

THE HEROIC PATRIOTISM OF GILES AND O'KEEFE
Or
THE POWER OF TWO

Richard Rahn

To The Point

Wednesday, 16 September 2009

Do you think your tax dollars should be used to help those who want to open a house of prostitution and illegally bring underage girls into the United States as "sex workers"? As you may have seen on Fox News over the last few days, the taxpayer-funded ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) has been doing just that.

Who exposed this latest bit of corruption at ACORN? The FBI? The local police? A congressional investigating committee? The mainstream media? No, no, no, and no. It was a 20-year-old college student named Hannah Giles and a 25-year-old law student and investigative journalist named James O'Keefe.

I first met Ms. Giles almost a year ago in her home town of Miami. Through mutual friends, she had contacted me to see if I could help her get an internship with a policy group in Washington.

She ultimately interned this summer at the National Journalism Center and the Center for Freedom and Prosperity. Having heard about the various charges of voter and housing fraud that ACORN had been previously charged with, she decided to learn more.

ACORN claims it provides assistance to people who are trying to obtain housing and set up businesses in low-income areas. Given ACORN's sleazy record, Ms. Giles began to wonder if ACORN would also give help to those who were trying to start illegal businesses.

She contacted James O'Keefe, whom she had never met. Mr. O'Keefe, despite his youth, had already established a reputation as a highly competent and enterprising investigative journalist. Mr. O'Keefe, like President Obama, had studied Saul Alinsky's "Rules for Radicals," but his goal was to turn the tables and use the "rules" against the radical left.

Ms. Giles suggested to Mr. O'Keefe that she pretend to be a prostitute and that he play the part of her pimp to see if ACORN would help them set up a house of prostitution. Mr. O'Keefe liked the idea and agreed to work with Ms. Giles.

Using a hidden mike and camera, they first went to the ACORN office in Baltimore, and were quite stunned that the ACORN officials offered to help them -- even though they made it very clear that they wanted to set up an illegal house of prostitution and bring in underage girls from Central America to work in the house.

(The video tapes of their meetings in ACORN offices can be found on <http://BigGovernment.com>)

Emboldened by their first success and wanting to make sure the Baltimore ACORN office was not a fluke, they then went to ACORN's office here in the District, then to Brooklyn, and San Bernardino in California.

In each, they were given detailed legal instructions on how to avoid problems with the police and tax authorities while running an illegal operation in each location, and even made other offers of help. They funded all of their travel and other expenses out of their own pockets without any organizational support.

Lawyers, who have reviewed the tapes, believe the ACORN officials may have violated dozens of laws and regulations, and perhaps even the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) statutes against racketeering and organized crime.

After Glenn Beck and Fox News showed the Baltimore tape last Thursday (9/10), ACORN officials, clearly not knowing the extent of the O'Keefe-Giles investigation, claimed that the Baltimore officials were rogue employees and fired them.

The next day, when the D.C. tapes were released, ACORN fired two more employees, and the Census Bureau said it would no longer contract with ACORN. Mr. O'Keefe has been working with the noted journalist Andrew Breitbart to expose what he and Ms. Giles uncovered. Mr. Beck, Sean Hannity, and others at Fox News and elsewhere have taken up the story and have had Mr. O'Keefe and Ms. Giles on their shows.

ACORN officials have already made false charges against Ms. Giles and Mr. O'Keefe, and the media organizations that have been exposing ACORN's activities.

The Senate voted 83 to 7 on Monday (9/14) to partially defund ACORN.

As more tapes from more locations are released and ACORN's claims of not being thoroughly corrupt are shattered, it will be interesting to see the reaction of those in Congress, the administration and the media who have continued to be supportive of ACORN despite all of its past corruption.

Will they protect the taxpayers or the criminals?

Ms. Giles and Mr. O'Keefe are true American patriots -- they did not wait around for the authorities or Congress to do something. They spotted a problem and they took action on their own at considerable personal expense and risk to expose wrongdoing.

The American Founding Fathers would be proud of Ms. Giles and Mr. O'Keefe because they understood that more often than not, government is the problem not the solution -- and the Founders knew that the American Experiment would fail if citizens did not repetitively act to protect both their liberties and pocketbooks.

We can hope that Ms. Giles and Mr. O'Keefe will serve as role models for millions of other

young Americans who see that the present generation in Washington is stealing their financial future and liberty.

All too many in the mainstream media have climbed in bed with government rather than doing their duty to expose governmental wrongdoing. By using the new technologies, smart amateurs with courage and good judgment are becoming effective investigative journalists.

Richard W. Rahn is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and chairman of the Institute for Global Economic Growth.