

2023 Annual Report

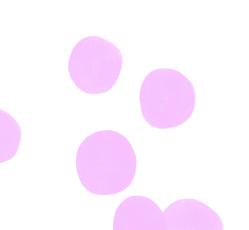


The SPLC is a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements and advance the human rights of all people.

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Cover Illustration by Jordan Andrew Carter





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Message from Margaret Huang, President & CEO



2023 was a tumultuous year for democracy in the Deep South and throughout the country. After a decade of cascading attacks on voting rights brought on by the *Shelby County v. Holder* decision, we arrived at a pivot point in which challenges to democracy reached alarming levels never before seen in this country.

Efforts to suppress the votes of communities of color, seniors, young people, people with disabilities and others have been deliberately incubated in our region, with states seemingly competing to design the worst voting restrictions in the nation. The Deep South, in particular, has been a testing ground for discriminatory anti-voter laws and intimidation tactics intended to shut people out of the political process.

At the same time, we have seen unprecedented attacks on public education. Teachers have been threatened and disciplined for giving lessons on diversity and inclusion. Schools and universities have been targeted for teaching accurate history that acknowledges the wrongdoings of this country and addresses the connection that our past has to racial disparities that persist today.

Make no mistake — these attacks work jointly toward a common goal

of derailing democracy. They chip away at our democratic institutions in the present, while attempting to create future generations that do not understand or acknowledge the fragility of our democracy and the sacrifices that the pioneers of the Civil Rights Movement endured to secure equal access to education, housing, employment and the ballot box.

But 2023 was also marked by our will to persevere in the face of these challenges. Over this past year, we have worked diligently to overcome the rising threats to equality and justice and lead collective action to protect our democracy, eradicate poverty, end mass incarceration and combat hate.

No single organization or leader has ever been able to win change alone. The SPLC is made stronger when aligned with partners in all of our work, whether in litigation, advocacy, community organizing or public education. And it was through those partnerships that we were able to secure some of our most impactful victories this year, including helping Black communities throughout the Deep South preserve and protect historic sites, ensuring that communities of color were fairly represented in redistricting efforts, and restoring voting rights to people with felony convictions.

As you read this annual report, you will recognize the obstacles that we are confronting in the march toward a more inclusive, multiracial democracy. But you will also see that our unyielding commitment to justice is resulting in transformative change that gives hope for a better tomorrow.

Combating Hate

In 2023, we saw a dramatic rise in the number of hate and antigovernment extremist groups operating within the United States. Our annual *Year in Hate and Extremism* report documented more than 1,400 active groups, with a 14% increase in the number of hate groups, fueled by growth in the white nationalist movement.

Among their targets were communities of color, the Jewish community and the LGBTQ+ community. In a separate report exploring anti-LGBTQ+ pseudoscience, the SPLC exposed the network of openly antitransgender actors who use the language of science to support legislative and legal campaigns to limit bodily autonomy and LGBTQ+ people's human rights.

The Southern Poverty Law Center recognizes that combating hate in any form starts by understanding the true history that has led us to this point. To counter efforts across the Deep South to stifle learning about race and history in the U.S., Learning for Justice released a framework for teaching about the Civil Rights Movement, as well as multiple resource guides for educators designed to help them advocate for inclusive learning.

Ending Over-Criminalization and Mass Incarceration

Beyond inclusive curriculums, children across the region, in particular students of color, also deserve fair access to quality public education. Yet overly harsh disciplinary policies and practices have created a "school-to-prison pipeline" in many states that threaten to trap young people in a cycle of incarceration.

This year, the SPLC highlighted the broken youth legal systems in both Louisiana and Mississippi as part of our *Only Young Once* report series. In Louisiana, the SPLC successfully worked with partners to remove children from the notorious Louisiana State Penitentiary. During Louisiana's legislative session, the SPLC Action Fund, the SPLC's lobbying arm, also helped defeat a bill to make juvenile court records public in majority-Black parishes.

