOODS:** What's your website?

**O'KEEFE:** Website is ProjectVeritas — that's the Latin word for truth — ProjectVeritas.com. And if you're listening to this broadcast and you have the means, send us 50 bucks and a note of encouragement. And we appreciate the support. That's how I pay my journalists' salaries, is support from viewers like you, except unlike PBS, I don't get government funding. So please send \$10, \$50, \$100, ProjectVeritas.com, and this is the fall of fake news. Stay tuned. In the coming months ahead, you will see some serious exposes that will lead to resignations inside the mainstream media.

**WOODS:** I'm going to link to that also on the show notes page for Episode 989, which is [TomWoods.com/989](https://TomWoods.com/989). James, I know you're ridiculously busy. Very, very hard guy to nail down, so I'm glad you were able to take this time with us today. Thanks so much.

**O'KEEFE:** Thanks, Tom.