

**‘Making Hate Pay’: Why It Makes Sense the SPLC Was Funding the Very Hate It Claims  
It Exists to Oppose**

**The Southern Poverty Law Center: Manufacturing Hate**

Testimony before

The Committee on the Judiciary

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## **‘Making Hate Pay’: Why It Makes Sense the SPLC Was Funding the Very Hate It Claims It Exists to Oppose**

My name is Tyler O’Neil.<sup>1</sup> I write commentary and investigative reporting for The Daily Signal. I wrote two books, “Making Hate Pay: The Corruption of the Southern Poverty Law Center” (updated May 2026) and “The Woketopus: The Dark Money Cabal Manipulating the Federal Government.” The views I express in this testimony are my own.

Chairman Jordan, Ranking Member Raskin, members of the committee, I am honored to be invited to testify before you today.

This testimony argues that the Southern Poverty Law Center has strong financial and institutional incentives to exaggerate hate, such that the conduct alleged in the federal indictment against the SPLC is consistent with those incentives.

A federal grand jury indicted the SPLC on wire fraud, bank fraud, and conspiracy charges for a scheme to fund the very hate that the SPLC claims it exists to oppose. While fundraising on its mission of combatting hate, the SPLC allegedly sent \$3 million to members of the Ku Klux Klan and other groups.<sup>2</sup>

The indictment alleges that the SPLC misled donors and a bank about how it used donor funds, in order to deceive donors and raise more money.

My years of research and reporting on the SPLC have led me to suspect it is true—because it matches the SPLC’s modus operandi of exaggerating hate to scare donors into ponying up cash.

To be clear, the SPLC has not denied the payments in question. The group merely claims that it bankrolled Klan members as part of an “informant program,” to learn about potential threats ahead of time and prevent them. The SPLC has highlighted two federal prosecutions it claims resulted from the SPLC informant program.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Indictment. United States v. Southern Poverty Law Center. Filed in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Alabama, April 21, 2026.

<sup>3</sup> O’Neil, Tyler. “DOJ Responds to SPLC Claim That Todd Blanche Lied About Informant Program.” The Daily Signal. April 28, 2026. Accessed May 15, 2026. <https://www.dailysignal.com/2026/04/28/doj-responds-splc-claim-todd-blanche-lied-informant-program/>

The indictment suggests these “field sources” weren’t just informants, however, and the SPLC’s recent history lends credence to the idea that these payments may have helped the group exaggerate hate, to raise money.

The SPLC made its reputation by suing Ku Klux Klan groups into bankruptcy, and donors rightly flocked to this cause. When the center ran out of grand dragons to slay, however, it expanded the definition of “hate” to keep the donor money flowing.

Today, the SPLC maintains a “hate map” that plots mainstream conservative and Christian organizations—including Turning Point USA, PragerU, Alliance Defending Freedom, and Focus on the Family—alongside Klan chapters, suggesting they all form the “organizational infrastructure upholding white supremacy in the U.S.”<sup>4</sup>

I analyzed the SPLC’s “hate map” in 2023 and concluded that the center inflates “hate” by *at least* 267%. Considering the fact that the SPLC counts each “chapter” of an organization as a separate group, that it includes mainstream conservatives and Christians, and that it includes groups that no longer exist, I culled the list of 1,225 groups down to 459 groups that might plausibly be “hate groups.” I did not analyze each of those, however, so even that number is likely inflated.<sup>5</sup>

This nefarious strategy achieves two disparate objectives at one stroke: it systematically demonizes conservatives who disagree with the SPLC’s agenda, and it exaggerates “hate” by suggesting that Klan-style animus is more mainstream than it is.

Former SPLC staffer Bob Moser put it well when he recalled the group’s “hyperbolic fundraising appeals, and the fact that, though the center claimed to be effective in fighting extremism, ‘hate’ always continued to be on the rise, more dangerous than ever, with each year’s report on hate groups.”