Outside of our work in Louisiana, we, along with our legal partners, won important settlements for Latinx workers who were illegally targeted and detained during a workplace raid, as well as detained immigrants forced into abusive working conditions at a for-profit immigrant prison in Georgia.

Eradicating Poverty and Economic Inequality

This year, state legislatures across the country have chosen to target the most economically vulnerable individuals by attempting to criminalize people experiencing homelessness. To protect the rights of unhoused people, the SPLC secured a federal injunction against two Alabama statutes that criminalized soliciting donations and begging.

We also began a new venture to work with Black communities throughout the Deep South to prevent the commercial development of historic sites that would have led to the gentrification and displacement of communities of color. Our successful efforts in Eatonville, Florida, to support a community-organized campaign against the development of a tract of land that had previously housed a prestigious private school for Black students led to our organization taking on similar work in Royal, Florida, and Sapelo Island, Georgia. Working in partnerships with local organizations, we will continue to push for the creation of economic opportunities that benefit legacy residents.

Strengthening Democracy

Engagement with local communities has also underpinned our efforts to safeguard our democracy. In 2023, the SPLC's Vote Your Voice campaign provided grants to grassroots voting organizations across the Deep South to build capacity and scale up voter outreach and civic engagement over the next decade. Our Mississippi state office launched the Defenders of Democracy campaign to educate teens and college students about the importance of civic participation through town halls, community events and campus forums. And the opening of our Alabama state office has positioned us to more directly and effectively collaborate with communities on

the ground as the SPLC launches our first-ever civic engagement campaign in 2024.

As we have done over the past year, we will continue to challenge anti-voter laws and gerrymandered voting maps in the courts. But to truly achieve racial justice in the Deep South and beyond, everyone must have a stake in our future. Our goal over the next year will be to convince those who are disengaged to join our movement. Dismantling white supremacy, reforming our justice system, and building an economy that works for everybody can only happen if those who believe in equality and democracy exercise their right to vote.

Onward,

Margaret

Margaret Huang President & CEO, SPLC

Lisa Borden, SPLC senior counsel for international advocacy, at a human rights conference in Warsaw, Poland.



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Fighting Hate and Extremism

Impact Area: Countering White Supremacy

The SPLC works to expose the influence of hate and extremist groups and dismantle white supremacy. We investigate extremists and hold their leaders accountable for their attempts to sow division and destroy our nation. We promote antiracist, anti-bias education and action that prevents radicalization and moves us closer to our vision of safe, resilient communities celebrating diversity and inclusion.

The SPLC documented 1,430 hate and antigovernment extremist groups in the U.S. The

SPLC's annual <u>Year in Hate and</u> <u>Extremism</u> report documented 595 hate groups, a 14% increase over 2022 — a rise driven by the growth of white nationalist hate groups. The report also identified 835 antigovernment extremist groups, up from 702 in the previous report, a 19% increase.

The SPLC and its allies published <u>U.S. Youth Attitudes on Guns</u> study, two reports that provide groundbreaking insights into young people's experiences with and views on guns, gun violence and radicalizing narratives. The <u>reports</u> – developed with the Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund and the Polarization &

Extremism Research & Innovation

Lab at American University found broad consensus among young people that the U.S. is facing a gun violence crisis. Insights on the relationship between guns, male supremacy and racial resentment that help the SPLC and policymakers craft inoculation and prevention measures were offered in the publications released in late 2023 and early 2024.

The SPLC released a pioneering report about a national pseudoscience network that works to undermine confidence in science, dismantle public education and limit political engagement. While outwardly anti-transgender, the network is also built on eugenics and is harmful to health equity and equal rights of Black people.

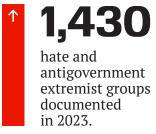
The SPLC exposed and derailed a neo-Nazi's plan to create a paramilitary training camp in Maine. The extremist, a former Marine, accumulated more than 100 acres of rural property and was in the process of buying a 10-acre plot in Maine for a white supremacist compound. Not only did the neo-Nazi abandon his plans after the public exposure, the SPLC's investigation <u>sparked</u> <u>passage</u> of a state law in early 2024 to restrict such training.

