About the Southern Poverty Law Center

The Southern Poverty Law Center, based in Montgomery, Ala., is a nonprofit civil rights organization founded in 1971 and dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry, and to seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of society.

For more information about
THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER
www.splcenter.org

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As the first year of the Trump presidency began in 2017, we knew that the most vulnerable people in our country would need our help as much as – if not more than – ever.

The reality was worse than we imagined.

It quickly became clear that the xenophobia of Donald Trump’s campaign was simply a preview of his presidency. He stacked his White House with far-right extremists. He unleashed a government-wide assault on hard-won civil rights protections. He promoted policies that threatened to shred the social safety net and reverse efforts to root out racism in the criminal justice system. And he launched a cruel immigration dragnet that shattered the lives of millions of immigrants, few of whom were the “bad hombres” he had promised to target.

What’s more, he turned his back on the most fundamental tenets of our democracy – on the rule of law itself – and the values for which our country has stood for many decades.

Even in the aftermath of a deadly white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, the president equivocated rather than forcefully denounce the neo-Nazis and other white supremacists who were energized by his presidency.

With so much at stake, we made fighting Trump’s extremist agenda – and the hate he pulled into the mainstream – our No. 1 priority.

We responded on multiple fronts.

We tracked and exposed more than 900 hate groups, documenting a third straight year of increases and a more than 20 percent growth coinciding with Trump’s campaign and presidency.

We filed suit against one of the country’s most notorious “alt-right” leaders for orchestrating a campaign of terror against a Jewish woman and her family.

We testified multiple times before Congress, warning about the danger of rising extremism, and distributed thousands of law enforcement training videos to help officers respond to the threat. We successfully pressured Silicon Valley companies to stop hate groups from using their services to raise money and spread radicalizing propaganda.

As Trump’s immigration policies tore families apart, we launched an ambitious project to provide free legal representation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
In Trump’s first year in the White House, he demonstrated that the xenophobia of his campaign was simply a preview of his presidency.

to immigrants who have no access to counsel while locked up in remote detention centers across the Deep South.

We also filed a series of cases to stop the shocking abuse of poor people who are being exploited in the justice system because of their poverty – a problem the Trump administration has turned its back on.

In our fight against mass incarceration in the Deep South, we won a major courtroom victory in a lawsuit seeking to reform Alabama’s overcrowded prison system. We brought attention to the medical neglect and abuse of transgender prisoners by helping the Michigan Department of Corrections adopt a new policy for their care. And in Louisiana, we successfully fought for criminal justice reforms that will safely reduce the state’s sky-high incarceration rate.

We also fought for the rights of vulnerable children in Mississippi, suing the state for operating an education system that shortchanges black children and violates a 150-year-old state obligation to provide a “uniform system of free public schools.”

Through our Teaching Tolerance project, we equipped educators with a variety of free resources in response to racial and ethnic tensions sparked by Trump’s rhetoric. We helped teach children to see through extremist propaganda they encounter on the internet. And we started a nationwide grant program to fund school projects that fight bigotry and create safe and welcoming classrooms for all students.

And, at colleges and universities across the country, our SPLC on Campus program provided resources and strategies to help students safely respond when white supremacists target their campus for recruitment.

We owe our success in 2017 to the steadfast support of thousands of people across America who share a commitment to justice and equality – and we’re deeply grateful for their financial and moral support.

We know that the challenges ahead will be great, particularly as long as Trump remains in office. The most marginalized people in our country are hurting and need our help. We’re committed to defending their rights and providing them with a voice in the nation’s courtrooms, classrooms and halls of government in 2018 and beyond.

Very truly yours,

Morris Dees, Founder

J. Richard Cohen, President
FIGHTING HATE

The chilling sight of hundreds of young neo-Nazis marching with torches in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August epitomized a year that saw the radical right emboldened and energized by the presidency of Donald Trump.

Throughout the year, Trump thrilled white supremacists with both his policy actions and his words, such as when he equated neo-Nazis with anti-racist activists in the wake of the deadly violence in Charlottesville.

White supremacists, indeed, saw in him an ally and a kindred spirit.

Former Klan boss David Duke proclaimed the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville – the largest white supremacist rally in a decade – a “turning point” and vowed that white supremacists would “fulfill the promises of Donald Trump” to “take our country back.”

Trump also opened the White House doors to far-right extremists tapped to serve as advisers. Meanwhile, so-called “alt-right” groups, the latest incarnation of white supremacy, ramped up their recruitment of college students and staged demonstrations across the country.

The SPLC responded on multiple fronts. We tracked and exposed 954 hate groups, documenting a third straight year of hate group increases – a more than 20 percent growth coinciding with Trump’s campaign and presidency.

We filed suit against a neo-Nazi leader, a prominent figure in the alt-right movement, for orchestrating a terror campaign against a Jewish woman and her family. We also helped a lesbian mother take steps to hold an anti-LGBT hate group responsible for its role in the kidnapping of her daughter.

On Capitol Hill, we warned Congress of the threat of hate violence. We provided university students, college administrators and law enforcement with resources and training to combat extremism. And we successfully pressured Silicon Valley companies to stop hate groups from using their services to raise money and spread radicalizing propaganda.
President Trump’s first year in office proved to be just as racially divisive as his campaign — but even more consequential.

The president’s policies and rhetoric reflected what white supremacist groups had longed to see: a country where racism is sanctioned by the highest office, immigrants are given the boot and Muslims banned.

The white supremacist “alt-right” movement moved into the political and media mainstream, pulled by Trump’s embrace during his campaign and the early days of his presidency. In turn, Trump appointed a number of advisers with ties to the radical right – people like Breitbart News executive Stephen Bannon, chosen as chief White House strategist. Reinvigorated white supremacists staged their largest rally in a decade – a demonstration in Charlottesville, Virginia, that left an anti-racist counterprotester dead and Trump equivocating over condemning racism.

Against this backdrop, the SPLC identified 954 hate groups in 2017 – an increase of 4 percent from 2016 and the third consecutive year of hate group increases. The overall rise in hate groups was driven in part by a backlash from the Nation of Islam and other fringe black nationalist groups that expanded in response to Trump and the white supremacist movement. The groups, which have historically been a reaction to white racism, grew to 233 chapters in 2017, from 193 the previous year.

Black nationalist groups, however, still lagged far behind the more than 600 hate groups that adhere to some form of white supremacist ideology – and they have virtually no supporters or influence in mainstream politics, much less in the White House. These groups, typified by their anti-Semitic, anti-LGBT, anti-white rhetoric and conspiracy theories, should not be confused with activist groups such as Black Lives Matter and others that work for civil rights and the elimination of systemic racism.

Within the white supremacist movement, neo-Nazi groups saw the greatest growth – from 99 groups to 121. Anti-Muslim groups rose for a third straight year. They increased from 101 chapters to 114 in 2017 – growth that comes after the groups tripled in number a year earlier.

Ku Klux Klan groups, meanwhile, fell from 130 groups to 72. The decline is a clear indication that the new generation of white supremacists is rejecting the Klan’s hoods and robes for the hipper image of the alt-right.

