

# Turmoil Engulfs the SPLC

*A closer look at the underlying scam of the organization's 'hate group designation'*

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As I write this in late March 2019, the Southern Poverty Law Center [SPLC] seems to be in well-deserved turmoil. Its 82-year-old co-founder and leading public face Morris Dees was dismissed on March 14 amid charges of moral turpitude in his personal life and in the Center's own workplace. A week later, SPLC president Richard Cohen and legal director Rhonda Brownstein resigned in the backwash of Dees's firing.<sup>1</sup>

In an apparent now-it-can-be-told reaction to the firing, Bob Moser, a writer for *The New Yorker* who had worked at the SPLC from 2001 to 2004, recounted his dawning realization while there that the SPLC is, "in many respects, a highly profitable scam."<sup>2</sup>

This has long been apparent from outside the organization, too, as a steady stream of writers have highlighted the SPLC's incessant fund-raising and its resulting steadily expanding endowment, which has recently topped \$500 million.<sup>3</sup> As others have noted, the SPLC fits the mold "longshoreman philosopher" Eric Hoffer summarized long ago: "Every great cause begins as a movement, becomes a business, and eventually degenerates into a racket."<sup>4</sup>

Its mushrooming endowment demonstrates that the SPLC's core activity is piling up the dough, to what ends isn't clear. But in the meantime, in their long-running Hatewatch project,<sup>5</sup> the SPLC also pronounces on the civilizational decency or indecency of individuals and other organizations. And they're effective in the sense that lazy reporters and other dupes routinely take the SPLC's "hate group" labels seriously.

For example, in February 2019, a representative from the Federation for American Immigration Reform [FAIR] testified in Montana's legislature in support of

bills to forbid illegal-alien sanctuary policies in the state's cities and towns. (I was there, too, testifying.) Two weeks later, the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* published an op-ed by a Bozeman rabbi who had testified in Helena against the bills.<sup>6</sup> The op-ed was laden with heavy breathing about FAIR as a "white supremacist" organization, in league with eugenicists and anti-Semites (this despite the fact that FAIR leaders Dan Stein and Ira Mehlman are Jewish). Naturally, the rabbi sourced his assertion that FAIR is a "designated hate group" to the SPLC, and he went on at length about the "substantial documentation" behind the designation.

But how do such "designations" happen? How do the SPLC's vigilantes against hatred and "haters" — led by "Intelligence Project" director Heidi Beirich<sup>7</sup> — actually operate? A few years ago, I assembled some language regarding this that I've used in letters-to-the-editor, online comments, and the like:

The SPLC's *modus operandi* is simplicity itself: Using its own criteria, which have a trigger level of essentially zero, SPLC names Person P a "racist." Person P publishes an article in *Journal X*. Then if Person Q also publishes in *Journal X*, Person Q is a "racist" too. It's an open-and-shut case of guilt by association.

In recent years, SPLC has been tarring as "hate groups" several organizations advocating systematic enforcement of our immigration laws and reduced legal immigration — e.g., the Federation for American Immigration Reform [FAIR]. Poll after poll shows that huge majorities of Americans agree with FAIR, but the SPLC would put this vast swath of public policy, with its enormous implications for our national future, out of bounds for public discussion.

Meanwhile the SPLC shows no heartburn over MEChA (Spanish acronym for the Chicano Student Movement of Aztlan, with Aztlan the mythical ancestral home of the

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Aztecs), which has chapters at hundreds of American colleges and high schools nationwide. MEChA's governing document, El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán, includes such ethnocentrism as "We are a bronze people with a bronze culture." And the group's motto is "Por La Raza todo. Fuera de La Raza nada" ("For our Race, everything, outside our Race, nothing"). That's apparently too brazen to attract SPLC's attention as it sleuths everywhere for "white supremacists."

Here's a specific example, except that in this case it's two organizations — the immigration-restrictionist website VDARE.com and the Center for Immigration Studies [CIS] think-tank — tied together by one author, instead of the reverse.

That author is John Miano, a sporadic contributor to VDARE over the years. John, whom I know slightly, is a computer programmer who quit that career to become a lawyer fighting the H-1B visa program that immiserates so many of America's native-born technology workers. And, since 2008, he's been a Fellow of CIS.