“The S.P.L.C.—making hate pay, we’d say.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> “The Year in Hate and Extremism 2023.” Southern Poverty Law Center. June 4, 2024. Accessed May 15, 2026. <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/guides/year-hate-extremism-2023/> Claim repeated in testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee on Sept. 17, 2024. <https://www.splactionfund.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/files/statement-hearing-stemming-tide-hate-crimes-america.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> O’Neil, Tyler. “ANALYSIS: Just How Deceptive Is the SPLC’s ‘Hate Map’?” The Daily Signal. June 13, 2023. Accessed May 17, 2026. <https://www.dailysignal.com/2023/06/13/exposed-far-left-smear-factory-attacked-moms-liberty-exaggerates-hate-groups-267/>

<sup>6</sup> Moser, Bob. “The Reckoning of Morris Dees and the Southern Poverty Law Center.” The New Yorker. March 21, 2019. Accessed May 15, 2026. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-reckoning-of-morris-dees-and-the-southern-poverty-law-center>

Hate pays rather well. As of October 2024, the SPLC had more than \$822 million in assets, with more than \$30 million in investments in Central America and the Caribbean.<sup>7</sup>

The SPLC pads the numbers by highlighting as “hate groups” entities that barely exist. The “hate map” previously included Wildman’s Civil War Surplus and Herb Shop, because it sold Confederate memorabilia. As of the 2024 version, the map still includes Catholic Apologetics International, which has reportedly dissolved. The map also includes Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Town of Richmond, New Hampshire, a convent full of nuns.<sup>8</sup>

The SPLC also lists each chapter of an organization as a separate “hate group.” A full 251 of the 1,371 organizations on the “hate map” are chapters of Moms for Liberty, making up 18.2% of the map.

Nathan J. Robinson, the editor of Current Affairs and no conservative, noted that SPLC staff “have to know that they’re inflating the danger.” He wrote that the SPLC’s hate exaggerations are “a scam bordering on criminal mail fraud.”<sup>9</sup>

### **The Charlottesville Pay Day**

Americans were rightly horrified to see marchers with tiki torches chant, “Jews will not replace us” at the 2017 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. The event took place amid demands that Charlottesville remove its statue commemorating Confederate general Robert E. Lee.

Yet many of us suspected there was something fishy going on. The indictment against the SPLC alleges that one of the organizers of the “Unite the Right” rally was on the SPLC’s payroll. If so, this was probably one of the SPLC’s most lucrative investments ever.

According to the indictment, “field source” 37 helped plan the event “and attended the event at the direction of the SPLC.” This person “made racist postings under the supervision of the SPLC and helped coordinate transportation to the event for several attendees.” Between 2015 and 2023, the SPLC paid this person more than \$270,000.

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<sup>7</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center Form 990 for the year ending Oct. 2024. Part I, Schedule F Part I. EIN: 63-0598743 Accessed via ProPublica May 15, 2026.

<https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/630598743/202511199349300716/full>

<sup>8</sup> O’Neil, Tyler. “FOREBODING: SPLC ‘Laying the Groundwork’ for Government to Silence Conservatives, Traditional Catholic Warns.” The Daily Signal. May 14, 2023. Accessed May 15, 2026.

<https://www.dailysignal.com/2023/05/14/hate-group-leader-condemns-fbi-memo-exposes-splcs-crusade-traditional-catholics/>

<sup>9</sup> Robinson, Nathan. “The Southern Poverty Law Center Is Everything That’s Wrong With Liberalism.” Current Affairs. March 26, 2019. Accessed May 15, 2026. <https://www.currentaffairs.org/news/2019/03/the-southern-poverty-law-center-is-everything-thats-wrong-with-liberalism>

Let's get this straight. The SPLC says it was paying informants to prevent violence, but in this instance, it not only allegedly paid one of the organizers of the most notorious white supremacist event in recent history but also *directed* the organizer's activities.

In the lead-up to Charlottesville, the SPLC also arguably enflamed tensions. It published a "hate map" of Confederate monuments, warning that these might spark "turmoil and bloodshed." The map included military bases, high schools, and middle schools. Antifa agitators had mobilized to knock these monuments down.

Carol Swain, a black former professor at Vanderbilt University who has studied white nationalist movements, told me that the SPLC likely knew that attacking these monuments would inspire an event like Charlottesville.

"Just the whole idea of taking down the monuments, that's like waving a red flag in front of a bull and it does incite a reaction, and some of it's being done for that purpose," Swain said in remarks for my book, "Making Hate Pay."