Also, for the first time, the SPLC designated two male supremacy groups as hate groups: A Voice for Men, based in Houston, and Return of Kings, based in Washington, D.C. The vilification of women by these groups makes them no different than other groups that demean entire populations, such as the LGBT community, Muslims or Jews, based on their inherent characteristics.

Aside from hate groups, the SPLC identified 689 active antigovernment groups that comprised the “Patriot” movement in 2017, up from 623. Of these, 273 were armed militias.

Historically, these groups rise during Democratic presidencies out of fear of gun control measures and federal law enforcement action against them. They typically decline under GOP presidencies. This has not been the case under Trump, whose radical views and bigotry may be energizing them in the same way he has invigorated hate groups.
SPLC SUES NEO-NAZI LEADER OVER ANTI-SEMITIC HARASSMENT CAMPAIGN

The SPLC filed suit against one of the nation’s most prominent neo-Nazis in April for orchestrating a campaign of terror against a Jewish woman and her family in Montana.

The lawsuit describes how Andrew Anglin used his web forum, the Daily Stormer, to publish dozens of articles urging his followers to launch a “troll storm” against Tanya Gersh, a real estate agent in Whitefish, Montana. Gersh, her husband and the couple’s 12-year-old son received hundreds of harassing, anti-Semitic messages and threats.

The Daily Stormer, which takes its name from the Nazi propaganda sheet *Der Stürmer*, has established about 30 chapters in the United States and Canada. Anglin has bragged about how he uses his website to target children as young as 10 with propaganda designed to indoctrinate them into Nazi ideology. It has been designated a hate group by the SPLC.

The harassment campaign against Gersh began in December 2016 after Anglin accused her of attempting to extort money from the mother of white nationalist leader Richard Spencer. Anglin and Spencer are both prominent leaders of the “alt-right” movement that rallied white supremacists behind Donald Trump’s presidential campaign. Spencer’s mother has a home in the same Montana town as Gersh.

One message received by Gersh included an image of her being sprayed with a green gas, along with the words: *Hickory dickory dock, the kike ran up the clock. The clock struck three and the Internet Nazis trolls gassed the rest of them.*

Sometimes, Gersh answered the phone and heard only the sound of gunshots.

The lawsuit is similar to litigation the SPLC has used to win crushing court judgments against 10 major white supremacist organizations and 50 individuals who led them or participated in violent acts. The legal strategy, however, has been adapted for the digital age.

**HOLDING SILICON VALLEY ACCOUNTABLE**

With the advent of powerful new technology, hate groups have moved more and more of their activities online, using a variety of internet platforms to raise and move money, to network with each other, and to spread racist propaganda that indoctrinates young people and encourages violence.

For several years, the SPLC has been working to hold Silicon Valley companies accountable to their own “Terms of Service” and “Acceptable Use” policies that generally prohibit behavior that promotes hate but that were previously enforced only rarely.

Some companies, such as Apple and Amazon, were quick to embrace and enforce community guidelines dealing with hate and
extremism. But 2017 proved to be a watershed for the effort. Numerous companies took action after the deadly white supremacist rally in Charlottesville provided a real-life example of the dangers about which the SPLC had been warning.

The SPLC revealed how PayPal, one of the world’s largest online payment processors, was an integral tool used to raise money to orchestrate the rally. Organizers, speakers and individual attendees relied on it to move funds during the run-up to the event. Shortly after the SPLC published its report, PayPal dropped many extremist accounts cited by the SPLC. The company also re-stated its commitment to enforcing its Acceptable Use Policy.

A number of white supremacists prominent in the alt-right also saw their Twitter accounts deleted. And companies that hosted major racist websites like Daily Stormer and Stormfront on their internet services cut off those services.

The reality is that extremists are developing their own technologies, and their websites are finding new companies to host them. But, in many cases, they no longer enjoy the same broad access to mainstream audiences, rendering them less able to spread their hate and conspiracy theories among the general public.

Prior to the Charlottesville rally, the SPLC exposed another way that internet technology can foster extremism.

In January, the SPLC released *Google and the Miseducation of Dylann Roof*. The video asked how Roof could go from a childhood in a nonracist home to being so steeped in white supremacy that he murdered nine black parishioners during a Bible study at a Charleston, South Carolina, church in 2015. The answer lies in part with the way that Google’s search engine works. Roof became obsessed with so-called “black-on-white crime” after the Trayvon Martin case, and his internet searches took him to crudely racist propaganda on the website of the white supremacist Council for Conservative Citizens. Once he read that kind of material, Google search led him to similar pages. It’s an example of how Google’s search function can reinforce user behavior rather than provide factual, authoritative information on a subject.

It is unclear what steps Google took to adjust the algorithm behind its search function, but since the release of the video, a search for the phrase “black-on-white crime” no longer includes such propaganda on the first page of the results.

**WARNING CONGRESS OF EXTREMIST THREAT**

The SPLC’s expertise was repeatedly sought from the highest political levels in 2017. SPLC President Richard Cohen appeared at three congressional hearings to warn Congress of the threat posed by the radical right.

In November, Cohen testified before the
U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security about the need to focus on domestic terrorism by the radical right. He noted that the deadly violence at the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville was “a wake-up call for our country” and “a reminder that the oldest form of terrorism our country has ever known is still with us.”

While terrorist groups such as ISIS pose an acute threat to the nation, the nation discounts the threat of the white supremacist movement at our own peril, Cohen said, adding that radical-right groups not only pose a threat to our safety “but to the very soul of our nation.”

After leading figures of the white supremacist “alt-right” descended on colleges across the nation for controversial – and volatile – speaking engagements, Cohen testified before two panels about the need for colleges and universities to protect free speech but also speak out for our nation’s democratic values.

“First Amendment rights must be protected,” Cohen told the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary in June. “But we must not ignore the increase in white nationalist activity around the country and on our college campuses. We need to fight speech that threatens our nation’s democratic values with speech that upholds them.”

He addressed the issue again in October before the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions.

HELPING POLICE RESPOND TO THE EXTREMIST THREAT

The SPLC worked with law enforcement agencies across the country to combat hate crime and domestic terrorism in 2017 by providing key information, training and life-saving resources to law enforcement at every level.

The SPLC’s free, in-person training sessions equipped officers in 2017 with the knowledge and expertise necessary to respond to the threat from hate groups and extremists.

In response to the outbreak of hate-inspired violence in the wake of the 2016 election, the SPLC distributed more than 64,000 copies of a new training video that will help law enforcement officers recognize and respond to hate crimes. After Charlottesville, the SPLC produced another training video to help officers combat violence when hate groups hold rallies in their town.

As hate groups planned more rallies in the wake of the deadly violence in Charlottesville, the SPLC spoke with officials in major cities to help them deal with the volatile situation and ensure such violence wouldn’t be repeated. During the week after Charlottesville, Boston Mayor Marty Walsh contacted the SPLC for advice on how to avoid violence. He credited the advice for a peaceful outcome when 40,000 anti-racist demonstrators took to the streets in his city to protest a vastly smaller white nationalist rally.

“Excellent officer safety information ...[M]any officers, as well as the public, are unaware these groups exist and the extent of harm possible by them.”

