



**AMERICAN-ARAB
ANTI-DISCRIMINATION COMMITTEE**

**TEACHERS', SCHOOLS, AND UNIONS
DO NOT BECOME THE
GOVERNMENT'S PUPPET
TO MONITOR OUR CHILDREN**

*The Impact of the FBI's "Don't Be a Puppet"
CVE Web-Based Program in Your Schools*

#DONTTARGETOURCHILDREN

SUMMARY OF “DON’T BE A PUPPET PROGRAM”

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) “Don’t Be a Puppet” web-based Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) is a surveillance program. The FBI, a law enforcement agency known for monitoring communities of color, political dissidents, and Arab and Muslims under the guise of community outreach, is now entering your classrooms and taking control. Through the program teachers become extensions of law enforcement, policing statements and actions of students made inside or outside the classroom, or on social media – monitoring and conducting surveillance on our children. Assessing whether or not an individual is radicalized to the point where they pose a risk of violent extremism is far beyond the core business of education. Behaviors and factors of identified as “at risk” could also be “misdiagnosed” for other issues such as drug abuse, family violence or mental illness.



HOW DOES THE “DON’T BE A PUPPET” PROGRAM AND CVE-SURVEILLANCE IMPACT YOUR SCHOOLS?

- + *Federal Government in Your Classrooms***
- + *Surveillance and the Snow Ball Effect***
- + *Interference with Academic Freedom and Speech***
- + *Breeds Bullying***
- + *Negative Impact on Student Growth and Academic Progress***
- + *Law Enforcement in Schools***

HOW CAN YOU PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF YOUR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS?

Refuse to participate in the “Don’t Be a Puppet Program”

- + *Refuse to show/use in classrooms and/or to students***
- + *Organize colleagues to vocally oppose use by school, school districts & teachers, & teacher union members***
- + *Raise awareness at local Parent Teacher Associations and conferences***



Federal Government Intrusion in Your Classrooms

Your participation in the “Don’t Be a Puppet” program is an acquiescence of your control over your classrooms to the FBI. The federal government’s role in primary and secondary education is limited, but now the FBI wrongfully seeks to expand that power. The federal government’s intrusion into state sovereign controlled areas is not to aid in the achievement, progress or even performance of students, but to monitor students’ thoughts and daily activities. The FBI is telling teachers, schools, and school districts what they will teach their students, how to teach their students, and how to interact with their students. All this is done without any substantive review from appropriate stakeholders involved in the education of students. The FBI wants teachers and schools to change their curriculum to include as part of civics,

history, and/or social studies curriculum the “Don’t Be a Puppet” program to identify and/or weed out those students “at risk” for radicalization.

In order to do so, teachers, schools, and school districts will monitor students’ statements, thoughts, and actions. Teachers, schools, and school districts will then report this information (data) collected to the FBI. Teachers are now responsible to the FBI for a non-academic related activity. Furthermore, there is no evidence or scientific research to support that: 1) there are active “terrorist” or “violent extremist” student clubs in our nation’s schools; 2) the “at risk” factors can predict if any particular individual will become a “homegrown terrorist”; and 3) the creation of this program will actually aid in preventing radicalization.

Surveillance and the Snow Ball Effect

Teacher and subsequently their school and school districts’ monitoring and information collection on students under the “Don’t Be a Puppet Program” is all being done without any reasonable suspicion of criminal or illegal activity. Also keep in mind, that generally surveillance activities require a warrant. But with teachers as the

government’s puppet, doing the government’s “dirty work” the FBI attempts to evade the requirement of the warrant and to circumvent 4th Amendment protections.

The “Don’t Be a Puppet” program also has large risks for over-reporting on “at risk for radicalization” by teachers because of

fear that they do not want to be chastised and/or get in trouble with the FBI for not reporting, even if as claimed a “voluntary” program. As such, the FBI now has access to large amounts of information on students for no other reason than a teacher believed a student fit the profile of one of the “Don’t Be a Puppet” overbroad warning signs:

- Use of multiple communication or messaging applications
- Speaking in unusual languages
- Taking pictures of government buildings
- Viewing extremist¹ (unpopular or non-mainstream) material

There are no limitations and/or procedures on how this information collected will or will not be used, length of retention, disposal, and information sharing. There are also serious concerns that parents, teachers, schools or school district will be powerless as to correct students wrongly identified as “at risk.”

