NYT THINKS TEABUGGER JAMES O'KEEFE ENTITLED TO OWN SET OF FACTS

As I reported a while back, chief TeaBugger James O'Keefe had called on the FBI to release the videos he took while (according to the FBI) by false pretense, entering US government property with the intent of interfering with a phone system owned by the US government. He wanted those released because they would show he neither bugged the phones nor managed to do anything in the phone closet (largely because they were arrested before they were able to get to the phone closet). But even while calling for the release of one set of his videos, O'Keefe has always refused to release the set of videos he took while filming various ACORN employees not break the law. That's presumably because, as an independent investigator reported, that O'Keefe edited those videos, possibly to make them as incriminating as possible.

> The unedited videos have never been made public. The videos that have been released appear to have been edited, in some cases substantially, including the insertion of a substitute voiceover for significant portions of Mr. O'Keefe's and Ms.Giles's comments, which makes it difficult to determine the questions to which ACORN employees are responding. A comparison of the publicly available transcripts to the released videos confirms that large portions of the original video have been omitted from the released versions.
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> Experienced forensic investigators would be able to determine the extent to which the released videos have been

> manipulated to distort, rather than merely shape, the facts and the conversations, as ACORN alleges.

Unfortunately, the TradMed doesn't seem to understand that videos can be manipulated in the editing process, and so they have continued to report James O'Keefe's tales precisely as he has claimed they happened, without closer scrutiny. Of note, the TradMed has always just accepted James O'Keefe at his word that he dressed in his silly pimp costume, when it appears he did not.

Now the NYT has stepped up that journalistic malpractice by (apparently) refusing to even consider whether its repetition of the claim that O'Keefe was dressed as a pimp is backed up by any independent evidence. Brad Friedman lays out an entire exchange that, first, one of their readers, and then Brad Friedman himself had with the NYT, attempting to get them to either correct or back up the claim that O'Keefe dressed as a pimp. Over the course of the email exchange, Greg Brock, NYT's Senior Editor for Standards, evolved his explanation for making the claim as follows (click through to see the full set of emails):

- "Mr. O'Keefe himself explained how he was dressed – and appeared on a live Fox show wearing what HE said was the same exact costume he wore to ACORN's offices. … If there is a correction to be made, it seems it would start with Mr. O'Keefe himself. We believe him."
- "At one point, the camera was turned in such a way to catch part of the "costume" he was wearing. And ACORN employees who saw him

described his costume."

- "I don't have any comment on our coverage."
- [after complaining that Brad's reader shared the email with him] "My response wasn't addressed to the public and wasn't a statement on behalf of The Times."
- "I'm not going to have our corporate communications folks wake up tomorrow and discover that I have issued some official statement for publication."
- "I said our statement was based on a video. I did not say that we saw the video online or that it ever was online. … And through [NYT's] reporting – whether it was watching videos, interviewing sources (who would not always go on the record) or doing other research – we feel we have confirmed the information we reported. Just because I am not willing to give you a link – or don't even have a link – doesn't mean our reporting is in error."
- "Please re-read that reference to Fox and Mr. O'Keefe. I did not cite that as our source."

- “The main thing I cited was the video.”

Now, to be fair, it’s possible that the NYT has seen the videos that O’Keefe refuses to release publicly, and based on that, they believe that O’Keefe was dressed as a pimp during this stunt. Heck, perhaps they have even done the kind of forensics former MA Attorney General Scott Harshberger called for. But they never said so.

Barring that, it appears that the NYT has watched the heavily edited videos O’Keefe has released publicly, seen him assert on TV that he was dressed as a pimp, and believed the assertions he made on Fox over assertions to the contrary. Perhaps they have reason to believe the veracity of a guy whose story—about his latest stunt—is transparently inadequate.

Or perhaps, having unadvisedly confessed to being slow on the ACORN story in the first place, having assigned an editor to “monitor opinion media,” the NYT does not want to reconsider whether their cowardly response to right wing propaganda was based not on facts, but on perceptions.

If the NYT is sitting on the videos that O’Keefe refuses to release, it’d sure be nice to release them—now that O’Keefe has become such a fan of releasing all his raw video.