

SPLC: Radical Evil Posing as Good

JOHN VINSON

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) employs strategies and tactics that bewilder and outrage many good and decent people. It poses as a source of moral authority, but while it endorses “tolerance” (and even has a program called Teaching Tolerance), its spokesmen are quick to slap harsh and dehumanizing labels on anyone who dares to disagree with their dogmas. These labels are quite often arbitrary and totally disproportionate to anything the offending parties have said or done.

A prime example is the term “hate group,” which the SPLC applies to organizations it wishes to stigmatize. It’s a term with a powerful emotional punch, and to the average person it suggests a violent lawbreaking group, one that consistently uses defaming language against its targets. Some of the SPLC’s designated “haters” may fit this description, but most do not.

The SPLC claims that it applies set criteria for naming hate groups, saying that these are organizations that commonly demean people on the basis of “immutable” characteristics such as race and sex. But it also includes religion, which isn’t immutable, and sexual orientation, which may or not be. With respect to religion, the SPLC doesn’t seem concerned about attacks against Christianity. It condemns Islamophobia but not Christophobia. A significant political bias shows up too, as the left-wing SPLC’s “Hate Watch” “monitors and exposes” the radical right, but not the radical left.¹

SPLC’s hate group designations show little coherence or nuance. To illustrate, it lumps together in the same “hate” category potentially violent Klan groups and the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), a research organization whose members have been invited on numerous occasions to provide expert testimony on immigration before Congress. CIS is most definitely law-abiding, and one will search its publications in vain to find anything truly hateful, let alone consistent expressions of malice.

The label of “hate group,” says the SPLC with breathtaking dishonesty, does not imply that the group is

criminally inclined or violent. But that’s precisely what it suggests, and that’s why the SPLC sends its hate group misinformation to law enforcement agencies across the country.² By this action the SPLC surely implies that these groups deserve oversight by police agencies. The organization’s desire to influence police is ironic given its endorsement of terror bomber Bill Ayers, a self-described militant “communist” and ex-fugitive as a Weather Underground domestic terrorist.³

The SPLC’s ruthless and hardball stance against its targets is consistent with the strategy outlined by former SPLC spokesman Mark Potok. He declared, “Sometimes the press will describe us as monitoring hate groups and so on. I want to say that our aim in life is to destroy these groups, to completely destroy them.”⁴ Many critics of the SPLC have charged it with hypocrisy as it claims to promote tolerance, while seeking to marginalize and even destroy dissenting views.

The sins of the SPLC are indeed numerous, but hypocrisy is not one of them. Its behavior is perfectly consistent with its worldview and convictions. Mainstream Americans need to understand exactly what those are. It is hardly controversial to note that the SPLC is a hard-left organization and that its general ideology is what people commonly refer to as political correctness (PC). PC in its essence is not the silly nuisance that some imagine, but something far more sinister.

Basically, it derives from classical Marxism, which holds that conflict between oppressors and the oppressed is the key to understanding societies throughout history. In the final stage of this conflict, say classical Marxists, the oppressors are the capitalist class and the oppressed are the working class. The capitalists are evil and are doomed to defeat by the righteous workers whose victory is ordained by the “forces of history” as revealed by Marxist dogma.

Classical Marxists deny the principles of Western Christian society, including the freedoms of speech and inquiry, as well as—or at least tolerance—for those with opposing views. These, say the Marxists, are “bourgeois values” which the capitalists use to hang on to their power, deceive the workers, and deny the class struggle. The views of capitalists merit no tolerance because they aren’t worth debating. For Marxists, words employed in the class struggle are verbal weapons to destroy the

John Vinson is president of the American Immigration Control Foundation.

opposition. Tolerance is only for those who support the revolution.

One prominent Communist who held this view was Soviet dictator Vladimir Lenin, who stated, “We can and must write in a language which sows among the masses hate, revulsion, and scorn toward those who disagree with us.”⁵ The Soviets placed great emphasis on the use of words and propaganda to control thinking.

