

February 6, 2023

TO: Project Veritas Board of Directors, Project Veritas Action Board of Directors, and Executive Management:

*Note: The opinions, data shared, and anecdotes were compiled by 1/3 of the PV staff, representing every department. Not all signed this letter, but all had compelling reason to contribute. Some signatories have not been the subject of abuse nor witnessed any abuse but found the corroborated behavior troubling and were willing to sign.*

The undersigned are troubled and frustrated with James' management style and business acumen. These behaviors and actions are antithetical to our core values, and it came to a head this week. Most recently, the treatment of Barry Hinckley and Tom O'Hara. These 2 highly respected individuals did what they thought was right for the betterment of the organization and got berated in public on Tuesday and effectively terminated by Thursday.

A screenshot of a text message from Barry Hinckley. The text reads: "Team. Last night I stood up to a Bully and was fired. Management by shaming and bullying is never acceptable and it doesn't belong in the workplace. I won't tolerate it personally or on behalf of my coworkers / direct reports. I'm proud to say I stand by my actions. It was an honor to work with you. As they say...BeBrave. Do Something." The time "5:13 AM" is visible in the bottom right corner of the message box.

Barry Hinckley  
Team. Last night I stood up to a Bully and was fired. Management by shaming and bullying is never acceptable and it doesn't belong in the workplace. I won't tolerate it personally or on behalf of my coworkers / direct reports. I'm proud to say I stand by my actions. It was an honor to work with you. As they say...BeBrave. Do Something.  
5:13 AM

These actions led to immediate communication between concerned PV members. Over the past 2 days we collected additional examples of behavior which crossed the line. The following bulleted items came from individuals and are edited **as little as possible** to keep the spirit of everyone's individual thoughts.

- James has become a power drunk tyrant and he is exactly who he pontificates on who we should be exposing.
- I'm on the side of holding James accountable for his behavior that has damaged important relationships inside and outside of PV. A great example is Spencer Meads and Eric Cochran. Both left because they were so abused and overworked, Eric Cochran was asked to do lie detector I believe, and James would make derogatory statements about him to the staff because he was unhappy that Eric left. James went as far as to call Spencer a pussy in Vegas, and Spencer heard him say it. Both of these guys were mission driven and suffered through it. They were raided and James still called Spencer that name - he never forgave them for making a decision to leave for their own mental wellbeing

- Airing grievances leading to termination is what has prevented me from speaking up in the past. The times I have, I was accused of violating my NDA, sabotage, had my behavior labelled traitorous.
- I say we exhibit some patience. We have all been on the receiving end of unnecessary, seemingly intentionally humiliating, and outright cruel behavior. And I've certainly not been here as long as many of you and I don't mean to invalidate any of what you have experienced. But I believe James knows he's in over his head, he's scared, overworked, manic on stress and drunk on the success of the last two weeks. His flaws aside, his aims are genuine and he is a true leader. He just needs a push back in the right direction. I hope this potential board action is that push. The sign he needs to free himself from constantly feeling the need to hold everything tightly, trust his team, and allow himself to focus on the creative while others run the stuff he doesn't actually want to be doing anyway. Patience, not mutiny. I do believe that he has the sense to recognize that when faced with an inevitability. He's rundown and in need of a sabbatical. PV is strong, and all we can do is continue to show that we will put out great work to whatever end.
- Lack of transparency when mistakes are made from the top down - Example: Nancy Vaden never was suing us, and it was told to our entire company as if it was absolutely true
- Davis was a bad hire. We all know that - but when I tried early on to prevent him from assuming so much power and authority, knowing he couldn't handle it, I received a classic "If you don't agree, there's the door."
- Another example in a group setting is the all-hands with respect to Jitsu's leaving the Org. Spain had the bravery to say, "we should have the ability to disagree", and to paraphrase "we are not disposable". JOK was combative: Conflating internal v. external issues. This stifles valuable internal voices and we need to have this dialog in a respectful manner.
- We still haven't fully recovered the losses from Fall of 2021 - and now over a year later, we've lost more people, through resignation or termination, and I fear that on the path we are on, we will not only prevent the growth of the organization, but we will be led to a place where the organization doesn't exist.
- I received complaints from an FBI source about James. Diamondback was upset about witnessing James' treatment of staff during his interview in DC. He said that James was snapping at employees and ordering them around in a very curt manner. Diamondback called me after and told me James needs a people management class and that he was a "diva." I reported this to Jen and not sure what was done after that.