Probation and parole officer, Missouri
SPLC RESOURCES HELP FIGHT HATE

Throughout 2017, the SPLC distributed publications that help the public, law enforcement, and government and school officials counter the hate and false propaganda being spread by the radical right. Below is a list of publications released during the year.

splcenter.org/publications

- **Intelligence Report.** The SPLC’s investigative journal provides in-depth reporting about hate and extremism in the United States. In each Spring issue, it includes an annual census and map of domestic hate groups. It is provided free to law enforcement across the country.

- **Hatewatch blog.** The Hatewatch blog monitors and exposes the activities of the American radical right, providing timely posts with the latest information about far-right extremists.

- **100 Days in Trump’s America.** This special report examines how President Trump followed an alt-right agenda, in both words and policy actions, during his first 100 days in the White House.

- **The Alt-Right on Campus: What Students Need to Know.** Released days before the deadly white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, this guide advises students on how to respond when speakers associated with the growing white supremacist, or “alt-right,” movement, appear on campus.

- **Ten Ways to Fight Hate.** In the aftermath of white supremacist violence in Charlottesville, the SPLC released a new, updated edition of this guide for effectively – and peacefully – taking a stand against bigotry.

- **SPLC on Campus: A Guide to Bystander Intervention.** This publication provides bystanders with the steps necessary to safely take action when they witness hate incidents.

64,000+ TRAINING VIDEOS
distributed by the SPLC in 2017 to help law enforcement officers recognize and respond to hate crimes and the threat posed by violent extremists.
As President Trump energized white supremacists and deepened divisions across the nation in 2017, teachers turned to the SPLC’s Teaching Tolerance project to combat the rise of bigotry in schools.

Teaching Tolerance was ready with an array of resources that help educators prepare young people to be active participants in a diverse democracy.

A year earlier, it had documented the corrosive effect of Trump's xenophobic rhetoric. A pair of reports titled *The Trump Effect*, based on surveys of more than 10,000 educators, found that Trump was inflaming racial and ethnic tensions in the classroom. Teachers reported a sharp uptick in the use of racial slurs and alarming incidents involving swastikas, Nazi salutes and Confederate flags. Many students whose races, ethnicities or religions were targeted by Trump were terrified of what might happen to them.

In 2017, Teaching Tolerance launched a nationwide grant program to help educators fund projects designed to create safe and welcoming classrooms for all children and prepare students for active citizenship.

To counter the racist rhetoric of the “alt-right” and other elements of the radical right, Teaching Tolerance created an innovative digital literacy initiative that educates teachers and students about media manipulation, “fake news,” smart searching and responsible online sharing. It’s designed to counter the spread of propaganda that can drive prejudice and corrode faith in our democratic institutions.

Teaching Tolerance also launched a new, more interactive website offering the latest resources and timely guidance for educators dedicated to creating inclusive school communities where children learn to respect democratic values. Teachers also found highly effective strategies to fight prejudice and promote educational equity in *Teaching Tolerance* magazine, which reaches approximately 450,000 educators.
Teaching Tolerance started a new grant program in 2017 to help educators develop programs that promote social justice. The Teaching Tolerance Educator Grants program offers grants ranging from $500 to $15,000 for projects that include marginalized students, that promote an affirming school climate and that teach young people to thrive in a diverse democracy.

The grants fund projects at both the school and classroom levels. School-level projects aim to improve school climate, reduce hate, support culturally responsive practices and implement an anti-bias curriculum. In the classroom-level projects, teachers use the grants for programs that promote empathy and kindness, positive identity development, perspective taking and critical thinking.

The grantees will submit a post-project evaluation to demonstrate the program’s impact. The hope is to build a network of educators who are enthusiastic about learning from each other and who can share their experiences fighting injustice in their schools with the broader Teaching Tolerance community.

Digital Literacy Initiative Combats ‘Fake News,’ Online Hate

Young people today depend on social media and the internet for news and information. Yet, like adults, they can be highly susceptible to the kind of false information – including propaganda from extremist groups – that has proliferated on forums like Facebook and Twitter in recent years.

In response, Teaching Tolerance in 2017 created a new classroom resource that will help children separate fact from fiction on the internet so they can be better-informed, more-engaged citizens in the digital age.

The new Digital Literacy Framework offers K-12 lessons, aligned with Common Core State Standards and organized by grade level, that will help students become more sophisticated consumers of online content.

“There’s a growing demand among teachers for resources that help them prepare students to recognize ‘fake news’ and engage in social media communities responsibly,” said Teaching Tolerance Director Maureen Costello. “This new resource is designed to fill that gap. It provides tools to help students determine if an online source is reliable and fair, to help them find high-quality sources of information, and to help them engage in online discussions with inclusivity and empathy, among other skills.”

The digital literacy initiative provides short informational videos and self-guided tools such as checklists, handouts and vocabulary lists.

“The internet is a powerful tool for community-building and civic engagement, but the ability to be fluent, savvy and safe online is vital for students if they are to become active, responsible participants in a diverse democracy,” Costello said.

Teachers can access the Digital Literacy Framework and other classroom materials at no cost by visiting tolerance.org/frameworks/digital-literacy.
REVAMPED WEBSITE HELPS TEACHERS RESPOND TO CURRENT EVENTS

Teaching Tolerance launched a redesigned website to provide educators with resources and guidance that help them respond rapidly to current events that are felt in the classroom – such as a school shooting, a natural disaster or a federal policy change that threatens the children of immigrants.

The new website offers easy access to a wide variety of free classroom resources – award-winning films, lesson plans, teaching strategies and more.

It also hosts ongoing discussions among educators about issues involving race and ethnicity, gender identity, religion, bullying and bias, and other topics.

STUDENTS ‘MIX IT UP’

While Oct. 31 is typically a day students associate with ghosts, goblins and candy, students at thousands of schools across the country stepped out of their comfort zones and got to know someone new as part of the 16th National Mix It Up at Lunch Day.

The annual school event sponsored by Teaching Tolerance encourages students to sit with someone new in the cafeteria. Since its inception, educators have used the event to help foster welcoming school environments for all students, and to better understand and respect classmates with different backgrounds and perspectives.

Cafeterias are the focus of the program because that’s where a school’s social boundaries are most obvious. Many schools, however, plan other activities outside the lunchroom. Each school sets its own agenda, makes its own plans and chooses its own theme. Some schools use Mix It Up at Lunch Day to kick off yearlong explorations of social divisions.

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

During 2017, Teaching Tolerance provided an assortment of free resources to help bring relevance, rigor and social emotional learning into teachers’ classrooms.

Among those resources are eight different film kits offering classroom documentaries on a variety of topics, including the civil rights movement, school bullying and the Holocaust.

Teaching Tolerance films have won two Oscars in the short documentary category. The Children’s March tells the story of how the young people of Birmingham, Alabama, braved fire hoses and police dogs in 1963 and brought segregation to its knees. A Time for Justice captures the spirit of the civil rights movement through historical footage and the voices of those who participated in the struggle.

Teaching Tolerance also sent resources to classrooms to address the negative impact of Trump’s rhetoric on school climate. The program mailed three key resources to every principal and superintendent in the country (127,000) and produced webinars for each.

