



## The SPLC's Incursion into Education

### SPLC Facts & Figures

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) calls itself a nonprofit civil rights organization “dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry” by using “litigation, education, and other forms of advocacy.”<sup>1</sup> It was founded in 1971 as a small civil rights law firm that fought the Ku Klux Klan for financial damages for the victims of Klan violence. But despite its laudable origins, the SPLC has over time fashioned itself into a political referee while simultaneously engaging in progressive activism, using smear tactics, intimidation, and a knack for fundraising to silence its political opponents. Next to neo-Nazi and Klan organizations, the SPLC includes Christian ministries, non-profit advocacy groups, and conservative think tanks on its infamous “hate list.”<sup>2</sup> SPLC representative Mark Potok has stated both that their efforts are geared toward destroying the groups on their list,<sup>3</sup> and that the “hate list” honorees are included for strictly ideological reasons.<sup>4</sup> Heidi Beirich of the SPLC has stressed that like it or not, the SPLC is only focused on the “radical right.”<sup>5</sup> Hate clearly pays, as the SPLC’s tax forms demonstrate. As of October 2017, the SPLC boasts 291 employees, 640 contractors,<sup>6</sup> six national offices, and an endowment fund of more than \$319 million, \$69 million of which is held in offshore accounts.<sup>7</sup>

Philanthropy Roundtable’s Karl Zinsmeister has joined other experts and pundits in rebuking the SPLC, saying: “Though it styles itself as a public-interest law firm, the Southern Poverty Law Center does shockingly little litigation, and only small amounts of that on behalf of any aggrieved individuals. Its two largest expenses are propaganda operations: creating its annual lists of ‘haters’ and ‘extremists,’ and running a big effort that pushes ‘tolerance education.’”<sup>8</sup>

It’s the SPLC’s education programs that are perhaps the most disturbing. The well-funded and articulate SPLC is far from a non-partisan arbiter of data on “hate” and “tolerance.” Rather, it seeks American children as the most susceptible targets of its large-scale propaganda operation aimed at normalizing ultra-Left perspectives, peddling junk science, and revising American history, and in so doing, crafting the nation’s students into social activists in their own image.<sup>9</sup>

### Educational Reach

As of February 2018, the SPLC claims to have over 100 campus chapters at colleges and universities nationwide.<sup>10</sup> Student chapters are directed to promote the SPLC’s guidebooks, such as the “Alt-right on Campus: What Students Need to Know,” or “Responding to Bias and Bigotry: Speak Up!” The latter includes a fake hate crime from 2016 when a Muslim teen claimed to be harassed on the train by anti-Muslim, President Trump supporters, then later admitted to police the incident was made up. Student chapters must agree to “further SPLC’s goals by raising awareness of the growth and activities of hate and extremist groups” through events, speakers, and films on campus.<sup>11</sup>

However, it’s the “Teaching Tolerance” (TT) program that is SPLC’s hallmark education initiative. Employed by K-12 schools, the mission of the TT initiative is “to reduce prejudice, improve intergroup

relations and support equitable school experiences. . . [while] emphasiz[ing] social justice and anti-bias. The anti-bias approach encourages children and young people to challenge prejudice and learn how to be agents of change.”<sup>12</sup>

The SPLC claims the materials are used by over 500,000 educators nationwide,<sup>13</sup> and has partnered with the hard-left Human Rights Campaign (HRC)<sup>14</sup> to provide products that indoctrinate school age children on “police violence,” Black Lives Matter, “whiteness,”<sup>15</sup> sensitivity to Islam, homosexuality, gender “non-conformity,” and comprehensive sex education.<sup>16</sup>

The fully-immersive TT project makes no attempt to hide its patent left-wing bias. The program’s material inclusions evidence this. They include the Tolerance.org website, *Teaching Tolerance* magazine, “perspective texts,” professional development materials, workshops, lesson plans, and film and project kits that include documentaries on progressive heroes like Cesar Chavez.<sup>17</sup> In addition to its magazine, the TT program includes publications<sup>18</sup> for educators on creating an “LGBT Inclusive School Environment,” and “The Truth About American Muslims.” The publications also include a report on the “Trump Effect,” a publication based on an unscientific collection of data from a small, self-selected sampling of educators who filled out subjective surveys on the SPLC’s behalf, and whose comments were almost exclusively anonymous.<sup>19</sup> The report claims everything from tummy aches to assaults in school were owing to the 45th President of the United States, even though partisan PolitiFact conceded that the report was both unscientific and anecdotal.<sup>20</sup>

In 2017, the SPLC announced that the newest TT offering would be educator grants, in which grants ranging from \$500 to \$10,000 would be awarded to those that promote “affirming school climates” and a “diverse democracy” at the classroom, school, and district level. The goal is to “reduce hate,” and “implement anti-bias curriculum,” while building a network of apologists for the SPLC’s TT program. Leading the December 2017 grant recipients was the “#USvsHate Collective Action” project: “In this educator- and youth-led messaging contest, students will dialogue about inclusion and create posters denouncing xenophobia, homophobia, Islamophobia, sexism and other forms of bias and hate.”<sup>21</sup>