The SPLC expanded its campaign to bring international pressure on the U.S. to meet its human rights obligations under international treaties.

In October, an SPLC delegation, including President and CEO Margaret Huang and survivors of hate crimes and prison abuses, <u>testified</u> before the United Nations during a review of U.S. compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

providing recommendations to curtail hate crimes, prison system abuses and voter suppression laws in the Deep South. Our advocacy resulted in the committee issuing strong recommendations to the U.S. government on these issues as well as the need for a U.S. National Human Rights Institution. The SPLC also gave its assessment of the status of hate and extremism at an international human rights conference in Warsaw, Poland. The conference was a meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

The SPLC published essays on antisemitism for the National Urban League's State of Black America seminal annual report and also Holocaust **Remembrance Day.** The SPLC also provided a webinar on digital literacy, antisemitism and prevention for over 450 students. Meanwhile, the SPLC Action Fund submitted recommendations to the White House Domestic Policy Council for the U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism. The recommendations informed the national strategy rollout.





Voting Rights

Impact Area: Strengthening Democracy

The SPLC has been committed to expanding access to the ballot and pursuing fair representation for more than four decades. The SPLC works across the Deep South with community partners and organizers to engage and mobilize voters, restore voting rights to returning citizens, pursue electoral policy reforms and bring litigation to challenge unconstitutional and discriminatory voting practices. The SPLC fought against Georgia's draconian anti-voter law, SB 202, successfully suing to strike down a ban on the distribution of food and water to voters waiting in long lines to cast ballots. The <u>federal court</u> <u>ruling</u> in August also blocked a requirement that voters write their date of birth on absentee ballot envelopes or have their ballot discarded.

The SPLC protected the voting rights of residents in several Deep South states. In Cobb County, Georgia, the SPLC filed a lawsuit that prompted a federal court in December to temporarily block a racially gerrymandered school district voting map ahead of the 2024 school board election. In Alabama, we sued three counties for their failure to provide an accessible option for absentee voting by blind and print-disabled voters. In Jacksonville, Florida, an SPLC lawsuit over the city's gerrymandered district map was settled, providing hope for an equitable voting map.

The SPLC filed suit on behalf of voters in Florida after Gov. Ron DeSantis suspended <u>Monique</u> <u>Worrell</u> from her elected position as the top state prosecutor in **Orlando.** Worrell is the only Black woman state attorney in Florida.

The SPLC's <u>Vote Your Voice</u> campaign supported grassroots voting rights organizations across the Deep South. The

SPLC with the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta provided financial and capacity building support to Deep South organizations to build capacity and scale up voter outreach and civic engagement over the next decade. The SPLC published a <u>report</u> highlighting how states in the Deep South enacted a series of harsh voter suppression laws during the decade following the U.S. Supreme Court's 2013 decision to invalidate a key provision of the Voting Rights Act, in *Shelby v. Holder.* A

Decade Long Erosion: The Impact of the Shelby County Decision on the Political Participation and Representation of Black People and Other People of Color in the Deep South also examines how to chart a new path forward. The report describes how policy priorities, such as congressional passage of the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, can begin to redress the harm caused by these laws and build a more representative and inclusive democracy.

Along with our allies, the SPLC Action Fund prevailed in a number of legislative fights across our Deep South focus states. We successfully sidelined attempts to chill the First Amendment rights of free speech and protest in Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi. We defeated a Florida bill that would have banned the use of ballot drop boxes and made it easier for individual voters to challenge another voter's eligibility. In Mississippi, we defeated a bill that would have made it nearly impossible for residents to put a voter initiative on the ballot without legislative approval. And in Louisiana, lawmakers adopted measures that improved polling place access for voters with disabilities and created a new accessibility position and advisory board, comprising people with disabilities, within the secretary of state's office.

The SPLC and partners successfully removed children from the notorious Louisiana State Penitentiary.