A common tactic, perhaps derived from Pavlovian conditioning, was to use short emotive words to elicit hostility toward enemies. One example was when Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin placed the label of kulak (oppressor) on the peasant family farmers he wished to destroy. Communists often used such invectives against individuals in ritual shaming exercises designed to make them grovel and apologize for their alleged sins against Marxism. The Chinese Communists used this tactic extensively during their Cultural Revolution in the ’60s and ’70s.

Classical Marxism exerted great power in its day, but it finally collapsed under the weight of its economic failures. Unfortunately, a new Marxism was waiting right behind it to pick up the fallen Red banner. It began shortly after World War I when some Marxists began to see the need to revise their doctrine. Specifically, they couldn’t understand why the workers of Europe (outside Russia) fought for their respective countries, rather than join together to overthrow the capitalists. Wasn’t that what their theory predicted?

These Marxists decided that the problem was deeper than just economics, and that nothing less than a full-scale subversion of Western culture and civilization could bring about their desired revolution. Thus they targeted all the bonds of the traditional Western society, including religion, national identity, patriotism, and family life. To undermine the latter, they placed great emphasis on discrediting conventional sexual mores. They used the term “critical theory” to describe their agenda of relentlessly criticizing Western culture in order to undermine it.

Adherents of this “cultural Marxist” movement congregated in Frankfurt, Germany, and became known as the Frankfurt School.⁶ After the rise of Hitler, they fled Germany, and a number of them resettled in the United States. One was Herbert Marcuse, who was a leading guru of American left-wing radicals during the Sixties. Marcuse infamously stated that tolerance in its truest form should only be extended to viewpoints of the left. Most interestingly, Marcuse was a close associate of the SPLC’s first president, the radical leftist Julian Bond.⁷

As cultural Marxism evolved after the Sixties, it reinterpreted the class struggle by downplaying economics and stressing the conflicts of race, gender, and sexual orientation. The oppressors in this scheme are

white people (particularly heterosexual males) and the oppressed are so-called “people of color,” women, and homosexuals. And if people in those groups don’t think of themselves as oppressed it is only because they are deluded by their oppressors. These basic premises of cultural Marxism are the same as those of political correctness, a term derived from the Soviet Communist era. The two are identical for all practical purposes.

The SPLC’s dogmas and tactics follow those of cultural Marxism/PC almost to the letter. The tolerance it teaches is Marcuse’s bigoted version. And following Lenin’s formula it uses language to encourage “hatred, revulsion, and scorn” toward opponents. As Stalin once railed against kulaks, the SPLC employs Pavlovian word-weapons such as hater, bigot, racist, extremist, and xenophobe to conduct ritual shaming and silence dissent. In Potok’s own words, the goal is to “destroy” the opposition. The goal beyond that is to subvert traditional society in the fashion proposed by the Frankfurt School.

To undermine religion, specifically Christianity, the SPLC has designated respectable Christian organizations, such as the American Family Association, as “hate groups” because they uphold the conventional view of their faith that homosexuality has negative consequences for individuals and society. Islam has similar views, but the SPLC gives it a pass because Islam, the long-standing enemy of the West, can be helpful in weakening Western society.

SPLC is particularly hostile to immigration control groups because mass immigration is the preferred weapon of the left to weaken national identity and the patriotism sustained by a common heritage. A fractured and divided society is one congenial to totalitarians who scheme to impose their rule. A good expose of the far left’s strategy is the book *Importing Revolution* by former congressional aide William Hawkins.⁸

The SPLC and other PC radicals try to pose as humanitarians and defenders of immigrants, but nothing could be further from the truth. If they really cared about immigrants they would favor periods of immigration restriction so that assimilation could take place and immigrants could rise up the economic ladder and have a stake in society. But the radicals want no such thing. Their aim is a growing mass of poor and alienated people who can be useful pawns for social deconstruction.

In keeping with the racial emphasis of cultural Marxism, its adherents cast immigration control as a plot by whites (oppressors) against “people of color”—a pompous term which demeans various races and ethnicities by ignoring their diversity and lumping them all together on the basis non-whiteness. In the name of fighting racism, PC radicals relentlessly unleash their critical theory against European heritage. One of their charges is that whites possess a mysterious “privilege” which they employ to oppress everyone else. The charge

recalls what Hitler claimed about Jews.