The FBI is watching every movement of a student, what is to stop them from watching teachers and school districts? If this program is allowed to exist against students in schools, then it can be implemented against all persons associated with the educational setting. School administrators

¹ It is important to make clear that the proffered warning sign is extremist material, not violent extremist material. This difference is crucial. The 1st Amendment protects a person’s right to extreme thoughts and views, and unfavorable opinions. Only when a person acts in violence, does the action become illegal.

could be tasked by the FBI to report on teachers, school districts and boards could be tasked by the FBI to report on school administrators to report back based on the same “at risk” factors (teacher’s name, teaching on Middle Eastern or foreign affairs issues, supporting or discussing political movements). This will be an immense interruption to the educational setting where teachers will be disciplined or provided warning for speaking on particular issues. This is already a common occurrence throughout our nation’s schools and institutions of higher learning. Teachers will have to be replaced and/or substituted based on an allegation of being “at risk” although they have committed no crime.



Interference with Academic Freedom and Chilling Speech

The “Don’t Be a Puppet” program has large risks for over-reporting on radicalization and consequently chilling speech and expression. The “Don’t Be a Puppet” program fails to separate extremism from violent extremism, simply because a student has opposing perspective or beliefs, and/or strict interpretation of a particular faith does not make him/her violent, “at risk”, a

criminal or a terrorist. So why treat students as such, by reporting back to the federal law enforcement, and subject these students, and their families to continued monitoring and interrogation. It also fails to understand that young people may be exposed to violent extremism without fully comprehending the implications of such actions or without ever actually agreeing and/or acting upon those ideologies that promote and justify violent extremism.

School and the learning environment are supposed to encourage debate, discussion, and thinking on all topics even controversial ones. However, discussions, ideas, and learning on issues related to Islam, the Middle East, and the Arabic language will be chilled. Students will stray away from not only speaking on such issues but disclosing their relation and/or interest in such areas. This is not only counterproductive to the academic setting, but counterproductive to embracing and lifting up diversity.

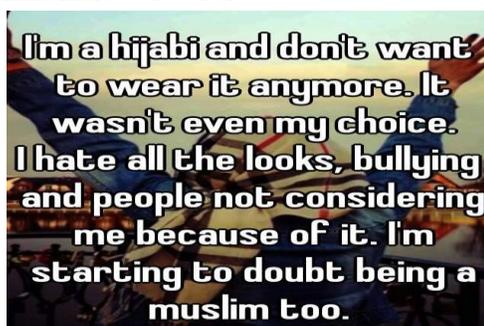
Breeds Bullying

Alarming, the program targets children in a way that will promote bullying based on race, national origin, religion, and political opinion. The program, designed for high school students, includes “games” and exercises that perpetuate stereotypes and unreliable indicators that youth are “at risk” of radicalization. For example, the exercises pose quiz format questions the FBI identified that would be of FBI interest:

1. One option asked about a youth posting on Facebook their intent to attend a political protest.
2. The second option asked about a young person posting about feeling emotional.
3. The third option described a youth with a common Arabic name who posted on Facebook that he’s going overseas on a mission and asked if anyone wants to join.

Exercises and games under the “Don’t Be a Puppet” program will not make our schools safe. Rather the program will endorse students bullying of children,

calling them “ISIS” or terrorist, and retaliation or threats by students to “call the FBI on them” if they complain or report bullying. Reports have found that children who are made to feel isolated, different, un-American, are vulnerable to bullying. This negatively impacts academic achievement, particularly students from communities of color.²



² See M.L. Newman, G.W. Holden, Yvon Delville, *Isolation and the Stress of Being Bullied*, 28 J. Adolescence 343–57 (2005); see also *Bullying Victims Often Suffer Academically, Particularly High Achieving Blacks and Latinos*, AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (2011); see also Anna Lacey and Dewey Cornell, *The Impact of Bullying Climate on Schoolwide Academic Performance*, Curry School of Education – Univ. of Virginia.