Teaching Tolerance also set up a system to email resources to schools where – and when – bias incidents were reported in the news. It published timely materials immediately.
following changes in government policies, such as those that might affect children living in immigrant families, along with a new guide for English-language learners.

Teachers can also find lesson plans, customizable learning plans, texts and teaching strategies that not only educate but help create civil and inclusive school communities where children are respected, valued and welcome participants.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Teaching Tolerance in 2017 provided a range of professional development opportunities to teachers, including face-to-face training sessions and webinars that promote inclusiveness and presentations on educational equity.

These resources help teachers improve their practice and help K-12 leaders shape their schools into strong, equitable communities. The topics addressed in 2017 included the “alt-right,” responding to hate, and supporting students who are immigrants.

More than 4,000 teachers participated in face-to-face training sessions, learning how to have difficult conversations about race and how to recognize, respond to, and correct conditions that deny some students access to opportunities that their peers enjoy.

Teaching Tolerance conducted 12 new webinars in 2017 that reached more than 12,000 educators. Three particularly popular webinars included teaching digital literacy, how to be an ally in the classroom, and confronting implicit bias. Other webinars, which were co-sponsored by the National Education Association, included presentations on talking about race, racism and other difficult topics; speaking up at school; and responding to hate and bias at school.

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**TEACHING TOLERANCE MAGAZINE**

*Teaching Tolerance* magazine tackled a broad range of topics in 2017, providing educators with information, tools and strategies to help them respond when current events are no longer a news story but a reality in their schools.

The Spring issue offered a guide for educators and school support staff to respond to the hardships and biases that immigrant and refugee children encounter on a daily basis. The cover story of the Summer issue focused on the story of an undocumented student who may never have graduated if his peers and teachers hadn’t rallied for his release from an immigrant detention center.

The Fall issue included classroom-friendly resources to help teachers fight the spread of hate online and improve their students’ digital literacy.

*Teaching Tolerance* has been recognized frequently for journalistic excellence, with numerous accolades including the Golden Lamp from the Association of American Publishers and Green Eyeshade awards from the Society of Professional Journalists.

The magazine reaches approximately 450,000 educators and schools in every state. It can be read at [tolerance.org/magazine](http://tolerance.org/magazine).
SCHOOL CLIMATE PACKAGE
In February 2017, we mailed a package to virtually every principal and superintendent in the nation. It included free copies of three of our publications:

- Speak Up at School
- Responding to Hate and Bias
- Let’s Talk

BULK ORDER REQUESTS
In 2017, we distributed almost 21,000 copies of various items in response to requests for multiple copies of publications or other materials, typically for use in school or district-wide trainings.

AN AWARD-WINNING TRADITION CONTINUES
Since its founding in 1991, Teaching Tolerance has been recognized as a transformative force in education. Its resources have won two Oscars, an Emmy and scores of other honors. In 2017, the program was once again lauded for its exceptional quality by the following organizations:

ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN PUBLISHERS (REVERE AWARDS)
- Golden Lamp Award (Best Magazine)
- Best Overall Editorial in Professional Magazines
- Best Social Science and History Supplemental Resource
- Best Feature in Professional Magazines
- Best Illustrations, Graphics and Photography in Professional Magazines
- Best Single Issue Editorial in Professional Magazines

SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY
Simmons Luminary Award, National Honoree

NATIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION CENTER
National Peacemaker Honoree
“[P]lease know how grateful countless numbers of us who work in schools are for your wonderful work. I’m not sure what I would do without Teaching Tolerance, quite frankly. I hope you will share with your colleagues that the work you do each day helps honor children and teenagers and makes the world a better place. Truly.”

Vermont educator

2017 BY THE NUMBERS

900,000
TEACHING TOLERANCE MAGAZINES DELIVERED

243,500
VIEWS OF FILMS ON WEBSITE AND YOUTUBE

3.2 MILLION
VISITORS TO WEBSITE

445,000
RESOURCES DOWNLOADED

42,931
EDUCATION FILM KITS DELIVERED

6,129  Starting Small
7,861  Selma: The Bridge to the Ballot
5,839  Viva La Causa
7,093  Mighty Times: The Children’s March
7,545  Bullied: A Student, A School and a Case
ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The SPLC is fighting successfully across the Deep South to root out discriminatory practices – many of them in the judicial system – that punish or exploit poor people, so often people of color, because of their economic status.

In one major victory in 2017, the state of Mississippi promised to reinstate the driver’s licenses of more than 100,000 low-income people after agreeing, under pressure from the SPLC, to stop suspending licenses for the failure to pay traffic tickets and court fines.

The SPLC also worked in several communities to eliminate money bail systems that create a two-tiered system of justice based on a person’s wealth. In one case, the SPLC filed a first-of-its-kind lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of felony bail practices.

SPLC lawyers also shut down modern-day debtors’ prisons in Alexander City, Alabama, and Bogalusa, Louisiana – communities where people were locked away until they could pay fines and fees for traffic tickets and other minor offenses without any consideration of their ability to pay.

In addition, lawsuits filed in Louisiana and Alabama took aim at private probation companies that profit by charging fees for improper but court-ordered “services” like payment plans.

Edwards, who has two young children and was seven months pregnant at the time, was arrested for forging a $75 check. She was jailed because she couldn’t afford to pay the $7,500 bail.
REFORMING THE MONEY BAIL SYSTEM

When Ronald Egana’s mother and a family friend wanted to get him out of jail, they turned to Blair’s Bail Bonds in New Orleans.

The company told them they’d have to pay a $3,275 bail bond fee. They agreed.

But over the course of a year, they ended up paying almost twice that amount due to nonrefundable and hidden fees charged by the company. The company even sent bounty hunters to kidnap Egana and extort money.

Egana’s ordeal is described in a federal lawsuit the SPLC filed in 2017. It describes how Blair’s Bail Bonds, New Orleans Bail Bonds, Bankers Insurance Company, and Alternative to Incarceration, a company that provided ankle-monitoring equipment, worked together to issue bail bonds that pushed clients deep into debt with hidden and illegal fees.

The complaint, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana, alleges that the companies violated numerous laws, including the Truth in Lending Act and federal and state racketeering laws. It also accuses the companies of false imprisonment.

The complaint, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana, alleges that the companies violated numerous laws, including the Truth in Lending Act and federal and state racketeering laws. It also accuses the companies of false imprisonment.

In a separate action in September, the SPLC filed a complaint with the Louisiana Department of Insurance that outlined how several New Orleans-based bail bond companies, along with their insurance underwriters, have collectively overcharged poor defendants nearly $5 million over the last 12 years, in violation of state law.

The SPLC’s efforts to reform money bail systems across the Southeast did not, however, stop there. In Randolph County, Alabama, for example, the SPLC filed a lawsuit charging that the county’s money bail system violates the constitutional rights of people charged with misdemeanors or felonies because it creates a two-tiered system of justice based on wealth.

The suit is among the first to challenge the constitutionality of felony bail practices.

The complaint was filed on behalf of Kandace Edwards in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Alabama, Eastern Division. It accuses judicial and county officials of violating her due process and equal protection rights.