As further proof of the SPLC’s aims toward educational dominance, one need look no further than the far-left National Education Association (NEA), the nation’s largest union. The NEA has used the SPLC’s TT program to develop lessons and programs on immigrant “safe zones,” racial profiling, and “cultural competence,” and the SPLC and the NEA work in tandem to create professional development webinars on hate, bias, and classroom culture.<sup>22</sup> In 2016, the NEA gave Morris Dees, SPLC’s founder and lead trial counsel, the “Human and Civil Rights Award” for fighting injustice.<sup>23</sup> And in 2017, the NEA announced it would be partnering with the SPLC in tracking incidents of discrimination, racism, homophobia, transphobia, and Islamophobia in public schools. It plans to share the data “with districts to educate and eradicate hate through the development of programs that include, but are not limited to, training on unconscious bias, [and] culturally responsive instruction...”<sup>24</sup>

The TT program also provides tips for responding to “family push back.”<sup>25</sup> Likewise, the TT program stresses that families and guardians will be learning along with children over the years, and will subsequently add “richness to the work of anti-bias and social justice education.”<sup>26</sup> In so doing, the SPLC establishes itself – and the teachers who partner with it – as preferred authorities in matters concerning a child’s developing worldview. This Marxist groupthink allows the promotion of a single, homogenous viewpoint, and capitalizes on the peer pressure of the pre-pubescent and pubescent environment to prevent tolerance of any non-conforming views a child may bring from home into the classroom setting.

It's no wonder, then, that in February 2018, Andreas Zybelle, a high school teacher in Florida, was determined to have referred to "Trump supporters as 'white trash, uneducated, redneck'" during the SPLC's TT lesson on hate speech.<sup>27</sup> Having relied on the "data," resources, and lesson plans of the TT program, Zybelle was an operative for the SPLC's rhetoric – rhetoric that both pathologizes conservatives and foments an atmosphere of divisiveness both in the classroom, and outside it. Without deepening the racial and political divide by crafting a narrative of a rising tide of prejudice and hate, the SPLC loses the ability to capitalize on its propagandistic rhetoric to the betterment of its bank accounts.

### What You Can Do

- **Examine:** Review the curriculum, read the fine print, and examine all materials sent home. Parents must exercise their right to examination of both class materials, and the specifics of upcoming events (invited speakers, general assemblies, etc).
- **Understand the "Game:"** The SPLC's materials are not viewpoint neutral. To learn more, visit [splcexposed.com](http://splcexposed.com), an information clearinghouse on the SPLC. Encourage your child to ask questions, both at home and in class. Teach them to be independent thinkers. The SPLC counts on the power of peer pressure to manipulate students into silence. Remind children that teachers have viewpoints of their own, and that these viewpoints may be different than what they've learned at home or from other trusted sources.
- **Do Your Research:** Read, share, and investigate for yourself. Strong convictions stem from knowledge. Examine the SPLC's Teaching Tolerance website to learn what views are being promoted. Visit FRC's education resource page at: [frc.org/issues/education](http://frc.org/issues/education).
- **Network:** Get involved at a grassroots level. Strengthen and support parental networks by holding events, book clubs, and speaker events to present alternate perspectives. Form parental associations. Inquire at your church on who might be interested in joining a counter-effort. Use your resources.
- **Teach the Teachers:** The most effective outreach is one-on-one to unthread the needle of propaganda and start a dialogue on the necessity of ideological diversity in education. Educate the educators on the real aims of the SPLC, and its perpetuation of groupthink to achieve completion of a progressive mindset while bankrolling donations.

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<sup>1</sup> "About Us," Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed February 7, 2018, <https://www.splcenter.org/about>.

<sup>2</sup> "Active Hate Groups 2016," Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed February 7, 2018, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2017/active-hate-groups-2016>.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Knight, "Silencing the silencers," *The Washington Times*, July 2, 2017, accessed February 7, 2018, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/jul/2/lefts-inability-to-win-elections-leads-to-hatred-a/>.

<sup>4</sup> Tyler O'Neil, "Southern Poverty Law Center: 'Our Aim in Life Is to Destroy These Groups, Completely'," PJ Media, September 1, 2017, accessed February 7, 2018, <https://pjmedia.com/trending/2017/09/01/southern-poverty-law-center-our-aim-in-life-is-to-destroy-these-groups-completely/>.

<sup>5</sup> Ben Schreckinger, "Has a Civil Rights Stalwart Lost Its Way?" *Politico Magazine*, July/August 2017, accessed February 7, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/06/28/morris-dees-splc-trump-southern-poverty-law-center-215312>.

<sup>6</sup> SPLC Return, IRS Form 990 (2015), Part V, line 1a and line 2a.