- Recently, Diamondback was introduced to a high-dollar PV donor named XXX. During dinner, James offered Diamondback a job with PV and XXX was extremely supportive of this. James did not end up following through with hiring Diamondback due to “cultural differences.” The cultural differences were Diamondback’s noting James’ micromanaging behavior. XXX caught wind of this and told Diamondback he was turned off by James’ overpromising and boastful demeanor during the dinner and that he intends to pull out of supporting PV.
- Noel and I introduced a high-net-worth husband and wife to PV. They are now a PV high dollar donor. They had been friends of ours for a while. Between 6-8 months ago, the husband told me that he was extremely turned off by what James asked of him. In one of their first meetings, James asked him in a rather demanding way that he write a \$75,000 check to PV on the spot. This made him uncomfortable, but he continued the relationship with PV because he believes in what we’re doing. Then, they attended a donor event in Napa CA where James was present. The wife asked James for a photo, and he very rudely and publicly turned her down. She was humiliated to the point of tears. They have miraculously continued support for PV, but whenever I see them they have something negative to say about James behavior or “ego” as they put it, and I feel PV may lose them as donors soon.
- It’s sad, embarrassing, and increasingly becoming James’ standard for how he treats supporters. Honestly, it’s wild and incredibly irrational behavior for someone who publicly and internally claims to “be the only one raising money.”
- I was yelled at in a small meeting in JOK’s office for expressing my concern on my employee’s use of time and spend. Was told it wasn’t my place to question his decision, even though it turned out to be the correct business decision, and the one we ultimately followed. The meeting was loud enough that people asked how I was after I left the office. By the close of the business that day, we were able to have a productive conversation.
- At Democracy Partners trial, in public, I was yelled at in front of jurors because he was hungry and then he took the 8-month pregnant woman’s sandwich.
- Barry, Dan, Tom, and Eric were the subject of bullying on the leadership meeting with at least 10 people present. No productive outcome resulted that needed a forum of everyone present.
- A follow-up meeting after the above incident with Gillian, Tom, Joanne, Jon. In regard to a high-level email, James berated the team due to a poor business decision which was later retracted. Verbal abuse was so severe other departments came over and apologized on James’ behavior.

- Everyone is operating in fear because James is erratic. One doesn't know whether one will meet his needs and expectations, since the target is constantly moving, and priorities are shifting.
- Laura quit because she was humiliated and demeaned by James for not being fast enough to "give a critical mass story" even though she wasn't hired on as a journalist. In front of all journalists.
- In a personal conversation with Jered after he left PV, it was discussed that his departure was due to personality clashes between Jered and James. Jered is also held in high regard to the PV staff, and played an instrumental role in the organization.
- All the theatre stuff and how that is handled makes me very uneasy. I understand it is rationalized as "raising awareness of our brand," but the cost of that both in a financial sense as well as personnel and resources, becomes priority over why donors actually give us money, which is to conduct undercover investigations which expose waste fraud and abuse. In the end, we are in a deficit now, our fans and potential fans beyond do not respond positively to all of that stuff because all they want is for us to carry out the mission.

Additionally, several donors have expressed their concern with their money being used to produce a show like PVE.

- I would describe Project Veritas' current environment with this saying: 'the beatings will continue until morale improves'
- In recent donor meetings with James his behavior has been arrogant and dismissive of the donor if they do not just sign up to give us five or six figure donations – this happened in the past few weeks in a meeting with a donor in Miami as well as with a donor in Beverly Hills – he has not been listening to what the donors have to say.
- James is frequently coming across as though we are desperate for funds and it is everyone's duty to send us money. Donors are hesitating about the size and whether gifts should be sent to Project Veritas.
- At a donor event in Greenwich in September James was one hour and fifteen minutes late – we had a room with one hundred people waiting for him to speak. People commented afterwards that he could have at least apologized for being so late. This is a good example of James not realizing that everyone's time is important and should be respected.