Children's Rights

Impact Area: Reducing Incarceration and Countering White Supremacy

The SPLC works to eliminate systems of oppression that prevent children in the Deep South from accessing education, health care, and other services and supports necessary to live, grow and thrive. Children across the region, in particular students of color, students experiencing poverty and students with disabilities, are being denied access to a guality public education and the mental health services they need. At the same time, thousands are being pushed out of the classroom and into the youth legal system because of overly harsh disciplinary policies and practices.

The SPLC challenged the horrific conditions of incarceration of young people across the Deep South. In Louisiana,

we successfully worked with partners to remove children from the notorious Louisiana State Penitentiary, also known as "Angola," which sits on the former site of a plantation. The SPLC continues to <u>advocate</u> for these youth.

The SPLC issued reports highlighting the dangers of the Louisiana and Mississippi youth

legal systems. These reports are part of the *Only Young Once* report series, which highlights the broken youth legal systems in each of the SPLC's priority states and advances policy proposals to ensure all young people across the Deep South can thrive.

The SPLC and Loyola Law Clinic sued Louisiana's St. Bernard Parish School District in June for disability rights and due process violations. The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana, was brought on behalf of students with multiple disabilities who have languished in the district's alternative school for years, in violation of their due process and disability rights.

Georgia's Cobb County School District will revise its policies and procedures for special education services following a Southern Poverty Law Center <u>complaint</u>. The SPLC took the action on behalf of a 5-year-old student with Down syndrome and a chronic feeding disorder denied services by the district. The complaint was filed with the Georgia Department of Education, which ordered required revisions to the district's policies and practices in Georgia's second largest school district with more than 107,000 students.

Florida's Palm Beach County School District revised its policy regarding the use of forced psychiatric examinations of schoolchildren following an SPLC lawsuit. The district also agreed to pay \$440,000 to parents and students. The lawsuit, filed in June 2021, sought changes in how the school district used the Florida Mental Health Law, also known as the Baker Act, to address a host of student behaviors that do not meet the legal requirements for involuntary examination.

Florida's Palm Beach County School District agrees to pay \$440,000 to parents and students after SPLC lawsuit over forced psychiatric examinations.

The SPLC Action Fund defeated bills in Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi that attempted to erase Black history and stories in schools. These bills would have prevented teachers from offering a full and fair account of our nation's history. Curriculum censorship and book bans in schools are attempts to dismantle public education, a cornerstone of our democracy.



Khadijah Rashad's grandson died in a Louisiana jail. The incident is cited in an SPLC Action Fund report examining the state's criminal legal system.



Legal Justice Reform

Impact Area: Ending Over-Criminalization and Mass Incarceration

The SPLC works to reform the criminal legal system and immigration enforcement systems so they operate fairly and equitably; to ensure the dignity and humanity of those interacting with these systems; and to reduce the population of jailed, detained and incarcerated youth and adults in the United States.

> Decades after being sentenced to life without parole in Louisiana, Ivory Dixon Jr., an SPLC client, was released from

> **custody.** Dixon was <u>released</u> after over 33 years of incarceration. Returning to his faith while incarcerated, Dixon is a changed man who is fully rehabilitated. Through the SPLC's early release legal aid program, more than 66 total years in criminal sentences were reduced for formerly incarcerated people in Louisiana and Mississippi.

The SPLC Action Fund published in February Out of Balance, a <u>report</u> that highlights how lack of diversity taints Louisiana's criminal legal system. It noted that only four of the state's 64 sheriffs (6%) were Black. What's more, only 12% of its 42 district attorneys were Black. This is in a state where almost one-third of the population is Black. This disparity exists in a state that has the second-highest incarceration rate in the nation and where people being sentenced are 3.8 times as likely to be Black as white.

During Louisiana's legislative session, the SPLC Action Fund helped defeat a bill to make juvenile court records public in majority-Black parishes.

It also helped defeat a bill that would have allowed 17-year-olds to be prosecuted as an adult. In Georgia, it blocked a bill seeking to expand cash bail and require bail for 30 new offenses, including purchasing marijuana for personal use. The SPLC Action Fund's advocacy resulted in the removal of a provision in an Alabama bill to expand the state's habitual offender statute.