As oppressors, the Euro-folks have no legitimate arguments or defenses on their behalf. To illustrate, *Social Contract* once produced an issue entitled “Euro-phobia” which examined the left’s anti-white animus, such as the statement by Susan Sontag that whites are “the cancer of human history.” The SPLC claimed that this exposure of racial intolerance was itself an expression of racism.

Nevertheless, the SPLC has no reservations about working with groups like the National Council of La Raza (the Race), an organization that works to thwart any effective steps to stop illegal immigration. La Raza (recently renamed to make its purpose less obvious) works to build the clout of Latinos at the expense of other Americans—which makes it a supremacist group by any reasonable definition. But that doesn’t seem to bother the SPLC.

As noted, cultural Marxism/PC has downplayed hostility to capitalism in favor of race-baiting and anti-nationalism. The latter is appealing to some corporations that seek a borderless world for enhanced profits. As a consequence, a corporate alliance with PC has arisen, with both parties getting benefits. The business interests get a cover of leftist morality to hide their greed, and the leftists get corporate money and approval. Just recently, the SPLC received a donation of \$1 million from the CEO of Apple and \$500,000 from J.P. Morgan Chase.⁹

The SPLC’s stock-in-trade is its presumption of moral authority. This brazen chutzpah certainly deceives many, but that authority is the purest fraud. Marxist ideology in all its expressions is the negation of morality and ethics. It is pure thuggery and manipulation of power lurking behind a veil of humanitarian rhetoric. The ideological heirs of Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Alinsky, Gramsci, and Marcuse have nothing to offer but tyranny.

It may be that political correctness is too benign a term to describe this project. Another possibility is neo-communism. Still another is Red supremacy. As the SPLC hides its hatred by accusing others of hatred, it merits the contempt of all decent Americans.

LET’S STAND UP TO THE SPLC BULLY

The SPLC has all the characteristics of a bully. With an endowment of a third of a billion dollars and a largely fawning media to push its propaganda, the SPLC relishes its campaigns to push anyone around who disagrees with its dogmas. Labeling people as “haters” serves to intimidate them, deprive them of respectability, and ultimately silence them. In the words of SPLC spokesman Mark Potok, “Sometimes the press will describe us as monitoring hate groups, I want to say plainly that our aim in life is to destroy these groups, completely destroy them.”¹⁰

One victim of an SPLC fatwa, Hannah Scherlacher, observed that, “Groups like the SPLC threaten our constitutional rights and the very fabric that makes this nation great. If this trend of bullying and ostracizing anyone with a different opinion continues, we can only expect a chilling, mob-rule effect and the suppression of speech and ideas in this country.”¹¹

Enhancing that threat is the SPLC’s ongoing work to influence law enforcement agencies at all levels against its targets. It regularly sends its lists of “haters” and “extremists” to those agencies, and many accept this propaganda as gospel. A few years back, the Department of Homeland Security published documents about extremist threats that seemed to be cut and pasted from SPLC materials.¹²

It doesn’t matter to the SPLC that most of its target groups are non-violent and law-abiding. The organization even admits that its designated “haters” and “extremists” are not necessarily criminals, an admission no doubt crafted to fend off lawsuits. But the intent is clear: to encourage police agencies to regard them as criminals or potential criminals. The term “hate group” certainly suggests a disposition toward violence.

SPLC’s bullying has gone on for quite some time, and in the typical fashion of bullies it generally targets people and groups that lack the resources to fight back. This successful intimidation, however, has caused the SPLC to overreach with its bullying. It has defamed so many people that perhaps their numbers and collective resources are reaching a critical mass, one sufficient to bring an effective backlash.