- Sept 2021 All Hands right after the flood. I went into the city with James to produce stand ups for the big release that evening. Arranging the shoot, directing the shots, wrote the script and acted as his teleprompter on the sidewalk. While we were there, we met Matt Nelco who rode around with us the rest of the day. While in the car, James was upset about a reel edit that was just sent for review from someone at the Radisson. I told him I'd take care of it and began calling the guys there to adjust his notes. Not 2min later, he calls Fredy after I just had, tells him the same thing I told him, looks at me and then looks at Matt Nelco, still a total stranger riding around with us, and goes "see this is why I need to hire a good producer, I have to do everything myself" this, coming after weeks of successful Covid vax releases while I was on the road with him the entire time, had me considering quitting while on the city boat that night
- James' constant habit of publicly demeaning people's role and responsibilities, almost in a way to then step in himself with this, "see I'm the one who fixed it" mentality. Example "junior editors"
- James treated Eric with hatred over Nick Givas, going as far as to have Vanessa strip away his title of Chief of Staff after just a few months and took Nick Givas' failure as an employee out on him specifically - James ran a narrative through the entire company that he was a toxic employee and not a leader. The reality was that Nick Givas a bad hire, pushed through by James, and Eric saw it and voiced it for 6+ months.
- Former Executive Producer Joe Halderman quit over James' treatment and being forced to come back into office while Covid was still very fresh and he was an older man with health problems. Would make rude comments and tease internally to others about Joe because of his want to remain safe during Covid's beginning.
- Jake has constantly been told to be weary of James' attitude/mood. It LITERALLY alters everyone's day and workflow.
- Not to make excuses from inner bickering and such but these problems trickle from top down.

- After Nancy was fired, Eric and Mario asked questions from James as to why the decision was made and expressed concerns for the future of PV due to massive turnover in executive leadership.

Initially, James sent aggressive messages in response and called Mario - but appeared to agree to disagree and move on.  
He never moved on.

Weeks later, we held an All Hands for a week at Radisson Hotel in New Rochelle. The entire week, Mario Eric and Michael Villani were publicly humiliated in every session possible in front of the whole staff. The three of them were interrogated and asked if we still had friendships with Nancy, with serious suggestions that we should cease all contact. As we know, it is actually unconstitutional (freedom of association) to tell people who can and can't be talked to. It was an outrageous veiled demand.

- For a whole week, Eric Mario Villani and others were so severely verbally attacked by James that the staff morale dropped to an all-time low. Mario believed he was going to be fired every single day when walking into the office in October 2021.
- It was the most vivid intimidation tactics ever seen. James has held a grudge against these staff members since then, where he purposefully cited these September 2021 events in all hands calls in 2022 when he was upset. He holds the grudge, and it's become an awkward work environment (to say the least) with James ever since then.
- When Eric and Jake suggested to start using Twitter Spaces for the organization, James liked the idea. When it came time to do the first one, James would ignore/disregard/become busy or "use the bathroom" to avoid Eric's rundown of what to do and how to do it. Then James became very frustrated because he wasn't properly "prepped."
- Eric Spracklen was forced to take a polygraph test nearly a year after the diary had been leaked and Neil McCabe had left PV for no legitimate reason.

If you can't trust your own team let alone your own team leaders, what kind of trust do you claim to have? It's bullshit. The abuse and mental aftermath have been incredibly disgusting and demeaning. WHY??

- Jake was witness/"victim" to name calling that was belittling to himself/others. Whenever there was an edit/graphic/minor mistake/technical error with equipment James would say to Fredy "these Junior Editors need to be trained" in a demeaning tone. Sometimes with vulgar language added if James was really upset. There was one complaint that led to the top of the chain of command, recollection on who has been forgotten.

- Jake was in Colorado for the filming of the SI of Kris Jacks. They ended back at an airport in the middle of nowhere, literally, and James requested he send the footage (which are massive files) back to HQ to INSTANTLY (fake urgency) be cut. Jake did his best with the limited wifi in the nowhere airport that was available. James would constantly be asking how long it was taking. Trying not to displease James, Jake stayed in the small building to send as best as he could but was hurried by James to then get back on the private plane because of time sensitive scheduling for take off or there would be a massive charge for late take off.
- When there was concern of a “mole” in the office leaking information to the public, a majority of the staff were required to travel to HQ to be interrogated by two private investigators who were hired to identify the “mole.” Although I was told by the PI’s that my story checked out, as well as several of my colleagues expressing confidence that I was not the mole, James brought me in to personally question me a second time. Namely, questioning my mission driven-ness, and loyalty to the organization. After the investigation took place, the staff were never provided with a conclusion around who the “mole” was, and morale was so low colleagues were questioning their trust in one another which led to less collaboration, and an overall less effective and negative work environment.
- Bobby Harr (Lithium) was called at noon on November 17th by Jitsu at the demand of James to get a journalist to Mohonk ASAP to elicit education subjects. Bobby’s girlfriend was also asked to go as cover. All of this required last minute packing, flight, and her getting let off of work early, and we made it happen. While at Mohonk eliciting, James showed up to bar 6-10 feet away and began engaging subjects himself, swaying from the plan. James’s personal audio failed and my audio did not catch his conversation (not my responsibility, too far away). Following this, James lectured both Bobby and his girlfriend in his hotel room. After that, two different employees came to Bobby personally saying that James was blaming the loss of audio on Bobby’s girlfriend, a non-employee or contractor, and “talking mad shit on her.” Bobby nor his girlfriend were ever thanked or acknowledge by James for their efforts to get to New York asap, but instead ridiculed behind their backs to other colleagues for a mistake that was purely on James.

