



Christian Ministry Sues Southern Poverty Law Center

“We embarked today on a journey to right a terrible wrong,” said Dr. Frank Wright, president and CEO of the D. James Kennedy Ministries (DJKM), in announcing the filing of a defamation and religious discrimination lawsuit against the left-wing Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). SPLC has listed DJKM and other conservative and Christian organizations as “anti-LGBT hate groups.”

Included in the lawsuit are complaints against Amazon, for keeping DJKM off its charity donation program, AmazonSmile, and the charity rating organization Guide Star.

“Those who knowingly label Christian ministries as ‘hate’ groups, solely for subscribing to the historic Christian faith, are either woefully uninformed or willfully deceitful,” stated Wright. “In the case of the Southern Poverty Law Center,” he concluded, “our lawsuit alleges the latter.”

Wright explained why DJKM felt it necessary to file the suit, stating: “These false and illegal characterizations have a chilling effect on the free exercise of religion and on religious free speech for all people of faith.”

“After having given the SPLC an opportunity to retract, we have undertaken this legal action, seeking a trial by a jury of our peers, to preserve our own rights under the law and to defend the religious free speech rights of all Americans,” Wright added.

Guide Star is a tracker of nonprofits, which many donors use to make decisions about whom to give money. They provide data on how money is raised, and how it is expended by a nonprofit. Donors can then make a more informed choice as to which charities deserve their money, which serves a very legitimate purpose. But in this case, Guide Star is tagging any organization a “hate group” simply because it has taken an historic position of the Christian church.

Among the organizations called “hate groups” by the SPLC are the Heritage Foundation, Eagle Forum, the Family Research Council, and the American Freedom Defense Initiative.

The SPLC even added Dr. Ben Carson to its extremist watch list in 2014, although they later backed off. Some movies have also come under criticism by the SPLC, which claims that they are part of a right-wing conspiracy to influence the culture, such as Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*, and Ron Maxwell’s acclaimed movies on the Civil War, *Gettysburg* and *Gods and Generals*.

Guide Star is led by left-wing activist Jacob Harold, so it is not surprising that he would make use of the designations created by SPLC. For example, before joining Guide Star, Harold was the lead grant maker for the Hewlett Foundation’s philanthropy program. David Callahan, writing in *Fortunes of Change: The Rise of the Liberal Rich and the Remaking of America*, stated, “Hewlett Foundation awards grants to a variety of liberal and progressive causes.” Among those receiving money from Hewlett include the Brookings Institution, the Guttmacher Institute, the Center for Reproductive Rights, Planned





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Parenthood, and the United Nations Foundation.

It comes as no surprise, then, that Harold participated in the January 21 Women's March in Washington, D.C., which was largely an anti-President Trump rally, and that he considers the SPLC "the best option" in determining the definition of a charity "hate group."

AmazonSmile is the charity partner of Amazon, which makes a donation to shoppers' designated nonprofits. Because the SPLC is used by AmazonSmile to determine the eligibility of a charity, the DJKM suit alleges that they were wrongly excluded from the program and possible donations, just because of their religious beliefs.

In the lawsuit filing in Alabama (where SPLC has its headquarters), DJKM points to a statement made by Associate Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy in announcing the court's ruling on same-sex "marriage." Kennedy stated, "Many who deem same-sex marriage to be wrong reach that conclusion based on decent and honorable religious or philosophical premises, and neither they nor their beliefs are disparaged here."

DJKM argues in its 39-page lawsuit that the SPLC falsely labeled it a hate group with the intention of damaging its reputation, and thus hurting its efforts to raise money. For a libel suit to succeed, the plaintiff must prove malice: that the hurt is intentional and false.

There may be additional lawsuits coming against the SPLC. A British critic of Islamist extremism, Maajid Nawas, threatened in June to sue because he was included in a list of anti-Muslim extremists. Even left-wing political commentator Bill Maher, a frequent critic of the targeting of free speech by Islamist extremists, publicly sided with him.



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