Along with our legal partners, we won a \$1.2 million settlement for about 100 Latinx workers who were illegally targeted and detained during a workplace raid. In February, a federal judge approved a <u>final settlement</u> in a class action lawsuit challenging an April 2018 raid at a meatprocessing plant in East Tennessee.

\$1 million+ settlement to workers detained in massive 2018 workplace immigration raid.

After five years of litigation, a federal judge approved a settlement in a case filed by the SPLC and its legal partners that <u>exposed abuses</u> at a for-profit immigrant prison in Georgia. The suit was filed on behalf of detained immigrants forced to work for as many as seven days a week for as little as 50 cents per hour at the Stewart Detention Facility, operated by CoreCivic.

A court <u>settlement</u> reached in March with a sheriff's office in Florida will provide \$150,000 in relief to a lawful permanent resident who was unlawfully <u>detained</u> and referred to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The Marion County Sheriff's Office also was forced to end its discriminatory policy of automatically referring all foreignborn persons to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

66+

total years in criminal sentences reduced for formerly incarcerated people in Louisiana and Mississippi through the SPLC's early release legal aid program.

The SPLC's Editorial Services team was recognized for its advocacy journalism. The team received an <u>Anthem Award</u> for an investigative report about the mistreatment of Black men in immigrant detention. The award honors the purpose- and missiondriven work of people, companies and organizations. SPLC intervention ended prosecutions for late trash bills in Valley, Ala., providing relief for residents such as Nortasha Jackson.

Economic Justice

Impact Area: Eradicating Poverty

The SPLC is working to eradicate poverty by expanding access to opportunity and eliminating racial economic inequality.

> The SPLC's intervention ended criminal prosecutions over late trash bills in the Alabama town of Valley. A team of SPLC attorneys and investigators learned that the city had been arresting people for years over past-due trash bills, unlawfully using threat of arrest to collect a civil debt. The district attorney dropped all outstanding charges against residents and asked the district court to remit all outstanding court debt and to rescind all active warrants for nonpayment.

The SPLC continued to push back against laws criminalizing

homelessness. It secured a <u>federal injunction</u> against two Alabama statutes that criminalized soliciting donations and begging. In September, the SPLC <u>submitted a response</u> to United Nations special rapporteurs on the right to adequate housing, decriminalization of homelessness and extreme poverty.

The SPLC helped preserve historic Black communities to advance a vision of economic development that benefits —instead of harming or displacing—residents of those communities. We supported a community-led campaign against a development plan that would have gentrified and displaced the historic Black community of Eatonville, Florida. The SPLC Editorial Services team won an award from the National Association of Black Journalists for its article about efforts to preserve Eatonville. The SPLC also urged historic designation of the Black homesteading community of Royal, Florida, in the face of development pressures in one of the fastestgrowing areas in the country. We supported the Gullah Geechee people, on Georgia's Sapelo Island, against rezoning amendments that would encourage development likely to push them from ancestral lands. The goal of this work is to protect the dignity of place and people while creating economic opportunities that benefit communities of color.

The SPLC uplifted voices of the Black community in <u>Prichard</u>, <u>Alabama</u>, during a hearing on the mismanagement of local water utilities. It helped ensure Prichard residents, who have lived without drinkable tap water for years, were able to provide community feedback into future decisions on the fate of the city's water works and sewer board.

The SPLC Action Fund's advocacy in Mississippi helped secure expanded postpartum Medicaid coverage from 60 days to 12 months. It also advanced legislation to require school districts to supply menstrual hygiene products in schools at no cost to students.

In June, the SPLC Action Fund met with Housing and Urban Development Secretary Marcia Fudge to discuss the SPLC's policy priorities. After a successful meeting earlier about the problems with the agency's Louisiana Road Home program, intended to help Louisiana recover from Hurricane Katrina damage, the secretary made a sweeping decision to forgive debt created by the program, providing relief to over 3,000 Louisiana residents.

The SPLC Action Fund submitted letters to officials in <u>April</u> and <u>July</u> regarding its priorities to increase access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). It also advocated for removing the felony ban from SNAP and modernizing the Farm Credit process.

