

# SPLC denounced as ‘thoroughly disgraced’ after labeling pro-life, family organizations as ‘hate groups’

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CNA Staff



By CNA Staff

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Critics of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) say the organization has become extreme and “thoroughly disgraced,” after the center released its 2020 “census of hate groups,” which included numerous pro-life and family organizations.

Since 1990, the SPLC has issued an annual list of hate groups, listing organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazis. More recently, however, it has also included pro-life and pro-traditional marriage Christian organizations as “anti-LGBTQ hate groups.”

“Influential anti-LGBTQ hate groups,” the latest SPLC report says, “became further entrenched in the Trump White House, and the Trump administration continued its years-long pattern of appointing federal judges with ties to anti-LGBTQ groups. The most high-profile of these appointments was Amy Coney Barrett, who joined the Supreme Court last fall and has ties to Alliance Defending Freedom, which SPLC has designated an anti-LGBTQ hate group.”

Jeremy Tedesco, senior counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom, responded that “ADF is one of the nation’s most respected and successful Supreme Court advocates, and has won 11 cases at the U.S. Supreme Court since 2011.”

“We work to preserve fundamental freedoms of speech, religion, and conscience for all Americans,” Tedesco told CNA. “Once a respected civil rights organization, the Southern Poverty Law Center has destroyed its own credibility because of its blatant partisan agenda and discredited fundraising scheme. It has devolved into a group that attacks and spreads lies about organizations and people who do not agree with its far-left agenda.”

ADF has [created a website](#) responding to the SPLC's allegations.

The most recent SPLC report was released February 1. It presents a series of proposals, including a demand that “public figures involved in inciting and giving encouragement to the armed insurrectionists who stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 — destroying property,

injuring dozens of officers, and leaving five people dead – should be permanently deplatformed from all social media. In addition, corporations should permanently suspend political donations to Members of Congress and other elected officials that helped incite the violent siege and request that any past political donations to their campaigns be returned.”

In 2019, the SPLC’s reputation as a watchdog of injustice and inequality suffered a major hit when co-founder Morris Dees was forced to resign after serious allegations of racism and misogyny.

However, inclusion on the SPLC’s “hate group list” still has negative consequences. For example, online retail giant Amazon has used the list to disqualify nonprofit organizations from using the “Amazon Smile” program to receive donations.

Last year, NBC reported as scandalous that as 14 organizations designated “hate groups” by the SPLC benefited from the Paycheck Protection Program, designed to provide relief to small businesses affected by the coronavirus lockdowns.

Among the groups listed was the Ruth Institute, a pro-life organization based in Louisiana. Its founder and president, Dr. Jennifer Roback Morse, said the group faced bad publicity and unfair bias from the report.

“NBC relies on the Southern Poverty Law Center for the ‘hate group’ designation. This just means the Ruth Institute is a group the SPLC hates. Big deal. They raise a lot of money with their hate-mongering tactics. In 2018, their net assets were a half billion dollars,” Morse said.

Morse said “the Ruth Institute is a global, non-profit organization leading an international, interfaith coalition to defend the family and build a civilization of love. If fighting sex abuse, pornography, and divorce makes us a hate group, so be it.”

Consequences of the “hate group” designation have also been more serious. In 2012, Floyd Lee Corkins II, wielding a 9mm pistol and 50 rounds of ammunition, entered the lobby of the Family Research Council headquarters in Washington, D.C. He shot an unarmed security guard, who survived the attack and wrestled Corkins to the ground. Authorities said the security guard’s actions may have prevented a mass shooting.

Corkins, who was sentenced to 25 years in prison, confessed being motivated by the “anti-gay” label given to FRC by the SPLC.

William Boykin, executive vice president of Family Research Council, said the SPLC “is a political defamation machine that has little respect for freedom of thought and expression.”

“The Southern Poverty Law Center organization was connected in federal court to domestic terrorism when the shooter who attacked the Family Research Council in 2012 pled guilty to the crime while confessing that he relied on the SPLC’s discredited ‘hate map’ to target FRC,” Boykin told CNA.

Boykin said the organization has become so extreme that it is losing credibility.

“Across the political spectrum, there is an awareness of what the SPLC has become: a thoroughly disgraced organization that seeks to silence its political opponents with false and defamatory smears that endangers the lives of those targeted with it,” he said.

“[W]e have seen corporations and even the news media grow increasingly skeptical of SPLC’s discredited data, map, and its various lists,” Boykin said. “The FBI has removed links to the SPLC from its ‘hate crimes resources’ page and the Pentagon has distanced themselves from SPLC’s materials.”

The SPLC has been forced to retract several of its hate group designations. In 2018, it apologized and paid Maajid Nawaz a \$3.375 million settlement for including him in its “Field Guide to Anti-Muslim Extremists.” The SPLC retracted the entire field guide, which also notoriously included respected human rights advocate and scholar Ayaan Hirsi Ali.

Brian Brown, president of the International Organization for the Family also rejected the SPLC’s hate list classifications.

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“The SPLC should be held accountable for the provocative and inflammatory rhetoric that has already led to at least one shooting and called to account for the lives and livelihoods they've destroyed with their lies,” Brown continued.

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