The investment paid off. In the wake of the rally, Apple's CEO pledged to give \$1 million to the SPLC.<sup>10</sup> JPMorgan Chase also pledged \$1 million to the SPLC.<sup>11</sup> While the SPLC raised more than \$50 million in contributions and grants in the year before October 2016, donations spiked to \$132 million in the following year, and remained higher than \$111 million in the year following.<sup>12</sup>

Also following the rally, Facebook's board voted to crack down on postings from hate groups, Spotify pledged to take down music tracks with "hate lyrics," and Airbnb blacklisted hate groups.

Meanwhile, CNN uncritically published the "hate map" online.

The indictment also mentions that other "field sources" received SPLC cash while the SPLC featured them on "Extremist File" web pages.

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<sup>10</sup> "Apple CEO Tim Cook's message to his employees after the Charlottesville violence." The World Economic Forum. Aug. 17, 2017. Accessed May 15, 2026. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2017/08/apple-ceo-tim-cooks-message-to-his-employees-after-the-charlottesville-violence/>

<sup>11</sup> Cone, Allen. "JPMorgan pledges \$2M to anti-hate groups after Charlottesville." UPI. Aug. 21, 2017. Accessed May 15, 2026. [https://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/US/2017/08/21/JPMorgan-pledges-2M-to-anti-hate-groups-after-Charlottesville/6251503333746/](https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2017/08/21/JPMorgan-pledges-2M-to-anti-hate-groups-after-Charlottesville/6251503333746/)

<sup>12</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center Form 990 for the year ending Oct. 2017. Part I. EIN: 63-0598743 Accessed via ProPublica May 15, 2026. <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/630598743/201830739349300308/full> Form 990 for the year ending Oct. 2018. Part I. Accessed via ProPublica May 15, 2026. <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/630598743/201900309349301030/full>

The indictment also charges the SPLC with bank fraud. An SPLC staffer allegedly opened four bank accounts while stating that he or she was the “sole owner” of the company. A few years later, SPLC President Margaret Huang stated that the accounts in question “were opened for the benefit of Southern Poverty Law Center operations and operated under the Center’s authority.”

In other words, the SPLC set up shell companies to hide its payments to Klan members and allegedly lied to the bank in doing so.

The SPLC notes that its offices were firebombed in 1983 and claims the informant program “saved lives,” but it also ended the program.<sup>13</sup>

It stands to reason that the SPLC launched the program to monitor threats from potentially violent groups, but it also stands to reason that, once this program existed, the SPLC might use it to prop up the supposed strength of hate across America. The incentive structure to do so already existed.

### **SPLC’s Funding Sources**

Morris Dees, the SPLC’s co-founder, created a massive donor network, in part utilizing the list of contributors to the 1972 George McGovern campaign. This makes the SPLC less dependent on large gifts from the Left’s mega donors, such as George Soros. Even so, some of the larger dark money engines on the Left have also contributed to the SPLC.

New Venture Fund, which previously worked with the company Arabella Advisors and now partners with Sunflower Services, gave the SPLC \$20,000 in 2022.<sup>14</sup> The Proteus Fund directed \$30,000 to the SPLC between 2018 and 2021.<sup>15</sup>

Between 2018 and 2022, the Tides Foundation sent the SPLC more than \$1 million.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> O’Neil, Tyler. “SPLC Under Criminal Investigation for Paid Informant Program.” The Daily Signal. April 21, 2026. Accessed May 15, 2026. <https://www.dailysignal.com/2026/04/21/breaking-splc-under-criminal-investigation-paid-informant-program/>

<sup>14</sup> “New Venture Fund.” Form 990, Schedule I for 2022, accessed May 1, 2024, via ProPublica. <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/205806345/202323149349302362/IRS990ScheduleI>

<sup>15</sup> “Proteus Fund.” Form 990, Schedule I for 2018, 2020, 2021, accessed May 1, 2024, via ProPublica. [https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/43243004/201923199349310907/IRS990ScheduleI\(2018\)](https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/43243004/201923199349310907/IRS990ScheduleI(2018))  
[https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/43243004/202103159349307825/IRS990ScheduleI\(2020\)](https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/43243004/202103159349307825/IRS990ScheduleI(2020))  
[https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/43243004/202213199349310211/IRS990ScheduleI\(2021\)](https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/43243004/202213199349310211/IRS990ScheduleI(2021))

