

# PRAGER U

**IMPACT:** PragerU, short for Prager University, is an American conservative organization that produces content to promote “Judeo-Christian values” to their millions of followers through short, lecture-style videos. Although it is not an academic institution, by using the word “university” in its title PragerU implies that the right-wing messaging they spread is factually correct and expert-driven. A number of PragerU’s videos spread anti-Muslim rhetoric and conspiracy theories.

- Prager University is an **American conservative non-profit organization that creates five-minute, animated, lecture-style videos and social media content on political, economic, and social topics.** While it uses the word “university” in its name, **PragerU is not an accredited academic institution and does not offer degree programs.** Its website states that the organization believes in “economic and religious freedom, a strong military that protects our allies, and in the religious values that inform Western civilization, also known as Judeo-Christian values.”
- The organization was **established in 2010 by conservative radio talk show host Dennis Prager and radio producer Allen Estrin in order to present conservative views and combat perceived “liberal bias”** in the American education system. In the 2018 *MotherJones* piece, writer Mark Oppenheimer describes PragerU’s content as “engineered to sway those in the mushy middle, especially young people trying to figure out what they stand for.”
- The same *MotherJones* piece quotes Prager stating it was his duty to provide a conservative viewpoint “on things that matter—economics, good and evil, America, Israel, religion, God, etc.” because universities had “shut down” and “demonized nonleft ideas,” and the media was not “far behind.”
- In 2006, **following the election of the first American Muslim to Congress, Rep. Keith Ellison, Prager argued that Ellison should not be allowed to take the oath on the Qur’an, “because the act undermines American civilization.”** Prager went on to claim that allowing Ellison to take the oath on the Qur’an would “embolden Islamic extremists and make new ones, as Islamists, rightly or wrongly, see the first sign of the realization of their greatest goal -- the Islamicization of America.”
- In a June 2017 interview with *The Times of Israel*, Prager described his digital empire, including PragerU, as a “growing alternative to the moral and intellectual wasteland known as the Western university.”
- Francesca Tripodi, a sociologist at the Data & Society Research Institute, has argued that “sites like PragerU create an opportunity to dabble in content that seems extremely innocuous, yet makes connections to the same kinds of ‘revelations’ pushed out by the alt-right.”
- According to the tracker on its website, **PragerU videos have received over 3 billion views and counting.** As of February 2020, PragerU’s YouTube channel had 888 videos with a total of over 900 million views and almost 2.5 million subscribers. In addition, the organization produces weekly shows including a live “Fireside Chat with Dennis Prager” and “The Candace Owens Show.”
- PragerU also has a second YouTube channel, PragerU International, that offers videos in various languages including Hebrew, Arabic, Russian, and Spanish. The channel has over 500,000 views. Additionally, the organization runs PragerFORCE, a student ambassador program for university students in America and around the world who represent PragerU on campus.
- PragerU’s **“faculty” includes a variety of conservative and right-wing political commentators,** including Ben Shapiro, the current editor of *The Daily Wire*, who has a history of making derogatory and

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inflammatory comments about [Muslims](#), [Arabs](#), [African-Americans](#), and [transgender](#) people. Other individuals who serve as hosts in the videos include the who's who of "internet and media personalities," [described](#) by *Buzzfeed* reporter Joe Bernstein as individuals who've "made their bones in the Trump era antagonizing the campus left." They include [Jordan Peterson](#), [Dinesh D'Souza](#), [Alan Dershowitz](#), [Christina Sommers](#), [Charlie Kirk](#). Presenters for each video are given an [honorarium](#) of \$1000.

- [Reporting](#) by *Buzzfeed* in 2019 found that PragerU's videos do not focus on the news cycle, rather addressing "almost every divisive national issue in the United States today: racism, sexism, income inequality, gun ownership, Islam, immigration, Israel, police brutality," and free speech. In 2018, the **Southern Poverty Law Center** [said](#) that **"more than a few [of Prager's video topics] function as dog whistles to the extreme right."**
- PragerU has **published numerous videos related to Islam and Muslims**; 22 [videos](#) appear when searching the word "Muslim" on its website. Some of the titles include: "[The Dangers of Islamism](#)," "[Are Some Cultures Better than Others?](#)" "[How Is Muslim Immigration to Sweden Working Out?](#)" "[Where Are the Moderate Muslims?](#)" and "[Radical Islam: The Most Dangerous Ideology](#)." According to PragerU, the [goal](#) of their videos is "to undo [the] damage" inflicted by an education system that teaches American students that their country is "a land of inequality and racism" and a place of which to be "ashamed."
- In a [video](#) titled **"Is Islam a Religion of Peace?"** host [Ayaan Hirsi Ali](#) **claims that "a reform of Islam is necessary" because "Islam is not a religion of peace" and that "it is foolish to insist...that the violent acts committed in the name of Islam can somehow be divorced from the religion itself."** Hirsi Ali also hosted another [video](#), "Why Don't Feminists Fight for Muslim Women?" in which **she claimed that "Islamic culture" was to blame for the sexual assault of girls and women in Europe**. She [identified](#) the perpetrators of such acts as immigrant Muslim men, stating that they committed these crimes because they have a "different set of values." She claims the Islamic value system is "one in which women are viewed as either commodities (that is, their worth depends on their virginity), or on the level of a prostitute if they are guilty of public 'immodesty' (wearing a short skirt for example)."
- In another [video](#) entitled **"Where are the Moderate Muslims?,"** host **Hussein Aboubakr claims that his teachers and imams reacted to the news of the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center with "joy," asserting that "my experience was typical."** Aboubakr maintains that the majority of Muslims do not "tolerate freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, women's rights and gay rights." He goes on to [state](#) that "the Muslim world is dominated by bad ideas and bad beliefs" which provide the "soil in which radical Islam grows." **The hosts of these videos both use personal encounters with Islam to make broad generalizations that promote dangerous and problematic tropes** about a faith practiced by 1.7 billion people worldwide.
- In another [video](#) on Muslim immigration to Sweden, filmmaker [Ami Horowitz](#) [claims](#) that "increased Muslim immigration is leading to a spike in rapes and other violent crime." In February 2017, U.S. President Donald Trump [cited](#) Horowitz's documentary as evidence that immigration was contributing to crime in Sweden. A February 2017 piece in the *Guardian* [noted](#) that two Swedish police officers who were interviewed for the documentary said their comments were "taken out of context" and accused Horowitz of "bad journalism."
- In a September 2015 PragerU [video](#), [Raymond Ibrahim](#) **describes "Islamism" -- a general term for the popular use of Islamic terms of reference in public life -- as "a radical, and often violent,**

