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Right Wing Punks

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The news that James O'Keefe and three confederates were arrested for entering the premises of Senator Mary Landrieu's offices in New Orleans on false pretenses and with pernicious intentions — either to videotape the office or to record conversations — brought back to my mind a word I seldom use: punk.

James O'Keefe is a punk. This was obvious in his manipulative videotape of an ACORN office where he and a lady friend went posing as a prostitute and her pimp. The ACORN workers responded foolishly, sort of like the cops who came to Henry Louis Gates' door in Cambridge last summer. In an effort to appear non-judgmental, which is a very important quality among those who work with the poor, the ACORN workers failed to recognize the hoax, and failed to confront its purported criminal nature. They were wrong but the whole episode left me with a question: Who appointed Mr. O'Keefe an investigator? Who ordained this witch hunt?

Met with accolades and praise from rightwing nuts everywhere for his ACORN video, Mr. O'Keefe appointed himself the investigator of Senator Landrieu. In so doing, he thought nothing of breaking the law. There is a word for a person who does that: vigilante. Nor can O'Keefe claim the protection of being a journalist. Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward did not break the law to uncover Watergate, nor did they ever impersonate some they were not. Journalists don't do that.

Punks should have been spanked more frequently by their parents. By the time they reach their twenties, like Mr. O'Keefe, they need to have the book thrown at them. For being a punk is not unique to youth. Read the Live Feed of the State of the Union presided over by Deal Hudson of InsideCatholic.com. It is revolting. It is childish. It adds nothing to political discourse. It is profoundly unchristian. It is the work of a punk, or a bunch of punks. Punks grow up, if not attitudinally at least in years lived, but let's hope Mr. O'Keefe spends several months growing up in a not-too pleasant prison cell.

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