<sup>16</sup> The precise figure is \$1,038,381. “Tides Foundation” Form 990 Schedule I for 2018-2022, accessed April 26, 2024, via ProPublica. <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/510198509/201913189349314251/IRS990ScheduleI>

The Foundation to Promote Open Society awarded the SPLC a \$75,000 grant to convene an “Anti-Hate Table” in 2016.<sup>17</sup>

### **Influence in the Biden Administration**

Despite the SPLC’s many scandals, President Joe Biden’s administration welcomed this morally bankrupt smear factory with open arms.

My second book, “The Woketopus: The Dark Money Cabal Manipulating the Federal Government,” exposed much of this influence. The Biden White House had hosted SPLC leaders and staff at least 18 times; Biden nominated an SPLC attorney, Nancy Abudu, to a top federal judgeship; SPLC staff had a cozy relationship with leaders in the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division; and the FBI cited the SPLC in its memo targeting “radical-traditional Catholics.”<sup>18</sup>

Since I published the book last year, however, America First Legal and the Oversight Project have revealed even more SPLC ties with the Biden administration.<sup>19</sup>

Kristen Clarke, the assistant attorney general who led the Civil Rights Division, reached out to then-SPLC President Margaret Huang for a phone call in October 2022, seeking to hear from Huang “if there are federal civil rights matters of concern we should be tracking.”

Michael Lieberman, senior policy counsel for “hate & extremism” at the SPLC, met multiple times with Robert Moossy Jr., deputy assistant attorney general at the Civil Rights Division. Lieberman shared with Moossy an embargoed copy of the SPLC’s “hate map” ahead of its release in June 2023, and Moossy sent an embargoed copy of the FBI’s “hate crimes” report

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l (2018)

<https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/510198509/202043149349304239/IRS990Schedule>

l (2019)

<https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/510198509/202133149349300708/IRS990Schedule>

l (2020)

<https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/510198509/202233189349313898/IRS990Schedule>

l (2021)

<https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/510198509/202400469349300305/IRS990Schedule>

l (2022)

<sup>17</sup> Open Society Foundations Grants Database. Accessed May 15, 2026.

[https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/grants/past?filter\\_keyword=Southern+Poverty+Law+Center&grant\\_id=OR2016-30974](https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/grants/past?filter_keyword=Southern+Poverty+Law+Center&grant_id=OR2016-30974)

<sup>18</sup> O’Neil, Tyler. *The Woketopus: The Dark Money Cabal Manipulating the Federal Government*. New York: Bombardier Books, 2025. pp. 197-212.

<sup>19</sup> O’Neil, Tyler. “However Bad You Think Biden’s DOJ Was, New Documents Show It Was Even Worse.” *The Daily Signal*. Oct. 12, 2025. Accessed April 30, 2026. <https://www.dailysignal.com/2025/10/12/biden-doj-sought-direction-splc-leftist-group-that-put-turning-point-usa-hate-map-shortly-before-charlie-kirks-assassination/>

to Lieberman in December 2023. Lieberman also appears to have taken part in a “Quarterly Civil Rights Meeting” with the DOJ.

Other documents showed that R.G. Cravens, manager of research and analysis at the SPLC’s Intelligence Project, spoke at a conference for Justice Department prosecutors on Nov. 7, 2023. A program for the event noted that Cravens would focus on “the anti-LGBTQ movement” and “help investigators and prosecutors identify potential evidence and motivations for bias crime.”

Under President Donald Trump, the FBI has officially distanced itself from the SPLC. FBI Director Kash Patel told The Daily Signal that the SPLC’s “disgraceful record makes them unfit for any FBI partnership.”<sup>20</sup>

### **The True Threat of Violence in America**

The SPLC provides a useful tool for the Left when it comes to demonizing the Right and suggesting the true threat of political violence comes from the Right. While some political violence does come from the Right, Americans have experienced a torrent of political violence from leftist causes in recent years.