Negative Impact on Student Growth and Academic Progress

Your participation in the “Don’t Be a Puppet” program shifts the focus from educating your students to monitoring children as if they are criminals. Trust and respect is essential to the student teacher relationship and the overall progress of students. There is an unspoken trust between teachers and students, for teacher to protect students and guide them in the right direction. This program destroys this trust and respect in the student teacher relationship. No one, especially a child, wants to talk to anyone about anything or be anywhere, where they fear someone is constantly watching them. If children do not feel comfortable in school, they do not want to be there.



Children whom do not trust their teachers, will likely exhibit lower attention span in class, lower dedication to learning and studying, resistance to building relationships with other students, and communicate less. When it comes down to it, teacher’s cannot teach children whom do not want to be there and do not want to communicate with them, and students cannot learn where their focus is on

watching what they say and what the teacher is writing down, instead of the assignment. This only exacerbated with a teacher forced to monitor their students.

Importantly, the loss of trust with teachers impacts the school overall, including administrators and paraprofessionals work with students and students willingness to seek their assistance. Particularly in poor communities and communities of color, where career and guidance counselors, and mental health workers in school may be their only support system and vital to their success, is now compromised. Additionally, there is a lack of trust for law enforcement in these respective communities, and now they go to school where may be the only place they feel safe, but have law enforcement right in their classrooms.

The “Don’t Be a Puppet” program’s disruption to the classroom is especially concerning. The program may lead to students identified to being suspended and/or removed from the classroom. Students who have been wrongfully identified have now lost out on academic learning, which may lead to delay in achievement goals and anticipated graduation, or being held back if required exams or core subject material missed and/or chronic absenteeism due to identification under the program. These students also have to deal with social stigma from being identified, even if wrongfully, by their peers, which is immensely daunting to overcome and leads to bullying and disciplinary issues.



THE SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE

LAW ENFORCEMENT IN SCHOOLS



Currently, there is a mandatory 10 year sentencing minimum for providing “material support to terrorism.” With the definition of “material support” broadly defined, and arrests and charges made based on Facebook and social media posts, children identified “at risk” under the “Don’t Be a Puppet” program could face material support charges. How? Because similar to reports addressing the War on Drugs and school to prison pipeline, the 10 year mandatory minimum could be used as an intimidation and coercive tool to entrap children and force them to agree to plea deals.

We have no idea what the FBI will or will not do with the information (data) collected from teachers, schools, and/or school districts reporting under “Don’t Be a Puppet.” There is no explanation, procedures or assurances on how this information will or not be used. However, history, and practice and policy of the FBI as in the Minneapolis Public Schools case³

³ Amanda Sperber, Somalis in Minnesota question counter-extremism program targeted at Muslims, THE GUARDIAN, Sept. 14, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/sep/14/somali-muslims-minnesota->

among others, demonstrate that the information will not be used to help children but the information will be used to target and entrap people.

Additionally, students from communities of color already experience disproportionate disciplinary treatment in schools with high suspension and expulsions. Further, the website encourages teachers and students to call the police for any innocuous behavior or behavior that could be considered one of the overbroad “warning signs.” For some students this will result in unfounded school arrests and police arrests, and their names put in the system. For other students this will result in their first interaction with a police officer or law enforcement official is a negative one. This only perpetuates legitimate feelings of distrust for law enforcement and authority, and can impact a student’s interaction with law enforcement for the rest of their lives.

NEED HELP

CONTACT ADC AT
(202) 244-2990

OR FILE A REQUEST ONLINE
WIT ADC AT

<http://www.adc.org/legal>

counter-extremism-program; The 'Countering Violent Extremism' program institutionalizes injustice against Somalis, Minn. Post, May 1, 2015,

<https://www.minnpost.com/community-voices/2015/05/countering-violent-extremism-program-institutionalizes-injustice-against-so>. The case of Mohamed Mohamud is another example, where the FBI used father’s requests for help as an excuse to send in informants to specifically target his son and ignited him further down the wrong path. Murtaza Hussain, Avoiding the Sting: U.S.

Organization Proposes Different Approach to "Radicalization", The Intercept, May 1, 2015, <https://theintercept.com/2015/05/01/fbi-needs-stop-manufacturing-terrorist-plots/>.

*This summary report drafted by ADC Staff Attorney Yolanda C. Rondon, Esq. Revised April 2016.