Edwards, who has two young children and was seven months pregnant at the time, was arrested for forging a $75 check. She was jailed because she couldn’t afford to pay the $7,500 bail. Edwards, who served in the Army National Guard from 2006 until 2010, had recently lost her job due to a high-risk pregnancy. She was indigent and had been homeless for several months.

In jail, she slept on a mat on the floor.

Within hours of the lawsuit’s filing, a federal judge granted a temporary restraining order preventing officials from continuing to jail Edwards for her inability to pay bail. The suit is ongoing.
END DEBTORS’ PRISONS

The SPLC in 2017 made additional headway in its multiyear campaign to eradicate modern-day debtors’ prisons.

In March, SPLC lawyers reached a settlement with Alexander City, Alabama, and its police chief to resolve a federal class action lawsuit over its practice of jailing people for being too poor to pay fines and court fees for traffic tickets and misdemeanors.

In a town where almost 30 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, at least 190 impoverished people were jailed for nonpayment within a two-year period. The SPLC and its co-counsel filed suit in 2015 to stop the abuse.

Under terms of the settlement, the city and its insurer paid $680,000. The class members were compensated at least $500 for each day they were illegally jailed.

In Bogalusa, Louisiana, the city court agreed to stop jailing indigent defendants for failing to pay court debt – one of several reforms designed to ensure fairness for all people appearing before the court. The agreement, approved in September, resolves a 2016 lawsuit that described how the court was funded through fees levied against individuals found guilty, creating a financial incentive for the judge to find people guilty and coerce payment through the threat of jail.

And, as 2017 drew to a close, the SPLC and its co-counsel filed a lawsuit in December over a debtors’ prison operating in Corinth, Mississippi. The suit describes how a municipal court judge and the city routinely violate the constitutional rights of people facing misdemeanor or municipal charges by holding them in jail until they pay bail money or their fine, without taking into account their ability to pay, as required by law.

STOPPING EXPLOITIVE PRIVATE PROBATION

In Baton Rouge, Louisiana, people awaiting trial before a criminal court were coerced into paying hundreds of dollars to a company before they were released from jail – even after they had paid their bail. The SPLC and its co-counsel filed a federal lawsuit in 2017 to end the practice.

People awaiting trial were threatened with re-arrest if they did not pay additional monthly fees to Rehabilitation Home Incarceration, a for-profit company that provides pre-trial supervision. The lawsuit describes how the company and its owner worked with East Baton Rouge Parish officials for at least three years to detain people awaiting trial and coerce payments. The company and its owner are named as defendants.

In October, the SPLC filed a federal lawsuit and a judicial ethics complaint over an illegal probation scheme in Gardendale, Alabama, that exploited low-income defendants and violated their constitutional rights.

The lawsuit describes how a municipal court judge and the city required anyone who could not afford to pay their full fines and court fees for traffic and misdemeanor offenses to be placed on supervised probation with the company, Professional Probation Services Inc. (PPS).

It notes that PPS, acting as a probation supervisor, owed a duty of neutrality and objectivity to those it supervises but instead made every decision to maximize profits, including the $40 monthly fee it charged defendants.

As part of the settlement, the city severed ties with the company. The city and the judge
also cannot enter into a new agreement.

These successes are reverberating across the South. When the SPLC began targeting private probation companies that exploit the poor in Alabama, about 110 municipalities maintained arrangements with them. Now, because of the SPLC’s lawsuits and its public education campaign, that number has been whittled down to fewer than 10.

**DRIVER’S LICENSES REINSTATED AFTER SPLC ACTION**

More than 100,000 low-income people in Mississippi will be getting their driver’s licenses back after the state agreed, under pressure from the SPLC, to stop suspending licenses for the failure to pay traffic tickets and court fines.

Previously, the Mississippi Department of Public Safety would automatically suspend a license without asking people why they could not pay and without giving them extra time to pay or an alternative punishment like community service.

The new policies could have far-reaching effects in Mississippi, where nearly 95 percent of residents travel to work by car. Low-income people with suspended licenses were often forced to choose between paying fines or using money for food, housing and health care – or to choose between driving with a suspended license and losing a job.

They’re people like Vicki Smith of Columbia. Her license was suspended because she couldn’t afford to pay two traffic tickets from 2013. She was working as an accounts payable specialist but had to leave her job when her doctor ordered her onto pregnancy bed rest soon after the tickets were issued.

“My suspended license made it very difficult to get on my feet again and to find a job,” said Smith, whose only source of income was food stamps and her autistic son’s Social Security disability checks. “I recently lost my job as a health aide because I don’t have reliable transportation and there is no mass transit. I would have paid the tickets if I could, but I can’t afford it. I struggle to pay for my son’s medical expenses and basic necessities.”

“T’m in tears ... I just read where you made it possible for people that have suspended licenses ... to be reinstated. To some people, that might not seem like something to be crying about, but if they knew the fear and stress I’ve had as a single mother scared to get groceries, go to work, or even go to my son’s school functions they would understand.”

*Mississippi woman, Dec. 20, 2017*
The ugly xenophobia we saw during Donald Trump’s campaign didn’t just go away after the election. In fact, Trump continued to verbally attack people of color as his administration launched far-right initiatives targeting immigrants, Muslims and other vulnerable populations in 2017.

Families across America have been shattered by the president’s heartless agenda – children torn from their parents and hard-working men and women thrown into prisons, at great taxpayer expense, to languish for months and sometimes years as they await deportation. The vast majority are not the “bad hombres” that Trump vowed to pursue but rather ordinary members of the community simply trying to build a life for their families.

Many detainees, often held in isolated detention centers in the rural Deep South, lack access to counsel and have been subjected to rampant violations of their due process rights as the Trump administration has removed virtually all constraints from immigration agents and revved up the deportation machinery. Many are also seeking asylum because they face violence or death if forcibly returned to the countries they fled.

Responding to this human rights crisis, the SPLC created the Southeast Immigrant Freedom Initiative, which enlists and trains volunteer lawyers to provide free legal representation to detained immigrants facing deportation proceedings in the Southeast.

The SPLC also challenged the president’s “Muslim ban,” an attempt to fulfill his campaign promise of a “total and complete shutdown” of Muslims entering the country.
SPLC LAUNCHES NEW PROGRAM TO PROTECT RIGHTS OF DETAINED IMMIGRANTS

The aspiring math teacher had just poured her heart out to a group of reporters, hoping that she and other Dreamers could stay in America and continue contributing to the country they had long called home.

But minutes later, Daniela Vargas – who had once obtained permission to stay in the country through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program – was placed in handcuffs and whisked away to an isolated detention center in Louisiana. She was not given a hearing and was to be flown back to her native Argentina, a place she had not seen since her parents brought her to America as a child.

But the SPLC, along with other civil rights groups and private lawyers, filed a habeas petition on Vargas’ behalf in federal court to force her release and stop her deportation. They argued that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was retaliating against her simply because she had dared to assert her First Amendment rights.

A day later, Vargas was released.

Her plight, however, showed that under the Trump administration, even DACA recipients – young people who were brought here as small children – are in danger of being detained and deported to countries they don’t recognize as home.

