

Bashing for Dollars

The SPLC's Predatory Game

BY BRENDA WALKER

The corrupt Southern Poverty Law Center has been remarkably effective in fending off criticism against it, even though many detractors have scored meaningful hits over the years. Even so, despite its outrageous falsehoods and ad hominem attacks against decent people, the SPLC is still treated by much of the dinosaur media as a respectable source of information, rather than a bottom-feeding avaricious lie machine. That fact reveals as much about big media as it does about the race hucksters based in Montgomery, Alabama.

Curiously, a leftist writer scored the first big smack-down of the organization, by emphasizing its driving obsession with raising money above all else. Ken Silverstein wrote in the November 2000 *Harper's* magazine, "The Church of Morris Dees," that the SPLC cared more about a "relentless fund-raising campaign" than working for racial justice, which it claims as its prime directive.

The SPLC benefits greatly from an unscrupulous press obsessed with race, so the Center's McCarthyist rantings about racists under every bed meet with a receptive audience in the newsroom. Every accusation of malfeasance presents a do-gooder journalist with an opportunity to be virtuous in our complicated post-modern society. There is a lot of confusing cultural relativism these days, but elite opinion has concluded the worst possible malevolence is racism, period.

Genuine racism is an evil, of course, but characterizing every political disagreement as racial serves to dull the outrage about the real thing, and that is what the SPLC has done for years.

Furthermore, our era's fixation on race is so extreme that the word "racist" is morphing into a catch-all condemnation that has nothing to do with skin color or inherited traits. For example, persons who reject the authoritarian misogynist philosophy of Islam are routinely called racists — even though anyone, even a white Caucasian from Iowa, could choose to become a Muslim.

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Crazed overuse is literally making the word meaningless.

The "racist" accusation has been a useful hammer to quash challenging arguments the left doesn't like. It's much easier for the left/SPLC to shut people up than answer difficult questions about how excessive immigration harms citizens, particularly minorities, for example.

Another twisted aspect of the SPLC is its focus on "hate"—hate groups, hate crimes, hate watch. People who disagree with the party line are "haters." True, hate is not the most noble emotion, but it is certainly one of the most normal. What human being has not experienced hate at some time? No one I know.

Obviously the advantage of "hate" as a smear is its general applicability. Nothing has to be proven or definite, unlike say "convicted arsonist."

Can hate be stomped out by nanny state intrusion and the cult-like indoctrination of diversity from preschool through college? Unlikely. Utopian ideals enforced by big government often end up in the ash heap of gulags.

Anyway, hate is not always evil. I dare say many (all?) victims of priest sex abuse harbor hate against their torturers, and some have used that passion to fight for justice. What is the proper emotion with which we should regard child abusers of any stripe? A ferocious dislike seems appropriate and righteous.

Spring of 2010 was unfortunately blighted by an active SPLC road show. Mouthpiece Mark Potok made frequent media appearances trying to poison the public discourse about the Tea Party in particular and sentiment against government encroachment in general. The head office in Montgomery (aka the Poverty Palace) must have been squealing with delight at the prospect of a whole new conservative movement to besmirch. Oh, the fund-raising possibilities!

(When Ken Silverstein originally ripped the SPLC for money grubbing, the organization brought in \$44 million in 1999, and its treasury held \$120 million. By 2005, its assets reached \$168 million. The endowment is presently \$174 million, despite losing a bundle in investments from the recent downturn. But fundraising pitches continue, despite earnest-sounding promises to

quit at \$55 million and later \$100 million. And very little of the hoard is spent on actual civil rights work. The major products are the smear campaigns.)

NPR's Terry Gross gave Potok a major slot of time to discuss "The Rage on the Right: The Year in Hate and Extremism" on her popular Fresh Air program March 25, with no probing questions interrupting his parade of vitriol. In fact, her remarks indicated she was shocked about the angry rhetoric of conservatives.



NPR's Host of "Fresh Air" Terry Gross

How quickly they forget! Back in the distant mists of two years ago, dissent was patriotic and Bush was Hitler. (Try a Google search for Bush Hitler and the resulting list is over 6.6 million items; the number of images for the same search produces 1.3 million.)

But Potok acted like he had never heard angry political speech—he must not attend many "peace" marches like the shriek-fests we have in San Francisco. He played the race card again and again, remarking at one point:

You know, I think one other thing probably is worth saying about the militias today. In the 1990s, the enemy of the militia movement was, of course, the federal government. That is still true today, but today, the face of the federal government is the face of a black man. So I think that that really has ratcheted up the whole matter and has introduced more strongly an element of racism into the militias than that which we saw back in the '90s.

It damages the national conversation about public policy when left propagandists proclaim citizens to be knuckle-dragging racists merely because they express well-founded disgust with government incompetence. Potok's race huckstering adds to the polarization and

demeans genuine concerns. He and his cronies are deliberately poisoning the well of political discourse in order to make money.

Former University of California Regent Ward Connerly remarked on the *National Review* blog April 5 about the primacy of race in the left's toolbox of manipulation:

If I have learned one thing from life, it is that race is the engine that drives the political Left. When all else fails, that segment of America goes to the default position of using race to achieve its objectives. In the courtrooms, on college campuses, and, most especially, in our politics, race is a central theme. Where it does not naturally rise to the surface, there are those who will manufacture and amplify it.

Such is the case with the claims that the "Tea Partiers" are a bunch of racists and that many of them spat upon members of the Congressional Black Caucus and called them "n*****s." I am convinced beyond any doubt that all of this is part of the strategic plan being implemented by the Left in its current campaign to remake America.

In a video that has been played repeatedly showing CBC members as they walked past the tea partiers, Congressman Jesse Jackson Jr. is seen using his telephone to tape the event. If he had any evidence to corroborate the racial claims, why hasn't he come forward with his phone by now to settle this matter? I believe we all know the answer.

That's right. When Tea Partiers don't conveniently act like racists even when baited (as in the Capitol Hill provocation noted by Connerly), the left simply lies about their behavior for its ongoing campaigns of vilification, with the help of the compliant stooge media.

What the SPLC tells us about the far left is that lies are the coin of its realm. It doesn't matter if a person is a veritable saint filled with love for his or her fellow man, the Montgomery mudslingers will manufacture a false portrait out of whole cloth to characterize that citizen as a racist monster, unacceptable to polite society.

The SPLC sees its job as general intimidation against any speech that challenges the left orthodoxy. When it is successful, the result is censorship, diminished civil debate, and ruined reputations. And more money for the SPLC. ■