Resistance is definitely on the uptick. Following the 2016 election the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) filed a formal complaint with the IRS that the SPLC had violated its tax-exempt status with its strident partisan attacks against President Trump and other Republican candidates. FAIR, a moderate and respected immigration control organization, is on the SPLC hate list.¹³

At about the same time, a coalition of 47 conservative groups sent a letter to news outlets across the country urging them to stop treating the SPLC’s designation of hate groups as a legitimate source of information. The letter stated, “To associate public interest law firms and think tanks with neo-Nazi and the KKK is unconscionable, and represents the height of irresponsible journalism. All reputable news organizations should immediately stop using the SPLC’s descriptions of individuals and organizations based on its obvious political prejudices.”¹⁴

Also last year, the D. James Kennedy Ministries filed a federal lawsuit against the SPLC which argued that being called a hate group by the SPLC was defamation. A spokesman for the organization stated, “It’s

ridiculous for the SPLC to falsely tag evangelical Christian ministries as ‘hate groups’ for simply upholding the 2,000-year-old Christian consensus on marriage and sexuality.”¹⁵

In 2017 GuideStar, an organization that lists nonprofit organizations, decided to tag nonprofits so designated with the SPLC’s hate group label. GuideStar said that it had not investigated the designations, but was willing to take the SPLC’s word for them. The response from the tagged organizations was swift and furious. GuideStar backed down and removed the labels. One of the offended groups, Liberty Counsel, sued GuideStar.¹⁶ The judge in that case ruled against the lawsuit, but Liberty Counsel is considering an appeal.

In years past, at least a few mainstream media outlets expressed skepticism toward the SPLC. Recently the number has increased. Last year *The Wall Street Journal* ran a column entitled, “The Insidious Influence of the SPLC.” It affirmed that “[SPLC’s] branding of ‘hate groups’ and individuals is biased, sometimes false, and feeds polarization.”¹⁷

The Colorado Springs *Gazette* observed, SPLC’s lawyers have every right to operate their law firm as a high-dollar, left-wing think tank that acts like a bombastic social media bully. Donors who like these tactics should feel free to send their donations to pad that \$319 million endowment and the hefty salaries of SPLC employees. Meanwhile, we remain confounded and slightly scandalized by the mainstream media’s routine on this outfit, and the propensity of reporters to present the ‘hate map’ and assorted blacklists as sources of objective findings.¹⁸

When SPLC president Richard Cohen recently went to testify before the House of Representatives, supposedly as an expert on domestic terrorism, he may have expected an easy reception. What he encountered was strong skepticism toward his organization and its mission. Rep. Scott Perry (R-PA) grilled Cohen on the hypocrisy of SPLC labeling Christian organizations hate groups, while not so designating violent left-wing antifa thugs.

Cohen tried to dodge by claiming that the SPLC doesn’t count ideological hatred as hate. Conveniently, this is precisely the kind of hatred the SPLC indulges as it conducts its vendetta against conservatives and traditionalists. Perry replied to Cohen, “So you’re OK with antifa...if they hit people on the head with a bike lock or set things on fire or riot and flout the law by wearing face masks and incite riots—you’re okay with that?”¹⁹

The SPLC honcho offered a weak condemnation of antifa, evidently to salvage some credibility. In other instances, however, the SPLC has maintained a toler-

ant if slightly critical attitude toward antifa and other violent leftists. In one article it even suggested that an antifa group was a “constructive force.”²⁰ This starkly contrasts with the SPLC’s strident denunciations of non-violent right-wing movements such as the Tea Party. While it may not label them as “haters,” it strives to link them to extremism and possible threats to public order.

It would be comforting to think that the SPLC is finally discrediting itself, but such hope is far too premature. Following the fracas last year in Charlottesville, Virginia, much of the media reverted to their role as SPLC lapdogs and mouthpieces. Just recently it came to light that Google is using the SPLC, among other groups, to help police content on YouTube.²¹

As an outcome of all this uproar, Apple’s CEO and J.P. Morgan contributed a million dollars and \$500,000 respectively to the already cash-bloated SPLC. Unfortunately, it still has a significant following and significant influence.