Generally, these patterns of behavior severely limit our ability to execute the PV mission and we feel it's our duty as employees and leaders of Project Veritas that care about its future to have a voice and demand needed change. **We ask the board to address the following:**

- **Cease bullying and erratic behavior.** Treat every person with respect and integrity. Business interactions need to be carried out with business acumen.
- **Cease micromanaging.** We are all hired to PV for leadership qualities. Leaders provide a diverse set of skills and professional history. We are not cut from the same cloth, and we have unique managerial styles and methods to achieve success. **As long as we are all contributing to the betterment of the mission: Let leaders lead.** Allow for failure, and the successes will be amplified. If people need guidance they will ask for it.
- **Cease undermining.** Our donors are the lifeblood of the organization. We need to have a unified front and not expose internal conflict to our financial supporters. Internally allow the chain of command to do its job; both upward and downward.
- Ensure controls are implemented to execute on the above **without fear of personal reprisal.** Ongoing, the board needs to be more proactive to ensure we don't backslide, regardless of who is in a leadership position.

We are writing this because we value the organization that James has built and what we've become. No one else is doing the work of PV, and we love it. What we do for our audience, we do incredibly well, however we can't become even greater until we unleash the FULL potential of the organization and its people. The **only product** we have is the material that comes from the people in this organization. If we DON'T make these changes, we will fail to attract and retain the **best people**. We have the Moral Courage to say what needs to be said. Continue down the path we are on, and you will have an Army of "yes men" who wouldn't dare pen this letter.

We are resilient. Failure is not an option. Be Brave. Do Something.

**Signed,**

**Production:** Michael Villani

**Comms:** Eric Spracklen, Mario Balaban, Jake Mantel, Patrick Van Duyne, Sal Gueli

**Journalists:** Arden Young, Preston Scagnelli, Bobby Harr (Lithium)

**Development:** Bethany Rolando, Joanne Sumner, Gillian Pietrowski, Jonathan Bailey

**IT/Facilities:** Joshua Hughes, Nick Mehaj, Angelo Martinez

## From Employees that both signed and didn't sign this letter

This is our moment to make history

It's not about sucking - it's about being able to do it without him because the brand is more powerful than any one individual

I hope James can realize we're doing this out of the love for the mission

There is honestly no PV without us

I'd like to propose a group call to talk about how everyone feels about what's been going on. How we feel about James' leadership and how we are going to react to ANY news about the board meeting. We need to be aligned and we all need to be heard.

Oh wow literally everyone is here

But I'm serious this is important I get it if you want to walk. But I want to hear from you and I want the truth raw. So the board can talk to James honestly on Monday

Everyone is righteously upset BECAUSE of James

It's important

Let the board take care of it

PV is about to decide if we have a company of Yes Men or company of independent thinkers

And we will compromise and present to the board something so amazing that this organization will last beyond all of us

Rule #2: James O'Keefe is NOT Project Veritas and the money for PV is NOT his money

That distinction will never be made more clear than this week

Rule #3: No more public crucifixions of staff because they disagree with terrible decisions at PV

Rule #4: We are a family of values not a cult of personality

We need to present to the board conditions of working that we will not compromise on. We get to lay out how we are treated and we should present to the board our wants and needs to make sure we as employees are heard by James individually and as a collective. We have the opportunity to create our rules and redefine James' relationship with us. We have to power to hold him accountable we mustn't stumble during the time that try men's souls. We must rise and create something greater than us. For future of PV. This is about keeping us here and making sure we aren't walked on.

Demand: Apologize for defaming key staff who were fired/left but loved PV and gave everything to this place and then were defamed

Rule #1: You can't spit in an employees face over a tweet

I mean I'll give u a rule I follow period.

True story

Quite literally. Was screaming so wildly and loud within inches of my face that it indeed happened.

I'll treat everyone with respect, as everyone deserves. And I'll never out anyone. In a serious matter I'll keep it private. But the day I'm disrespected and disrespected in front of my peers to belittle me, my fren forget it.

- I've remained complacent because in the end I believe in the mission so much, but to remain silent as the problem worsens, I would feel like a hypocrite, which is one of the very things our organization sets out to expose.