In November, the SPLC Action Fund met with members from the White House Domestic Policy

Council. It discussed progress on the Racial Equity Executive Order; the Biden administration's actions to address anti-diversity, equity and inclusion attacks; and how to track the equitable distribution of federal funding. It continues to find opportunities to raise racial equity concerns with federally funded projects, including a December <u>coalition comment</u> to the Office of Management and Budget's revision of grant guidance for federal funding that removed the ban on geographic preference.

The SPLC Action Fund continued its efforts to support, modernize and reimagine the welfare system and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. In December, it submitted a <u>comment</u> supporting a proposed rule that would make significant changes to the definition of "needy" to be at or below 200% of the poverty level. This would encourage states to use more of their TANF resources to better support families with lower incomes. ACTION NOT

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SPLC staffers participate in an LGBTQ+ pride parade in Atlanta.

LGBTQ+ Rights

Impact Area: Countering White Supremacy

The SPLC is dedicated to protecting and advancing the rights, dignity and freedom of the LGBTQ+ community in the Deep South and to removing barriers to equality. We're working to ensure that LGBTQ+ people achieve full equality under the law. Our work has a national reach but is focused primarily on the Southeast, where relatively few organizations advocate for the LGBTQ+ community. The SPLC filed a lawsuit in late 2023 on behalf of educators challenging a ban in Florida public schools preventing them from using the pronouns that best match their identity. Many teachers had already left the profession and the state in response to discriminatory laws Florida passed to push LGBTO+ people out of public life. "I am a transgender teacher, but I am a human being first. As a human being living in America, I demand to be treated with fairness and equity at work," said Katie Wood, a plaintiff challenging the ban on teachers using their pronoun of choice.

The SPLC <u>released</u> a report exposing and debunking the vast network of anti-LGBTQ+

junk science. The sweeping <u>report</u> details how pseudoscience has become a tool of the far right to manipulate public opinion and advance legislation and legal action targeting the LGBTQ+ community.

"I am a transgender teacher, but I am a human being first. As a human being living in America, I demand to be treated with fairness and equity at work."

Katie Wood

Plaintiff challenging Florida's ban on teachers using their pronoun of choice

The SPLC fought on behalf of families in Georgia to protect their transgender children's essential genderaffirming health care from state interference in the lawsuit <u>Koe</u> <u>v. Noggle</u>. State legislatures in Mississippi, Georgia, Louisiana and Florida passed copycat laws mirroring Alabama's ban on gender-affirming health care for young trans people.

A case that originated with the SPLC's Southeast Immigrant Freedom Initiative led to an important U.S. Supreme **Court decision.** After Estrella Santos-Zacaria, a transgender woman fleeing violence in Guatemala, was detained at an immigrant prison, the SPLC placed her case with private pro bono attorneys, who won the right to further challenge her deportation. The court's decision in May cleared procedural hurdles that could help thousands of other immigrants pursue valid asylum claims in federal administrative courts. The decision also marks a notable step in its acknowledgment of transgender people; the written opinion references Santos-Zacaria's chosen name and uses her proper pronouns.

Learning for Justice and the ACLU of Alabama partnered in June 2023 to host a Teach Truth Day of Action event at 1977 Books in Montgomery, Alabama.

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Learning for Justice

Impact Area: Countering White Supremacy and Strengthening Democracy

In our work with educators, families, students and communities, Learning for Justice seeks to uphold the mission of the SPLC: to be a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements and advance the human rights of all people.

By the numbers

2

Learning for Justice magazine issues (17 feature articles and 13 short departments; 200,000+ circulation)

16 Online-only articles

1

Curriculum framework and 2 guides

2

In-person events supported 46 participants

129

Participants supported by 2 virtual cohort learning sessions



Webinars supported 2,036 total participants (live and ondemand)



Participants supported by trainer fellowships



Pilot community advocacy field tests Learning for Justice magazine deepened conversation on critical democracy and education issues in the South and across our nation by including the perspectives of a variety of scholars and collaborators. The Spring 2023 issue, "The Power of Place," examined the deep-rooted legacies of power and justice in Southern communities. The Fall 2023 issue, "Civics Education for Democracy," focused on how civics literacy is crucial to achieving a multiracial democracy. The issues reached hundreds of thousands of subscribers and supporters.

