

Nefarious SPLC Fraudulently Defames the Liberty Council

Debunking the SPLC “Hate Group” Myth

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The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), an organization that has recently defamed Liberty Counsel, is a money-driven organization that has admitted its own hypocrisy, lost sight of its own vision, and stooped to arbitrary name-calling to pander to its donors and media sensationalists. It has even been exposed by our courts to be instrumental in the attempted mass murder of American citizens. Allow us to set forth facts about this group.

What is the SPLC?

The SPLC calls itself “a nonprofit civil rights organization dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry.”[1] It developed its reputation by monitoring the activities of racist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan.[2]

The SPLC was founded in 1971 by Morris Dees, who had made a fortune in direct mail marketing. He used the same skills at SPLC, turning it into a powerful fundraising machine.[3] It has an annual budget of about \$30 million,[4] but also a massive “endowment” of \$223 million as of 2010,[5] including funds in bank accounts in the Cayman Islands and Bermuda.[6] The American Institute of Philanthropy has given SPLC a grade of “F” for continuing to fundraise while sitting on such a massive pile of money.[7]

Journalist Ken Silverstein wrote in Harper’s magazine in 2000, “Today, the SPLC spends most of its time-and money-on a relentless fund-raising campaign, peddling memberships in the church of tolerance with all the zeal of a circuit rider passing the collection plate.”[8]

What does the SPLC consider a “hate group?”

Logically, a “hate group” should be defined as one whose members (1) actually say that they hate a particular group of people; and/or (2) engage in or condone violence or other illegal activity toward such a group.

The SPLC, however, uses much broader criteria for defining “hate groups,” and criteria which can vary depending on which of fourteen categories of “hate

groups” you are looking at - ranging from “Neo-Nazi” to “Black Separatist” to “Radical Traditional Catholicism.” These criteria are entirely subjective and largely ideological.[9]

While their rhetoric ties “hate groups” with actual “hate crimes,”[10] the SPLC acknowledges alleged “hate group” activities include constitutionally protected activities such as “marches, rallies, speeches, meetings, leafleting or publishing,” and that the “hate group” designation “does not imply a group advocates or engages in violence or other criminal activity.”[11] However, they do not distinguish between racist or violent groups and legitimate organizations that participate peacefully in the political process - tarring all with the same label.

As genuine “hate groups” such as the Ku Klux Klan have dwindled, the SPLC has broadened its target list in order to justify its continued existence. In recent years whole categories and new groups have been added, not because of actual “hate” activities, but because they hold conservative positions on controversial political issues such as immigration[12] and homosexuality.[13]

The SPLC claims that the number of “hate groups” in America increased by a staggering 66% from 2000 to 2010.¹⁴ Yet this is only as a result of their own expanding definition of what constitutes a “hate group.” Actual hate crimes, as measured by the FBI, fell nearly 25% between 1996¹⁵ and 2009.¹⁶

The SPLC’s Mark Potok has publicly confessed that there is “an element of hypocrisy” in the SPLC attacking conservative groups while remaining silent about liberal groups that use “exactly the same kind of tactics.”[17]

A liberal writer in *The Humanist* said, “The SPLC campaigns for laws that will effectively deny free speech and freedom of association to certain groups of Americans on the basis of their beliefs. . . . [T]hen, with no discernible irony, it goes on to justify its Big Brother methods in the name of tolerance.”[18] [This section © Family Research Council, *The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and Its So-called Hate Groups*, (<http://downloads.frc.org/EF/EF12I53.pdf>, retrieved September 13, 2015, used with permission.)]

According to a series of articles published in the *Montgomery Advertiser* in 1994, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) was originally founded to combat racial discrimination. However, since that time, the SPLC has experienced what one Vanderbilt University professor called “mission creep.”[19]

The SPLC recklessly labels and defames organizations that believe marriage is a union of a man and a woman. Without offering any methodology for designating an organization a hate group, and without offering any of its research for peer review, the SPLC asserts that an organization is an “anti-gay hate group” for the “propagation of known falsehoods – claims about LGBT people that have been thoroughly discredited by scientific authorities – and repeated, groundless name-calling.”

The SPLC attributes three reasons for falsely labeling Liberty Counsel as a hate group.

What has Liberty Counsel done to be falsely accused? First, Liberty Counsel has defended marriage and has a sincerely held religious belief that marriage is the union of one man and one woman.

Second, Liberty Counsel criticized hate crime legislation for punishing a defendant’s thoughts rather than centering criminal justice on the actual injury suffered by a victim.

And third, Liberty Counsel recognizes the human dignity of those who have changed their unwanted same-sex sexual attractions or behavior. Unlike the SPLC, Liberty Counsel does not marginalize their experience or demean the sincerity of their testimony.