The 2020 riots following the death of George Floyd, for example, caused an estimated \$2 billion in damage, as measured by insurance payouts,<sup>21</sup> and took the lives of 26 people.<sup>22</sup> President Trump has faced three serious attempts on his life in the last three years.<sup>23</sup>

The SPLC had placed Kirk’s Turning Point USA on the “hate map” mere months before the assassination. In 2012, a since-convicted terrorist used the SPLC “hate map” to target the Family Research Council in an attempted mass shooting. A judge ultimately sentenced Floyd Lee Corkins II to 25 years in prison for the attack.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> O’Neil, Tyler. “BREAKING: Kash Patel’s FBI Cuts All Ties to Southern Poverty Law Center.” The Daily Signal. Oct. 3, 2025. Accessed April 30, 2026. <https://www.dailysignal.com/2025/10/03/breaking-kash-patels-fbi-cuts-all-ties-southern-poverty-law-center/>

<sup>21</sup> Johansmeyer, Thomas. “How 2020 protests changed insurance forever.” World Economic Forum. Feb. 22, 2021. Accessed May 15, 2026. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2021/02/2020-protests-changed-insurance-forever/>

<sup>22</sup> O’Neil, Tyler. “Say Their Names: 26 People Killed in the George Floyd Riots.” PJ Media. July 5, 2020. Accessed May 15, 2026. <https://pjmedia.com/tyler-o-neil/2020/07/05/say-their-names-20-people-killed-in-the-george-floyd-riots-n592577>

<sup>23</sup> Justice Department Press Release. “Suspect in White House Correspondents’ Dinner Shooting Charged with Attempt to Assassinate the President.” April 27, 2026. Accessed May 15, 2026. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/suspect-white-house-correspondents-dinner-shooting-charged-attempt-assassinate-president>

<sup>24</sup> Justice Department Press Release. “Virginia Man Sentenced To 25 Years In Prison In Shooting Of Security Guard at Family Research Council.” Sept. 19, 2013. Accessed May 15, 2026. <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/pr/virginia-man-sentenced-25-years-prison-shooting-security-guard-family-research>

CatholicVote has catalogued 395 attacks on Catholic churches<sup>25</sup> and 96 attacks on pro-life pregnancy centers and pro-life groups<sup>26</sup> since the leak of the Dobbs decision, which overturned Roe v. Wade in 2022.

The SPLC has not only turned a blind eye to the violence of Antifa and the pro-abortion vandalism of Jane's Revenge, but it has carried water for Antifa and worked with a researcher who passed along information to Antifa. An SPLC attorney also faces charges for his role in a Molotov-cocktail riot.<sup>27</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The SPLC derives much of its legitimacy, and a great deal of its financial success, from the idea that “hate” is on the march, and that it is almost exclusively a phenomenon of the Right. It has all the incentives to exaggerate “hate,” and since it was operating an “informant” program with members of the Ku Klux Klan anyway, it stands to reason that it may have used that program to bolster the Klan's image as a threat—to raise more money.

There is likely a great deal more evidence behind the indictment. The SPLC will get its day in court, and I hope the Justice Department plays everything by the book. I do not know whether the SPLC is guilty of wire fraud, but my experience covering this smear factory tells me that the SPLC had every incentive to exaggerate hate, so the Justice Department's argument aligns with the key takeaways from my years of research into the SPLC.

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<sup>25</sup> Valentine, Tommy. “Tracker: 500 Attacks on U.S. Catholic Churches Since May 2020.” Catholic Vote. April 15, 2026. Accessed May 15, 2026. <https://catholicvote.org/tracker-church-attacks/>

<sup>26</sup> CatholicVote. “Tracking Attacks on Pregnancy Centers & Pro-Life Groups.” June 9, 2022. Updated Jan. 21, 2025. Accessed May 15, 2026. <https://catholicvote.org/pregnancy-center-attack-tracker/>

<sup>27</sup> O'Neil, Tyler. “The Disturbing Ties Between the SPLC and Antifa.” Sept. 22, 2025. Accessed May 15, 2026. <https://www.dailysignal.com/2025/09/22/splc-leftist-group-targeted-turning-point-usa-has-long-carried-water-antifa/>