The day after Vargas’ arrest, the SPLC launched the Southeast Immigrant Freedom Initiative (SIFI), a project that enlists and trains volunteer lawyers to provide free legal representation to detained immigrants facing deportation proceedings in the Southeast. In 2017, SIFI operated from three offices situated next to rural immigrant detention centers in Louisiana and Georgia, where lack of representation and asylum denials are the norm.

Through SIFI, the SPLC is fighting the proliferation of ICE abuses, and for the rights of all immigrants.

In one such case, the SPLC won asylum for a transgender woman beaten by members of a drug cartel, raped and tortured by Guatemalan police, and threatened by co-workers.

After fleeing Guatemala in October 2016, the woman, identified as “S.A.C.” in court documents, turned herself over to U.S. Border Patrol and was detained at Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia – an immigrant detention center for men – for more than nine months.

Guatemala is widely recognized as hostile to LGBT people. Unable to maintain employment because of discrimination in Guatemala – and suffering harassment as well as death threats from her co-workers – S.A.C. turned to sex work.

While she was a sex worker, Guatemalan police raped her, she said in court documents.

She was also targeted by members of a drug cartel, who beat and threatened to kill her if she did not perform sexual favors for their clients and collect extortion money from businesses. She believed they posed a real threat after learning that they killed one of her transgender friends.

Thanks to the SPLC’s help, S.A.C. was released from Stewart to live with family in the United States rather than return to Guatemala to face near-certain death.
CHALLENGING THE ‘MUSLIM BAN,’ OTHER INJUSTICES

In 2017, the SPLC took an array of actions in multiple cases as it sought justice for immigrants and other minority groups targeted by Trump’s policies.

➢ The SPLC filed a lawsuit challenging Trump’s second “Muslim ban,” a watered-down version of the president’s original travel ban. The case has been stayed pending the outcome of other challenges awaiting a decision in the U.S. Supreme Court. The SPLC filed the case with its allies at Muslim Advocates and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State.

➢ In December, the SPLC filed a federal lawsuit that describes how U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents entered the homes of immigrant families in Atlanta without warrants, consent or probable cause – in violation of the Fourth Amendment – solely to detain and deport families.

➢ In November, in coalition with other civil rights groups, the SPLC filed a federal lawsuit challenging a North Carolina law that hinders the ability of farmworkers – more than 90 percent of whom are Latino – to organize and collectively bargain with their employers.

➢ A project by the SPLC and Emory University School of Law found that Atlanta Immigration Court judges are failing to uphold ethical standards that ensure immigrants receive fair and impartial treatment. In a letter sent to the Executive Office for Immigration Review in March, the organizations documented how judges made prejudicial statements – sometimes expressing hostility – toward immigrants in court.

“I especially want to thank every lawyer, interpreter and every one of the people who support and give their time, effort, fight, knowledge and wisdom in this incredible work that this organization takes on. I ask the Lord that he bless each and every one of you and your families, and that he also give you strength, health, wisdom and perseverance, and much success in your cases.”

F.A.C.P., SPLC client
“[The SPLC has] done wonderful work in defending the rights of immigrants in this part of the country. ... They work very closely with the Mexican government in order to approach and examine ways of providing immigrants legal assistance and identifying those that might be victims of hate crime.”

Javier Díaz de León, consul general of Mexico in Atlanta

MEXICO HONORS SPLC LAWYER

One of the highest awards the Mexican government bestows outside the nation was presented to the director of the SPLC’s Southeast Immigrant Freedom Initiative. Dan Werner (left) received the Ohtli Award in September from the Mexican government’s Institute for Mexicans Abroad. He accepted it on behalf of the lawyers, paralegals, investigators, support staff and others at the SPLC.
CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

The SPLC is working in the courts and the halls of power in the Deep South to help end the era of mass incarceration, to root out the racial discrimination that’s deeply embedded in the criminal justice system, and to ensure humane prison conditions that meet constitutional standards.

In 2017, the SPLC’s effort to reform Alabama’s vastly overcrowded prison system won a major victory when a federal judge ordered the state to overhaul its “horrendously inadequate” mental health care system – one where prisoners with severe mental illness are often simply locked away in solitary confinement. That case will continue into 2018, when another trial will focus on the lack of adequate medical treatment.

In Louisiana, the state passed a suite of historic criminal justice reforms backed by the SPLC – a step toward ending mass incarceration in a state that at the time incarcerated more people per capita than any other.

The SPLC also took on Louisiana’s broken public defender system, filing a lawsuit that described how the system has denied poor people their constitutional right to counsel.

And in Florida, the SPLC reached a settlement on behalf of a minor who was raped and beaten unconscious by other prisoners at a state prison – an important victory in the SPLC’s effort to end the culture of brutality in the Florida Department of Corrections.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDMUND D. FOUNTAIN

PRISONERS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS IN ALABAMA ARE ROUTINELY PLACED IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT CELLS LIKE THIS ONE AT THE BIBB CORRECTIONAL FACILITY. A FEDERAL JUDGE CALLED MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT “HORRENDOUSLY INADEQUATE.”
CHALLENGING A BROKEN PUBLIC DEFENDER SYSTEM

Nearly two years after Michael Carter’s arrest, he had not been visited by his attorney. His case illustrates a fundamental problem with Louisiana’s criminal justice system: Indigent defendants are being routinely denied their constitutional right to counsel.

In 2017, the SPLC filed suit in state court, accusing Louisiana of failing to establish an effective statewide public defender system. The suit came after a 2016 funding crisis forced as many as 33 out of 42 public defender offices to stop accepting cases or to place clients, many of whom were in jail, on waiting lists. Louisiana’s chief justice declared an “emergency shortfall” in public defense funding that year. Eighty-five percent of the people accused of a crime in Louisiana are indigent.

Louisiana is the only state in the country that relies primarily on court fines and fees – including one assessed against convicted indigent defendants – to fund public defenders. The state Legislature supplements local funding sources with state funds, but it always falls far short of what is needed.

At the time of the filing, the state boasted the nation’s highest incarceration rate and a high

MAJOR VICTORY IN ALABAMA PRISON REFORM CASE

The SPLC won a major courtroom victory in 2017, when a federal judge declared the mental health care system in Alabama prisons to be “horrendously inadequate” – an unconstitutional failure that has resulted in a “skyrocketing suicide rate” among prisoners.

U.S. District Judge Myron H. Thompson ordered state officials to reform the system and directed them to work with the SPLC and its co-counsel.

In a sweeping 302-page ruling, Thompson identified multiple areas where the Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC) has failed to maintain a constitutionally adequate mental health care system, ranging from the failure to identify prisoners with serious mental health needs to inadequate treatment for suicidal prisoners.

During the two-month trial, one incarcerated witness told the court he received only minimal attention from mental health professionals, and only while he was on suicide watch. Less than a month after his testimony, he died by suicide, alone and unmonitored, in a prison cell.

Several expert witnesses testified about horrible conditions in Alabama’s prisons, which are among the nation’s most overcrowded and understaffed. Dr. Kathryn Burns, chief psychiatrist at the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, characterized the mental health care as the “worst system” she’s ever seen – so bad that “it’s difficult, really, to call this a system.”