<sup>7</sup> Jeryl Bier, "The Southern Poverty Law Center Has \$69 Million Parked Overseas," *The Weekly Standard*, September 6, 2017, accessed February 7, 2018, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/the-southern-poverty-law-center-has-69-million-parked-overseas/article/2009553>.

<sup>8</sup> Karl Zinsmeister, "Some People Love to Call Names," *Philanthropy Roundtable*, accessed February 7, 2018, [http://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/topic/excellence\\_in\\_philanthropy/some\\_people\\_love\\_to\\_call\\_names](http://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/topic/excellence_in_philanthropy/some_people_love_to_call_names).

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- <sup>9</sup> For example, one of the TT offerings is a professional development webinar on how to mobilize young social justice activists. "The Young and the Registered," Teaching Tolerance, June 30, 2017, accessed February 7, 2018, <https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/webinars/young-and-registered>.
- <sup>10</sup> Toni Airaksinen, "Southern Poverty Law Center Now Targeting Conservative 'Hate Groups' on 100-Plus Campuses," Fox News, January 29, 2018, accessed February 7, 2018, <http://nation.foxnews.com/2018/01/29/southern-poverty-law-center-now-targeting-conservative-hate-groups-100-plus-campuses>.
- <sup>11</sup> "SPLC on Campus - Terms & Conditions," Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed February 7, 2018, <http://static1.squarespace.com/static/53b48ddce4b042f160c7405f/t/53eb8a42e4b04bc9767281a2/1407945282648/SPLC+on+Campus+Terms+and+Conditions.pdf>.
- <sup>12</sup> "About Teaching Tolerance," Teaching Tolerance, accessed February 7, 2018, <https://www.tolerance.org/about>.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup> "Partners," Teaching Tolerance, accessed February 7, 2018, <https://www.tolerance.org/about/partners>.
- <sup>15</sup> Emily Chiariello, "Why Talk About Whiteness?" *Teaching Tolerance*, Summer 2016, accessed February 7, 2018, <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/summer-2016/why-talk-about-whiteness>.
- <sup>16</sup> Joel Baum, "Sex? Sexual Orientation? Gender Identity? Gender Expression?" *Teaching Tolerance*, Summer 2015, accessed February 7, 2018, <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/summer-2015/sex-sexual-orientation-gender-identity-gender-expression>.
- <sup>17</sup> "Film Kits," Teaching Tolerance, accessed February 7, 2018, <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/film-kits>.
- <sup>18</sup> "Publications," Teaching Tolerance, accessed February 7, 2018, <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications>.
- <sup>19</sup> Tina Trent, "The 'Trump Effect': How the Southern Poverty Law Center mobilizes schoolteachers to radicalize children to perpetrate hate," Capital Research Center, February 2, 2017, accessed February 7, 2018, <https://capitalresearch.org/article/the-trump-effect/>.
- <sup>20</sup> Lauren Carroll, "Hillary Clinton, citing 'Trump Effect,' says teachers are reporting more bullying in schools," PolitiFact, August 26, 2016, accessed February 7, 2018, <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2016/aug/26/hillary-clinton/hillary-clinton-citing-trump-effect-says-teachers/>.
- <sup>21</sup> "2017-2018 Educator Grant Guidelines," Teaching Tolerance, accessed February 7, 2018, <https://www.tolerance.org/about/educator-grant-guidelines>.
- <sup>22</sup> "Webinars," Teaching Tolerance, accessed February 7, 2018, <https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/webinars>.
- <sup>23</sup> "Human and Civil Rights Award Winner," National Education Association, accessed February 7, 2018, [https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HCR%202016%20Award%20Winner%20Bio%20Final\\_Morris%20Dees.pdf](https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HCR%202016%20Award%20Winner%20Bio%20Final_Morris%20Dees.pdf).
- <sup>24</sup> "2017 National Meeting and Representative Assembly; New Business Item 30 (2017)," National Education Association, accessed February 7, 2018, <https://ra.nea.org/business-item/2017-nbi-030/>.
- <sup>25</sup> Jey Ehrenhalt, "Being There for Nonbinary Youth," *Teaching Tolerance*, Summer 2016, accessed February 7, 2018, <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/summer-2016/being-there-for-nonbinary-youth>.
- <sup>26</sup> Amy Scharf, "Critical Practices for Anti-Bias Education," *Teaching Tolerance: Perspectives for a Diverse America*, accessed February 7, 2018, <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/critical-practices-for-antibias-education/family-and-community-engagement>.
- <sup>27</sup> Carly Zervis, "Investigation into educator finds cause for discipline," *Citrus County Chronicle*, February 2, 2018, accessed February 7, 2018, [http://www.chronicleonline.com/news/local/comments-lead-to-teacher-s-exit/article\\_63beb22c-086c-11e8-840f-c739819cd994.html](http://www.chronicleonline.com/news/local/comments-lead-to-teacher-s-exit/article_63beb22c-086c-11e8-840f-c739819cd994.html).