

Ithaca Newspaper response to Project Veritas Cornell ISIS Video: "wildly misleading and dumb"

When I commented this about the Project Veritas Cornell ISIS video on my personal Facebook page::

O'Keefe Project Veritas exposes Cornell Dean of Students suggesting that Student activities funds might support an ISIS Club. Is this carrying freedom of expression to the ultimate extreme at one of America's elite universities? We wonder how many other elite campus Student Deans would follow Assistant Dean Scaffido's reasoning. Moreover, what would be the reaction of Cornell's President and Trustees to Scaffido's comment in this latest O'Keefe investigative video.

Below is the response by the editor of the on-line news outlet "The Ithaca Voice" to the O'Keefe Project Veritas video alleging an Assistant Dean supported an ISIS chapter at the Ithaca, New York Campus. In it you will find a comment from Cornell's President, David Skorton.

Editorial: Video about Cornell dean and ISIS is wildly misleading and dumb

Ithaca, N.Y. – A hidden camera video purporting to show an assistant dean at Cornell supporting ISIS is getting widely circulated in the online media today.

This is a shame, because the video is both wildly misleading and very dumb.

The video, released by James O'Keefe's "Veritas Project," aims to prove that a secret Ivy League conspiracy supports

the terrorist group the Islamic State. In fact, all it shows is that O'Keefe has no ethical or intellectual reservations about publicly shaming someone without cause.

We could point out the false and misleading narration, the interviewer's lack of explicit reference to "ISIS," the bizarre video editing. We could point out that the person being interviewed clearly doesn't understand what he's being asked, or that he's merely doing his job as a university official.

But let's go to the more fundamental question: Do even the people who made the video really believe that a Cornell assistant dean supports a student group backing ISIS? And if the videographers do believe this, why wouldn't they ask the dean this question? Why pretend to ask the Cornell official about a "humanitarian group" helping victims in Syria and Iraq if they want to learn Cornell's stance on the group universally known as "ISIS?"

We know the answer: Because the interviewer and O'Keefe are more interested in getting a video they can use to grab attention than in actually learning what's happening on university campuses.

President David Skorton released a statement Wednesday pretty much saying as much, confirming what was already readily apparent to the neutral-minded observer:

"It is shameful that any individual would pose as a student facing racial discrimination at another university, ask leading questions on hidden camera about Cornell's tolerance for differing viewpoints and backgrounds, and then conveniently splice together the resulting footage to smear our assistant dean and our University," Skorton said.

"After speaking with Assistant Dean (Joe) Scaffido, I am convinced that he was not aware of what he was being asked."

What's remarkable to us about Skorton's statement is not what it said but that it needed to be released at all.

This was the case, regrettably, because the video has been taken seriously by media outlets in sites such as Fox News, Syracuse.com, CNYCentral.com, Capital New York and Mediaite.

These writers hide behind a veil of "reporting" on an event, trying to distance themselves from the claims in O'Keefe's video. But by neutrally recirculating the video's claims, they are complicit in its ethical lapses.