The SPLC is working to ensure the state truly reforms the system and that prisoners receive the care they desperately need. Addressing the mental health care system is just one part of a larger, multifaceted case alleging that ADOC provides unconstitutional health care.

In 2016, the plaintiffs settled the first phase of the lawsuit regarding violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act. In that settlement, ADOC committed to provide services and fair treatment to incarcerated people with disabilities. A final phase of the case, which is pending, challenges the prison system’s poor medical and dental care services.
A disproportionate number of those incarcerated are people of color, particularly African Americans, who comprise nearly 70 percent of the state prison population.

**SETTLEMENT REACHED IN PRISON RAPE CASE**

In Florida, a minor who was raped and beaten unconscious by other prisoners at Sumter Correctional Institution in Bushnell will receive $60,000 as part of a legal settlement with a guard who failed to intervene.

The settlement is the result of a federal lawsuit filed by the SPLC and its co-counsel. It’s part of an effort to end the culture of brutality in Florida’s youthful offender facilities, where teens share facilities with young adult men.

“R.W.,” as he is named in court papers, was 17 when he was attacked in July 2013. He was choked, beaten, raped with a broom handle, and stabbed more than 100 times with barbed-wire by six other prisoners as part of an initiation ritual called a “test of heart” that went ignored by a guard.

The attack on R.W. was one of at least 176 documented inmate and staff assaults between January 2013 and January 2016 at the Sumter facility, which houses more than 100 prisoners under the age of 17.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, Florida incarcerates more children in adult prisons than any other state in the country, including some as young as 14.

**HISTORIC CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM IN LOUISIANA**

Louisiana overhauled its criminal justice system in 2017, bringing historic reform backed by the SPLC to a state known as the world’s leader in incarceration.

The 10 bills signed into law will reduce the time people spend behind bars, set them up to be more successful when they return to their communities and diminish the likelihood they will return to prison. The reforms...
will also result in savings that will be used to improve public safety.

Over the next decade, Louisiana’s incarceration rate is expected to drop 10 percent, and the population on parole or probation is expected to drop by 12 percent – saving the state $262 million during that time.

Working as part of the Louisianans for Prison Alternatives coalition, the SPLC helped win support for criminal justice reform by taking the message of change to residents and lawmakers through town halls and a rally at the capitol that drew 600 people.
Defending the rights of vulnerable children has been a top priority of the SPLC since its founding in 1971. This work became even more vital in 2017 as the Trump administration – with far-right billionaire Betsy DeVos as education secretary – began to shred civil rights protections and promote a privatization agenda that threatens to undermine the public school system and erode the opportunity it represents for America’s youth.

In Mississippi, we filed a federal lawsuit against the state for operating an education system that shortchanges black students and violates a 150-year-old state obligation to provide a “uniform system of free public schools.”

In Louisiana, we won a major victory with the passage of legislation that bars the use of corporal punishment on students with disabilities. The SPLC also pushed back against the Trump administration’s efforts to abandon federal efforts to promote diverse schools and a quality education for all students.

In addition, the SPLC worked across the Deep South to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline, increase educational equity, and ensure that children with mental health challenges get the care and treatment they need.

“[T]he books are sent to honor their courage, their standing up, their challenging the State of Mississippi for equal schools for all Mississippi children. ... Blessings to all involved, the mothers, the SPLC, the journalists who tell this story. ... To all of you, so many strangers are rooting for you to win this court battle.”

Letter from Pilar Baetley, who sent books to SPLC clients suing Mississippi for failing to provide a “uniform” system of public education.
SPLC SUES MISSISSIPPI FOR FAILING TO PROVIDE ‘UNIFORM’ SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

At Raines Elementary School in Jackson, Mississippi, the paint is peeling off the walls, water spots are visible on the ceilings, and lunches sometimes include curdled milk and rotten fruit. Only 10 percent of the students are proficient in reading, and just 4 percent in math.

Precious Hughes, who has a 6-year-old in kindergarten there, described it as “old, dark and gloomy – like a jail.” Her daughter frequently asks why other schools have nicer facilities and better playgrounds.

The SPLC filed a lawsuit in May 2017 on behalf of Hughes and three other African-American mothers whose children attend kindergarten and first grade in the Jackson Public School District and the Yazoo City Municipal School District. Both districts have received an “F” rating from the Mississippi Department of Education.

The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi, Northern Division, describes how Mississippi has repeatedly violated a nearly 150-year-old, legally binding obligation to operate a “uniform system of free public schools” for all children. The obligation was placed on the state as a condition of rejoining the Union after the Civil War.

Mississippi enshrined this requirement in the education clause of its constitution, which the state ratified in 1869. The following year, Congress passed a law, commonly called the “Readmission Act,” allowing Mississippi to regain full statehood. The Readmission Act requires that the education rights then granted in the state constitution never be diminished.

Over more than a century, however, state lawmakers have diluted the education clause many times, rendering the state’s public schools as anything but “uniform.”

“Mississippi is failing its most vulnerable children – those living in the shadow of a Jim Crow system that deliberately undermined education rights in the name of white supremacy,” said Will Bardwell, senior staff attorney in the SPLC’s Jackson office. “The state’s education system is shamefully inequitable.”

Students at the schools attended by the plaintiffs’ children are overwhelmingly African-American. They lack textbooks, literature, basic supplies, experienced teachers, sports and other extracurricular activities, tutoring programs and even toilet paper. Plaintiff Dorothy Haymer, whose 6-year-old daughter is in kindergarten at Webster Elementary, spent $100 this year for sanitary supplies for the school.

The suit alleges that the schools, both rated “D” by the state, “suffer far worse conditions and outcomes than students at schools that are predominantly white and predominantly wealthy.”

Nearby schools with majority-white student bodies have all the resources lacked by Raines and Webster, and receive an “A” rating from the state. At one neighboring elementary school, the student body is more than 70 percent white; about 73 percent of its students are proficient in reading and 71 percent proficient in math.

Indigo Williams joined the SPLC’s suit as a plaintiff in the hope that it will result in better opportunities for her 6-year-old son, who attends Raines. “All I want is what’s fair for my son and for all of the students like him in Mississippi,” Williams said. “These children deserve what the state promised: public schools that treat all children equally no matter their race.”
Louisiana in 2017 enacted legislation banning corporal punishment for students with disabilities, a major milestone for the state and a victory for the SPLC, which supported the legislation.

The long-overdue policy change will ensure that these vulnerable students are protected from a cruel and ineffective practice. Studies have repeatedly shown that physical punishment does not improve student behavior and can exacerbate existing medical, developmental and behavioral issues for students with disabilities.

DEFENDING PUBLIC EDUCATION

The SPLC defended public education as the Trump administration threatened to undermine public schools and protections for some of the nation’s most vulnerable students.

In November, the SPLC argued that the U.S. Department of Education’s proposed discretionary spending priorities abandon the agency’s longstanding commitment to a high-quality education for all students, and undermine public schools across the country.