To counter political efforts to stifle learning about race and history in the U.S., Learning for Justice released a <u>framework</u> for <u>teaching</u> the Civil Rights Movement. The framework is designed to help educators, parents and caregivers teach high school-age students about Black Americans' struggle for equality and civil rights in the U.S. from Reconstruction to the present.

Learning for Justice released two resource guides to support K-12 educators' practice.

Advocating for Teaching Honest History offers resources and strategies for honest history education. <u>Critical Practices for</u> <u>Social Justice Education</u> helps educators to deepen their understanding of social justice principles and integrate that understanding into their practice.

Learning for Justice developed and published 16 <u>online articles</u> to continue conversations on critical issues to support young people, educators, families and caregivers. These articles addressed a range of topics, from youth well-being to race in history, civics and countering hate.

Learning for Justice designed and facilitated two in-person Professional Learning Institutes in Jackson, Mississippi, and Montgomery, Alabama, and two virtual learning cohorts. These opportunities engaged 46 educators in-person and 129 in virtual learning on social justice education practices and teaching the honest history of slavery in the U.S.

Learning for Justice facilitated 16 Virtual Open-Enrollment

workshops. These online sessions focused on LFJ resource publications for teachers, administrators, counselors and anyone who coaches classroom teachers and administrators.

Learning for Justice designed and facilitated three webinars for educators to support education practices. These sessions engaged 1,074 live participants and 962 on-demand learning, with 5,522 webinar resources downloaded.

Learning for Justice supported 12 Trainer Fellowships to facilitate learning opportunities. Five of these fellowships were from SPLC focus states.

Through community advocacy efforts, Learning for Justice launched three advocacy project field tests to expand social justice education outside of schools and into communities. Field tests occurred in Houma, Louisiana; Guntersville, Alabama; and Columbus, Georgia.

A wreath-laying ceremony at the Civil Rights Memorial honors the lives of 40 civil rights martyrs and the late U.S. Rep. John Lewis.

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People gather for a wreath-laying ceremony at the Civil Rights Memorial Center in Montgomery, Alabama.

Civil Rights Memorial Center

CRMC Story: The March Continues

The Civil Rights Memorial Center (CRMC) is one of Alabama's premier civil rights sites and serves as the interpretive center for the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, which honors the martyrs of the movement and inspires visitors to continue the march for racial equity and social justice.

In 2023, the Civil Rights Memorial Center hosted the Atlanta Quilt Festival's first-ever traveling exhibit: Good Trouble Quilts — Celebrating the Life and Legacy of Congressman John Lewis. The quilts, crafted by more than 30 artists, interpreted aspects of Lewis' life and achievements echoing themes of justice, racism and of course "good trouble," the civil rights icon's famous phrase to describe social action driven by moral justice.

As March marked the 58th anniversary of the Bloody Sunday voting rights march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, people gathered at the CRMC and Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery to lay a wreath in honor of the late representative's life as well as the lives of 40 civil rights martyrs who died during the height of the Civil Rights Movement and whose names are inscribed on the Memorial.

SPLC President and CEO Margaret Huang shared remarks, as well as U.S. Rep. Nikema Williams, who succeeded Lewis in Georgia's 5th Congressional District. They were joined by Lewis' relatives, including his grandson, two of his brothers, and other guests.

"We were excited to bring the *Good Trouble* quilt exhibit back to the CRMC for a second year," said Lauren Blanding, CRMC manager. "Having the Lewis family view the exhibit themselves during the wreath-laying ceremony was the best part of the experience. We are looking forward to bringing the exhibit back again in 2025."

The wreath-laying ceremony and exhibit punctuated the commemoration of Bloody Sunday, when civil rights marchers in Selma, including a young Lewis, were attacked by Alabama state troopers in 1968. SPLC leadership and staff joined thousands of people at the commemoration in Selma.