Rule 6: Trust those who have the institutional knowledge, history, and intuition of making the right decisions. Discuss accordingly

I think it's important we all get together and make sure that we can come to a compromise so we don't lose people. And people don't walk out. We can all stay and get through this together

Rule #7: No more fake urgency

Compromise is made when multiple parties agree. Meaning James must be a part of it. It seems he is unwilling. Time will tell.

If one end is absolute then there is no compromise, thus this is all pointless if we don't give the chance for change. Whether big or small, there has to be the opportunity.

Us continuing to work and not speaking up has allowed this behavior to continue and makes it look like we don't care. Us not

If anyone attempts to retaliate against any of you for this, I will go to war for you

### **Project Veritas Core Values**

1. **MORAL COURAGE** - Courage is the virtue that sustains all others. We choose to overcome our fears.
2. **WE ARE ALL LEADERS** - Turning people into leaders. Completed staff work. Ownership.
3. **COLLABORATION** - Best not to work in silos. No one individual is as smart as all of us.
4. **RESILIENCE** - Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. Never, ever, ever give up. We don't let mistakes or setbacks discourage us. Pursue perfection, knowing full well you will never attain it.
5. **MISSION DRIVEN** - The best people are motivated by purpose. We are passionate and truly believe in our cause. We must be externally focused, not internally focused.
6. **MAKE THE STATUS QUO DO THE IMPOSSIBLE** - We move mountains. Failure is not an option. We do whatever it takes.
7. **THE TIP OF THE SPEAR** - We are a loss leader. We do not shy away from conflict or litigation.

### **Project Veritas Ethical Values**

Rule #1 – Truth is paramount. Our reporting is fact based with clear and irrefutable video and audio content. Truth is paramount. We never deceive our audience. We do not distort the facts or the context. We do not “selectively edit.”

Rule #2 – We do not break the law. We maintain one-party consent when recording someone is inherently moral and ethical. We never record when there is zero-party consent. In areas where we are required to have consent from all parties, we seek legal guidance regarding the expectation of privacy’s impact on our right to record.

Rule #3 – We adhere to the 1st Amendment rights of others. During our investigations we do not disrupt the peace. We do not infringe on the 1st Amendment rights of others.

Rule #4 – The Zekman Test. The undercover investigations we pursue are judged by us to be of “vital public interest” and “profound importance.” The Zekman Test is our baseline. Undercover investigative reporting is necessary because, “...there’s no other way to get the story...” Whereas the Society of Professional Journalists allows for undercover techniques, if undercover techniques are necessary to expose issues of vital public importance; we believe they are not only allowed but required.

Rule #5 – We Protect the Innocent When Possible - Embarrassing private details are not to be investigated. We stay away from irrelevant embarrassingly intimate details about private citizens personal lives. We look for individual wrong-doing and judge its public importance. The irrelevant religious or sexual dispositions of our targets are not to be investigated.

Rule #6 – Transparency. Our methods and tactics must be reasonable and defensible. We use the “Twelve Jurors on Our Shoulder” rule. The work has to be done with such a degree of integrity that it can withstand scrutiny in both law and ethics. We are comfortable with transparency. We must be willing to be ready to disclose our methods upon publication.

Rule #7 – Verifying and Corroborate Stories – Evaluate impact on third parties and Newsworthiness of Statements Alone. We consistently consider the probable truth or falsity of statements, examine any reasons to doubt the veracity of underlying assertions and whether the assertions are newsworthy. When possible, we will confirm with our subjects that their statements captured on video are accurate and truthful. At the very least, we will give our

subjects an opportunity to elaborate and/or respond. In all matters, we rely on the 1st Amendment to protect our ability to publish newsworthy items after our internal deliberations. On whether there is an obligation to ensure the veracity of statements made on video, 1.) consider whether the remarks may potentially impact an innocent third party. (Factors in support of releasing the content) and 2.)The Newsworthiness of the statement alone by itself. (Factors against releasing the content).

Rule #8 – Raw Video. In certain circumstances we may release the “raw” video to the press and or the public. But as a rule, we do not.

Rule #9 – Subject Anonymity. We investigate and question sources before promising anonymity. Once we confirm, we will do everything in our power to protect the identity of our confidential sources.

Rule #10 – Being Accountable. Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.

Rule #11 – We do not manufacture content. We do not put words in our investigative subjects' mouths. We do not lead the horse to water. Our purpose is to elicit truth.

Rule #12 – With Great Power comes Great Responsibility.