Of John's 22 VDARE writings (count 'em, working backwards from his "writer" page<sup>8</sup> at the website), naturally most have to do with H-1B abuses (e.g. "San Jose

Mercury News's H1-B Driveby,"<sup>8</sup> on January 3, 2008 and "Fred Barnes's New Math On H-1B Visas,"<sup>9</sup> on May 29, 2008) or related corporate malfeasance (e.g. "Obscenities, Chaos, H-1Bs — And High Reported Earnings: My Year With AIG,"<sup>10</sup> on October 14, 2008 and "The Real Reason Microsoft Moved Jobs To Canada — A Manager's Convenience,"<sup>11</sup> on July 26, 2007).

Well, were any of Miano's 22 pieces about the racial and/or ethnocultural issues that reflexively provoke point-and-splutter hysteria at the SPLC? The titles of the three that come closest are:

- "The Loony Left's Tea Party Conspiracy Theory"<sup>12</sup>
- "John Lott On The Irrelevancy Of 'Stand Your Ground' To The Zimmerman Trial — Mentioned On VDARE.com Last March"<sup>13</sup>
- "How Often Do They Call Liberals Extreme?"<sup>14</sup>

And they don't come close—check them (or all 22!) out for yourself.

Further, all three were posted at least a year after the "indictment" to be described next.

Nevertheless, in 2009, SPLC's Beirich, as part of

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**NEWS**

**Top Trump administration immigration official to appear at hate group event**

August 07, 2018

by Heidi Beirich Intelligence Project Director

The head of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is scheduled to appear next week at an event hosted by an anti-immigrant hate group that's part of a network of organizations founded by white nationalist [John Tanton](#).

The [Center for Immigration Studies](#) (CIS) announced today that Lee Francis Cissna would participate in its "Immigration Newsmaker conversation" at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., on Aug. 15.

**On August 7, 2018, Heidi Beirich, the SPLC's chief muck-raking troll aka "Intelligence Project Director," posted this attack on Lee Francis Cissna, the head of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), for appearing "next week at an event hosted by an anti-immigrant hate group." Director Cissna was targeted for his participation at a National Press Club event hosted by the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS). A week later, on August 14, 2018, House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer urged Cissna to cancel his scheduled appearance at the August 15 event, citing the SPLC posting in a "press release" under the headline, "Hoyer Sends Letter to USCIS Director Cissna Urging Him to Cancel Meeting with Hate Group." The basis of this coordinated attack is a grossly inaccurate description of CIS's activities and guilt-by-association political tactics intended to discredit and marginalize anyone that Beirich and the SPLC oppose.**

what she evidently thought was an open-and-shut indictment of the Center for Immigration Studies, wrote:<sup>15</sup>

Some at CIS have also written for a nativist hate site, VDARE.com, which is named after Virginia Dare, said to be the first English child born in the New World. They include CIS Fellow John Miano and board member Carol Iannone.

Clearly, what John Miano had actually written at VDARE.com was of no consequence. (The same is true for Carol Iannone; her lone item at VDARE was a one-paragraph note in January 2001: “Carol Iannone Rebukes Paleocon Schadenfreude.”<sup>16</sup>) Indeed, there’s no hint that Beirich even glanced at any of those 22 pieces. Their sole significance for her “case” against CIS was their mere *existence* at VDARE — which Beirich labeled variously a “hate site,” a “hate website,” and a “racist anti-immigration website,” in addition to a “nativist hate site.”

That 2009 article is very long — more than 13,000 words — and besides CIS, it smears NumbersUSA and FAIR, along with several individuals who have played important roles in the three organizations’ formation and work. Notably, Beirich quotes such individuals throughout the piece, but her few references (all embedded links) are solely to other pages at the SPLC’s website. In an era when it’s straightforward to put most sources before readers so they can examine quotations within their original contexts, this is glaring misbehavior.

And in August 2018, she was still attempting to slime CIS. In a brief piece, “Top Trump administration immigration official to appear at hate group event,”<sup>17</sup> wherein Beirich apparently interviewed herself, she described CIS as “a hate group that exists solely to vilify immigrants.” That’s rather startling, as vilification of immigrants is wholly absent from CIS’s work, consistent with part of the think tank’s own “Who We Are” statement.<sup>18</sup>

[Our] data may support criticism of US immigration policies, but they do not justify ill feelings toward our immigrant community. In fact, many of us at the Center are animated by a “low-immigration, pro-immigrant” vision of an America that admits fewer immigrants but affords a warmer welcome for those who are admitted.

So the SPLC is at least a two-dimensional scam. There’s the financial aspect that’s attracted so much attention. But there’s also the intellectual vaporware of its pure guilt-by-association demonology. Because of that latter aspect, I propose that we henceforth refer to this scurrilous operation as the “Southern Point & Splutter Center.” ■

## Endnotes

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