Tafeni English-Relf delivers the keynote for the Focus Women's Conference in Mobile, Alabama. and the second s

State Offices

Connecting with Community

As part of the Southern Poverty Law Center's efforts to strengthen its focus on communities, it opened its Alabama state office in 2023 the second state office of several planned to advance the SPLC's work through <u>deep partnerships</u> with local activists.

The SPLC named Tafeni English-Relf as the Alabama state office director.

"We will be intentional in focusing on state and local issues," English-Relf said, "and elevating those issues to our internal colleagues in Policy, Legal and Learning for Justice to face issues aligned with our partners through an integrated advocacy framework."

English-Relf previously served as the director of the SPLC's <u>Civil Rights Memorial Center</u> in Montgomery, but her tenure stretches to 1997 when she joined the SPLC as a research analyst for the Intelligence Project, which monitors far-right extremism. Later, she worked in the Teaching Tolerance program (which became <u>Learning for Justice</u>) before leaving to conduct housing justice movement work and returning in 2019.

The work of the SPLC's state offices reflects a coupling of the organization's role as a civil rights law firm with on-theground community advocacy and partnerships.

The SPLC established its first state office in July 2021 in Mississippi. Helmed by Waikinya Clanton, its mission began with surveying tens of thousands of residents about the most pressing issues they faced.

"People feel abandoned in places like Mississippi, so the SPLC sees this as a unique opportunity to make sure that we are showing up not only as allies of the people in these communities but also as accomplices in a lot of the work that needs to be done," Clanton said. "That means investing in organizing the grassroots, and by <u>boosting communities</u> to do the long-term work."

In 2023, the SPLC filed a complaint against the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality due to discriminatory funding in the city's water crisis that exposed residents to health risks. After the largest water treatment plant in the state's capital failed in 2022, 160,000 Jackson residents were left without clean drinking water. The office partnered with more than 30 local organizations to provide temporary relief, delivering more than 4.1 million cases of water and 152 water filters and test kits. The Mississippi state office provided the coalition a pallet jack rental for six months and technical capacity for the public to watch a livestream

of a community meeting with an Environmental Protection Agency administrator.

When a tornado hit southwest Mississippi in March 2023, staff were on the ground to bring <u>resources and support</u> to residents. The SPLC's Mississippi state office provided supplies, funding and organizational help along with direct assistance to survivors and local governments.

The office has worked to boost civic engagement in Mississippi, which has one of the nation's lowest voter turnout rates. In 2023, it launched the Defenders of Democracy campaign, a 10-week effort to educate and empower voters. It featured town halls, community events, campus discussions and the launch of a comic book and coin design contest — a partnership with the NAACP ACT-SO Achievement Program and the Mississippi School of the Arts – aimed at engaging teens and college students in the voting process.

> The SPLC's Mississippi state office launched the Defenders of Democracy campaign to educate and empower voters in 2023.



The Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion team includes, from left, David Hodge, Skylar Kantola, Ranella Peters and Rebecca Latin.







Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

The SPLC's Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) team works to ensure that the SPLC's values are not only reflected within its work, but within its workplace culture. Its efforts provide a strong foundation for the SPLC's mission as a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond.

The JEDI team advanced its educational program, the JEDI Immersive Learning Curriculum, with employee workshops

The curriculum focused on understanding the root causes of structural racism in the U.S. Through these experiences, the JEDI team introduced concepts, challenged personal beliefs and built unified language and understanding within the organization.

The JEDI Working Group continued its mission to apply JEDI principles throughout the SPLC. The working group, which

SPLC. The working group, which is composed of democratically elected representatives from across the SPLC, played a key role in informing leadership and providing updates on how JEDI principles affect work within the organization and with partner groups. It ensured such principles are applied in communications within the organization and that our vendors are aligned with JEDI's mission and values.

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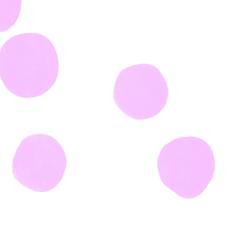
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