Marriage as the union of a man and a woman has been assumed for millennia of human history. This understanding of the created order predates all civil government. It is affirmed from Genesis to Revelation. When Jesus was asked questions about marriage, he went to the defining passages in Genesis: “From the beginning of the creation God made them male and female” (Mark 10:6).

The SPLC's false labeling of people or organizations would mean that every civilization and its people and every major religious denomination would be similarly labeled by the SPLC as a hater or hate group. It is SPLC that demonizes good people and organizations and spews false accusations against those with whom it disagrees. The SPLC is reckless and its false labels are dangerous.

SPLC “Hate Group” Label Leads to Violence

By falsely and recklessly labeling Christian ministries as “hate groups,” the SPLC is directly responsible for the first conviction of a man who intended to commit mass murder targeted against a policy organization in Washington, D.C. On August 15, 2012, Floyd Corkins went to the Family Research Council with a

gun and a bag filled with ammunition and Chick-fil-A sandwiches. His stated purpose was to kill as many employees of the Family Research Council as possible and then to smear Chick-fil-A sandwiches in their faces (because the founder of the food chain said he believed in marriage as a man and a woman). Fortunately, Mr. Corkins was stopped by the security guard, who was shot in the process. Corkins is now serving time in prison. Mr. Corkins admitted to the court that he learned of the Family Research Council by reading the SPLC's hate map.

1 <http://splcenter.org/who-we-are>

2 <http://splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-files/ideology/ku-klux-klan/the-ku-klux-klan-0>

3 Dan Morse and Greg Jaffe, "Critics Question \$52 Million Reserve, Tactics of Wealthiest Civil Rights Group," *Montgomery Advertiser* (Feb. 13, 1994): 14A; "Highlights of the Southern Poverty Law Center," *Montgomery Advertiser* (Feb. 13, 1994): 15A.

4 Southern Poverty Law Center, 2007 Form 990, Part 1, Page 1, Line 1e; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2008 Form 990, Part I, Page 1, Line 8; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2009 Form 990, Part I, Page 1, Line 8.

5 Southern Poverty Law Center, 2010 Form 990, Schedule D, Part V, Page 2, Line 1g.

6 Southern Poverty Law Center, 2010 Form 990 Part V, #4b ("Cayman Islands, Bermuda").

7 American Institute of Philanthropy. *Charity Rating Guide & Watchdog Report*. December 2008. http://en.citizendium.org/wiki/Southern_Poverty_Law_Center.

8 Ken Silverstein, "The Church of Morris Dees," *Harper's Magazine* Vol. 301, No. 1806, November 1, 2000), pp. 54ff. Nexis. (Also reprinted online at: <http://www.americanpatrol.com/SPLC/ChurchofMorrisDees001100.html>).

9 <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-files/ideology>

10 E.g., the SPLC boasts, "We've crippled some of the country's most notorious hate groups by suing them for murders and other violent acts committed by their members." <http://www.splcenter.org/what-we-do/hate-and-extremism>

11 <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/hate-map>

12 Jerry Kammer, "Immigration and the SPLC: How the Southern Poverty Law Center Invented a Smear, Served La Raza, Manipulated the Press, and Duped its Donors," Background (Washington: Center for Immigration Studies, March 2010). Online at: <http://www.cis.org/immigration-splc>

13 See pro-family response at: <http://www.startdebatingstopphating.com/>

14 Southern Poverty Law Center, "U.S. Hate Groups Top 1,000" (02/23/2011), last accessed 06/30/11 at <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/news/us-hate-groups-top-1000>.

15 "Hate Crime Statistics 1996" Uniform Crime Reports, Table 1, Page 7, last accessed 06/30/11 at <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/1996>.

16 "Hate Crime Statistics 2009" Uniform Crime Reports, Table 1, Last accessed 06/20/11 at http://www2.fbi.gov/ucr/hc2009/data/table_01.html.

17 David Schimke, "Why Words Can Hurt You: The editor of Intelligence Report on racists, militants, and their favorite pundits," Utne Reader, December 2009 (web exclusive); online at: <http://www.utne.com/Politics/How-Hate-Speech-Can-Hurt-You-Intelligence-Report.aspx>

18 Barbara Dority, "Is the extremist right entirely wrong?" The Humanist, Vol. 55, No. N6 (November 1, 1995), p. 12ff. Nexis. Online at: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1374/is_n6_v55/ai_17529288/pg_3/

19 Carol M. Swain, "Mission Creep and the Southern Poverty Law Center's Misguided Focus." The Huffington Post, (last updated May 25, 2011) Online at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/carol-m-swain/mission-creep-and-the-sou_b_255029.html