The question now for SPLC’s opponents is how to sustain and increase the recent skepticism toward the organization. Most important is cultivating the attitude that they will not be bullied and intimidated. Groups targeted by the SPLC should reach out to each other and explore possibilities for common action. One definite possibility is putting pressure on the federal law enforcement to stop relying on the SPLC as a source of intelligence. Progress may have already come in this area. According to some accounts, the FBI no longer uses SPLC information, but the extent to which it has cut ties is not clear.²² The FBI website still has a link to the SPLC website.²³



SPLC’s Morris Dees and Richard Cohen

In any case, the targeted groups should approach the Justice Department to make their case. With the Trump administration in office, they have a better chance of getting a hearing than under a Democratic presidency. They might also reach out to friends in Congress to have them put pressure on the Justice Department. It would

be most helpful too if congressional friends could be persuaded to hold hearings on the SPLC and its influence on government. Unified steps to limit SPLC influence on state law enforcement might also proceed.

Another possibility for joint action is lawsuits against the SPLC like the one initiated by the Kennedy Ministries. Groups working together could help manage the high costs of litigation. If nothing else, they could contribute to the litigation of one group. Also, groups might consider legal action against news outlets that use SPLC material to defame them. At the same time, they could cultivate friends in the media who would expose the SPLC.

Groups also could encourage their members to work at the local level against the SPLC. Activities might include going to sheriffs and police chiefs to expose the SPLC's efforts to manipulate and deceive law enforcement. They could be encouraged to share this information with their colleagues. A good resource to give them is a booklet published by the David Horowitz Freedom Center entitled *The Southern Poverty Law Center: A Hate Machine* by John Perazzo.

Other actions are going to local news outlets which parrot SPLC propaganda and informing the managers and editors why they should reconsider doing so. Activists further might want to contact local school boards and urge that they not permit the SPLC's "Teaching Tolerance" materials in their classrooms.

Thoroughly discrediting the SPLC will require work and dedication. It is the nature of bullies that they won't give up bullying until their victims stand up and refuse to be victims any longer. ■

Endnotes

1. <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch>
2. <https://www.splcenter.org/intelligence-report> and <https://www.thenewamerican.com/usnews/politics/item/9725-splcs-misdirection-of-law-enforcement>
3. <http://splcwatch.org/articles/fbi-promotes-splc-while-board-member-honors-cop-killer/>
4. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnTz2y1Jo_8&feature=relmfu
5. <http://www.azquotes.com/quote/1255417>
6. <https://www.academia.org/the-origins-of-political-correctness/>
7. <https://capitalresearch.org/article/southern-poverty-law-center-wellspring-of-manufactured-hate/>
8. <https://www.amazon.com/Importing-Revolution-Borders-Radical-Agenda/dp/0936247150>
9. <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2017/08/27/apple-j-p-morgan-and-southern-poverty-law-centers-hate-list-what-are-gifts-to-splc-really-telling-customers.html>
10. <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch>
11. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnTz2y1Jo_8&feature=relmfu
12. <https://www.christianpost.com/news/conservative-reporter-claims-splc-unjustly-put-her-on-hate-list-reckless-hate-labeling-stifles-free-speech-201321/>
13. <http://www.wnd.com/2018/01/splc-is-now-a-hate-group-itself-its-a-money-grabbing-slander-machine/>
14. <https://fairus.org/press-releases/fair-files-formal-exhaustive-complaint-irs-splc-violated-its-tax-exempt-status>
15. <https://www.christianpost.com/news/47-conservative-groups-urge-media-stop-using-splc-hate-list-as-legitimate-source-198318/>
16. <https://townhall.com/tipsheet/lauretta-brown/2017/08/24/christian-ministry-sues-southern-poverty-law-center-over-hate-group-designation-n2372988>
17. <https://www.christianpost.com/news/liberty-counsel-sues-guidestar-applying-hate-group-label-190128/>
18. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-insidious-influence-of-the-splc-1498085416>
19. <http://gazette.com/editorial-media-should-not-embrace-far-left-poverty-law-firm/article/1610836>
20. <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/dec/2/antifa-isnt-hate-group-southern-poverty-law-center/>
21. <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2013/better-way>
22. <http://dailycaller.com/2018/02/27/google-youtube-southern-poverty-law-center-censorship/>
23. <http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2014/03/26/fbi-dumps-southern-poverty-law-center/>
24. <https://www.mediamatters.org/blog/2014/03/27/no-the-fbi-hasnt-ditched-the-southern-poverty-l/198645>