



SPLC's Misdirection of Law Enforcement

Over the past four decades, Morris Dees and the SPLC have parlayed their political and media connections into close ties with law-enforcement agencies. These ties are more troubling — and potentially far more dangerous — than their often-criticized fundraising scandals. During the administration of President Bill Clinton and his Attorney General, Janet Reno, the SPLC developed a continuing tight relationship with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the FBI that has since expanded to include the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and many state and local police agencies. The SPLC sends its *Intelligence Reports* to thousands of police departments, and its so-called experts frequently provide seminars for law enforcement regarding conservative, constitutionalist, or pro-life groups that the SPLC smears by falsely associating them with the Ku Klux Klan or neo-Nazi groups.



By vastly exaggerating the number of KKK/neo-Nazi groups and the alleged number of “hate crime” incidents, and by falsely tying these violent groups and incidents to legitimate, law-abiding organizations, the SPLC is attempting to demonize and criminalize, in the eyes and minds of law-enforcement personnel, those with whom the SPLC disagrees.

Laird Wilcox, a recognized expert on extremist groups, is one of many critics spanning the political spectrum who see the SPLC as a danger to civil liberties. He is the founder of the Wilcox Collection on Contemporary Political Movements at the University of Kansas's Kenneth Spencer Research Library and an award-winning journalist, scholar, and author. The meticulous research provided by his *Guide to the American Left* and *Guide to the American Right* has made these works standard reference tools for serious journalists, political scientists, and law-enforcement intelligence personnel.

In 2005 Wilcox noted that shoddy — even fraudulent — “research” methodology is standard operating procedure at the SPLC. He told *The New American* that “with minimal effort I went through a list of 800-plus ‘hate groups’ published by the SPLC and determined that over half of them were either non-existent, existed in name only, or were inactive.”

Wilcox, Professor Carol Swain, and other researchers have pointed out that the SPLC's practice of exaggerating the “extremist” and “hate group” threat actually helps draw recruits to the groups they claim to be fighting. And the SPLC, notes Wilcox, has “everything to gain: fundraising goes up, they get more media exposure, their credibility increases, and their political usefulness to the far left surges.”

The *Humanist*, a left-liberal journal, has also scorched Morris Dees and his associates for their anti-



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American attacks on constitutionally protected rights, noting:

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. Six times a year, the SPLC's letter boasts, the center reports its findings to over 6,000 law-enforcement agencies; then, with no discernible irony, it goes on to justify its Big Brother methods in the name of tolerance.

The SPLC, says Wilcox, specializes in "a highly developed and ritualized form of defamation, however — a way of harming and isolating people by denying their humanity and trying to convert them into something that deserves to be hated and eliminated. They accuse others of this but utilize their enormous resources to practice it on a mass scale themselves."

In his 1999 book, *The Watchdogs: A Close Look at Anti-Racist "Watchdog" Groups*, Wilcox takes particular aim at the SPLC, writing:

Watchdog groups can have a profound influence on law enforcement tactics in a number of ways. Both the Anti-Defamation League and Southern Poverty Law Center publish newsletters and other material directed at law enforcement, often giving these agencies names from their files accompanied by suggestions of dangerousness.

Like all witch hunting operations, they occasionally find a real witch — which enhances their credibility, especially in high-profile media cases. But mixed with those few witches are thousands upon thousands of people whose politics may be extreme, but with no illegal intent whatsoever.

The SPLC's penetration of certain law-enforcement circles is especially alarming. In 2009, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano was forced to apologize to military veterans for a DHS report to law enforcement entitled "Rightwing Extremism" that warned of the danger of terrorism posed by "returning military veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan." The same report similarly smeared pro-life, pro-gun, and pro-Constitution activists with the terrorist label. When DHS was forced, under the Freedom of Information Act, to release the sources for its report, it was revealed that most of its information had come from the SPLC's discredited "research."

At roughly the same time, in March 2009, the Missouri State Highway Patrol issued a report entitled "The Modern Militia Movement," which was the product of a federal-state law-enforcement "Fusion Center."

The authors of the report clearly were attempting to create in the minds of law-enforcement personnel an association between violent "right-wing extremists" and the millions of law-abiding Americans who oppose gun control, the United Nations, the Federal Reserve System, the income tax, illegal immigration, and abortion.

After listing 18 incidents of what it called "noteworthy militia activity" from 1995 through 2008 — some of which involved bombings or armed confrontations with law enforcement — the report stated:

You are the Enemy: The militia subscribes to an antigovernment and NWO [New World Order] mind set, which creates a threat to law enforcement officers. They view the military, National Guard, and law enforcement as a force that will confiscate their firearms and place them in FEMA concentration camps. [Bold emphasis in original.]

The Missouri report reads as if it were taken directly from regular rants of the SPLC. And it sets up law enforcement to view law-abiding Americans who sport bumper stickers opposing abortion, the Federal Reserve, or the United Nations as dangerous extremists and potential terrorists.



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