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**form of Islam,”** and claims is the “world's most dangerous ideology.” Ibrahim goes on to **claim that an estimated 150 million Muslims are Islamist and within this, there are “three million potential terrorists.”**

- A May 2018 PragerU [video](#) features British author **Douglas Murray claiming Europe is “committing suicide” due to “the mass movement of peoples into Europe...from the Middle East, North Africa and East Asia.”** This is the central thesis of Murray’s 2017 book, *The Strange Death of Europe*. A December 2018 [article](#) by Alex Kotch in *Sludge* noted that the **Murray’s words “evoke the common white nationalist trope of ‘white genocide.’”** Kotch also interviewed Mark Pitcavage of the Anti-Defamation League’s Center on Extremism, who stated the video is “filled with anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric...White supremacists are certainly almost all anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim, so they would certainly agree with a lot of the things that [Murray] says.”
- A 2019 episode of **“The Candace Owens Show” featured an interview with right-wing, self-identified “Imam” Mohamad Tawhidi.** A 2019 piece in *The Intercept* [stated](#) that “Tawhidi presents himself as an Islamic reformer who embraces and amplifies far-right warnings that immigration by his fellow Muslims poses an existential threat to Western civilization.” On the [show](#), when asked by Owens whether or not the Prophet Muhammad was a good person, Tawhidi stated that the Prophet is “seen differently by all schools of thought” in Islam and then points towards ISIS’s viewpoint on the question, thus equating the violent militant group’s views to that of normative Islamic thought. At one point during the discussion **Tawhidi goes claims that “there’s war” between Jews and Muslims and states Muslims “must and [are] obliged to be hostile towards Jews.”** Tawhidi makes other **unfounded claims such as that the “left funded ISIS,” that London Mayor Sadiq Khan is corrupted by a “Pakistani mentality,” and that U.S. Congresswoman Ilhan Omar is “ISIS with lipstick. Same ideology, with lipstick.”** Owens also notes with alarm the “Muslim birthrate” and states there is a “flood of people coming in that believe in Sharia law” which poses a danger to western civilization.
- An August 2019 episode of Owens’ show [featured](#) American novelist [Andrew Klavan](#) who during the segment stated that, **“there’s no such thing as Islamophobia...nobody’s irrationally fearful of Islamic people...they saw the violence that infests the Islamic community.”** He went on to [claim](#) that “over 75 percent of terrorism worldwide is Islamic. Something like 13 of the 14 largest violent conflicts in the world involve Islamic people...something is happening in Islam. **There’s a debate to be had whether or not that violence is inherent to Islamic philosophy or is it a cancer in the house of Islam.**” Klavan has no academic or personal background in the study of Islam or international relations.
- A September 2019 PragerU video features former Breitbart London editor-in-chief, [Raheem Kassem](#), who claims without evidence that media company, Al Jazeera, was “associated with Osama bin Laden” and that the government of Qatar, which funds the network, wants to “weaken the U.S.” in order to secure a “victory for them and their radical form of Islam.”
- In an April 2019 [episode](#) of “Fireside Chat,” **Prager refers to the niqab (traditional face veil worn by some Muslim women) as “anti-human.”** He states, “When you see pictures of a bunch of women, all of whose faces are invisible covered by black shrouds... their humanity has been utterly compromised. For all you know, there’s an animal inside that [veil]...you don’t even know who’s in there...The person has

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become invisible.”

- In its 2019 [annual report](#), **PragerU reports that over 60 percent of its viewers on YouTube are under the age of 35, that it has over 7 million social media followers, and that 40 percent of the organization’s “funds are raised online from people who watch our content.”** In 2017, PragerU [sued](#) Google for placing age restrictions on some of its YouTube videos. A judge [dismissed](#) the complaint in March 2018.
- According to the organization’s **2018 tax documents, it took in almost \$18 million in contributions and grants.** The 2018 *MotherJones* piece includes PragerU CEO Marissa Streit [stating](#) that “Most of its annual budget, about \$6 million, is donated...and nearly 40 percent of PragerU’s revenue is from small donors.” A January 2020 *New York Times* [investigation](#) found that **in 2019, the organization raised \$22 million and aims to raise \$25 million in 2020.**
- A 2015 [piece in Rewire News](#) noted that **fracking billionaires Dan and Farris Wilks, who own the conservative website *The Daily Wire*, were PragerU’s largest donors at the time.** The article found PragerU “received \$6,550,000 from the Wilks family.” Other foundations that have [donated](#) the organization include [Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation](#) which supplied PragerU with \$215,000 between 2010 and 2013 and which has [contributed](#) millions to anti-Muslim organizations.

Bridge Initiative FactSheet