In remarks submitted to the DOE, the SPLC opposed the department’s decision to eliminate priorities related to school diversity, community engagement and access to technology. The Teaching Tolerance project has long found that all children benefit when educators work to ensure that schools are inclusive, welcoming and diverse. The SPLC also urged the DOE to drop a new priority that diverts government funds from public schools to private school vouchers.

What’s more, the SPLC spoke out against the DOE’s decision to rescind 72 guidance documents designed to help parents, educators and advocates understand how federal law protects services and accommodations for students with disabilities.
LGBT RIGHTS

Despite recent progress toward acceptance across America, the LGBT community in the Deep South continues to face significant barriers to equality, as few states offer protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

In each Southern state, state law permits employers to fire or refuse to hire a person because of their sexual orientation – and no Southern state prohibits discrimination against LGBT people in public accommodations or housing. In addition, LGBT youth often encounter bullying in school, and the community is, by far, more likely to be victimized by violent hate crime than any other group.

The SPLC is working to ensure that LGBT people achieve full equality under the law. Our work has a national reach but is focused primarily on the Southeast. In recent years, the SPLC has won lawsuits that exposed gay-to-straight conversion therapy as a fraud; protected transgender prisoners from abuse; upheld the First Amendment rights of gay students; ensured the marriage and parental rights of LGBT people; and more.

SPLC REPRESENTS MOM IN KIDNAPPING SUIT AGAINST ANTI-LGBT HATE GROUP

Janet Jenkins has been fighting for years for the return of her daughter, Isabella, and to bring those responsible for her kidnapping to justice.

In March, a federal court allowed Jenkins, who is represented by the SPLC and co-counsel, to sue a virulently anti-LGBT hate group for its role in the international kidnapping.

The U.S. District Court for the District of Vermont ruled that Jenkins could name the Liberty Counsel as a defendant in her 2012 lawsuit against her former partner, Lisa Miller, and others who conspired in the kidnapping. Jenkins was also allowed to add Liberty University and Liberty Counsel lawyer Rena Lindevaldsen as defendants.

Miller, who had earlier renounced her lesbianism, fled with Isabella to Nicaragua in 2009 after it became apparent that she might lose custody. Under the Liberty Counsel’s guidance, Miller had earlier denied Jenkins her court-ordered visitation with their daughter.

The Liberty Counsel and others were added to the case in light of new evidence obtained through criminal prosecutions against some of the conspirators. The court denied motions by the defendants to dismiss the case, holding, for the first time, that anti-LGBT bias can support a conspiracy claim under the Ku Klux Klan Act.

The Liberty Counsel was founded by Mat Staver – an attorney and former dean at Liberty University School of Law – and his wife, Anita. The group has been active in the religious right’s campaign to ensure that Christians can engage in anti-LGBT discrimination in places of business under the guise of “religious liberty.” Mat Staver has likened “the homosexual lobby” to terrorists. He has also supported the criminalization of homosexuality in the U.S. and other countries.
TRANSGENDER PRISONER POLICY CHANGED IN MICHIGAN

The Michigan Department of Corrections adopted a new policy for the care of transgender prisoners after a transgender woman incarcerated in one of its prisons campaigned, with the help of the SPLC and the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan, to receive the hormone therapy she was denied.

The policy came after Jami Naturalite wrote to the SPLC seeking information about its case, *Diamond v. Owens*, which successfully challenged a similar, unconstitutional policy in Georgia. The SPLC and the ACLU of Michigan contacted prison system officials on her behalf, sparking a collaboration that resulted in the new policy that protects the constitutional rights of transgender prisoners.

Denial of medically necessary, transition-related care for transgender prisoners amounts to “cruel and unusual punishment” under the Eighth Amendment. Without such care, transgender people may experience gender dysphoria – the distress associated with the conflict between one’s experienced or expressed gender and one’s assigned gender. It puts them at risk of anxiety, depression and suicide.

“Thanks to your intervention, the above hormone [therapy] was started Monday, 8 May 2017, at 8:50 a.m. That date just became my new birthday!”

Letter from Jami Naturalite, transgender woman who contacted the SPLC after denial of hormone therapy in prison
CHARITABLE STATUS & MANAGEMENT

The Southern Poverty Law Center was incorporated in 1971 and is tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The SPLC tax identification number is 63-0598743. All contributions, grants and bequests to the Southern Poverty Law Center are tax deductible. The SPLC’s work is supported primarily through donor contributions. No government funds are received or used for its efforts.

During its last fiscal year, the SPLC spent approximately 68% of its total expenses on program services. At the end of the fiscal year, the SPLC’s endowment — composed primarily of board-designated funds to support future work — stood at $432.7 million. The SPLC is proud of the stewardship of its resources.

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### OPERATING FUND

#### ASSETS

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**Total operating fund assets**                              | **$44,322,332** |

#### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

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**Total operating fund liabilities**                          | **27,211,694** |

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**Total net assets - operating fund**                          | **17,110,638** |

**TOTAL OPERATING FUND LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS**              | **$44,322,332**

*A copy of the SPLC’s audited financial statement is available upon request and at splcenter.org.*
ENDOWMENT FUND

Shortly after the SPLC was founded, the Board of Directors decided to begin setting aside a portion of the organization’s donations to build an endowment that would help sustain its programs, fund new projects and lawsuits as the need arises, and protect it from economic downturns. The endowment ensures that the SPLC has the financial strength to address, over the long haul, the entrenched problems our country faces.

### ASSETS

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<tr>
<td>Absolute return funds</td>
<td>$ 24,896,215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arbitrage funds</td>
<td>$ 10,377,919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-short funds</td>
<td>$ 24,197,598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-strategy funds</td>
<td>$ 62,134,355</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL ENDOWMENT FUND ASSETS**  

$432,723,955
## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

### CHANGES IN UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS FROM OPERATING FUND

Operating support and revenue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>$119,653,501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>10,069,577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total public support</strong></td>
<td><strong>129,723,078</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment income (excluding endowment)</td>
<td>1,301,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1,065,965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,367,925</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total operating fund support revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>132,091,003</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Net assets released from temporary restriction 1,372,395

**Total public support, revenue, and net assets released from restriction** 133,463,398

Operating fund expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal services</td>
<td>19,680,973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public education</td>
<td>21,200,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total program services</strong></td>
<td><strong>40,881,493</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management and general</td>
<td>7,417,746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>11,031,618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total supporting services</strong></td>
<td><strong>18,449,364</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total operating fund expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>59,330,857</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Changes in unrestricted net assets from operating fund 74,132,541

### CHANGES IN TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS FROM OPERATING FUND

Operating support and revenue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributions and grants</td>
<td>2,459,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net assets released from temporary restrictions</strong></td>
<td>(1,372,395)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Changes in temporarily restricted net assets from operating fund</strong></td>
<td>1,087,143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CHANGES IN NET ASSETS FROM OPERATING FUND

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transfer to endowment</strong></td>
<td>(67,220,177)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net assets at beginning of year</strong></td>
<td>9,111,131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net assets at end of year</strong></td>
<td><strong>$17,110,638</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MISSION STATEMENT

The Southern Poverty Law Center is dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry and to seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of our society. Using litigation, education, and other forms of advocacy, the SPLC works toward the day when the ideals of equal justice and equal opportunity will be a reality.