

Could Your Church Be Considered a 'Hate Group'?

What Is the Southern Poverty Law Center?

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

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. It has an annual budget of about \$30 million, but also a massive “endowment” of \$223 million as of 2010, including funds in bank accounts in the Cayman Islands and Bermuda. 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.

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.”

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 14 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.

While their rhetoric ties “hate groups” with actual “hate crimes,” 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.” 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 and homosexuality.

The SPLC claims that the number of “hate groups” in America increased by a staggering 66 percent from 2000 to 2010. 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 percent between 1996 and 2009.

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.”

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.”

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.”

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 3 Reasons for 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 the 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. Floyd Corkins went to the Family Research Council Aug. 15, 2012, 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.