

Counterpunch: Tells the Facts, Names the Names » King of the Hate Business » Print

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What is the arch-salesman of hate-mongering, Mr. Morris Dees of the Southern Poverty Law Center doing now? He's saying that the election of a black president proves his point. Hate is on the rise! Send money!

Without skipping a beat, the mailshot moguls, who year after year make money selling the notion there's been a right resurgence out there in the hinterland with massed legions of haters, have used the election of a black president to say that, yes, hate is on the rise and America ready to burst apart at the seams, with millions of extremists primed to march down Main Street draped in Klan robes, a copy of Mein Kampf tucked under one arm and a Bible under the other, available for sneak photographs from minions of Chip Berlet, another salesman of the Christian menace, ripely endowed with millions to battle the legions of the cross.

Ever since 1971 US Postal Service mailbags have bulged with Dees' fundraising letters, scaring dollars out of the pockets of trembling liberals aghast at his lurid depictions of hate-sodden America, in dire need of legal confrontation by the SPLC. Nine years ago Ken Silverstein wrote a devastating commentary on Dees and the SPLC in Harpers, dissecting a typical swatch of Dees' solicitations. At that time, as Silverstein pointed out, the SPLC was "the wealthiest civil rights group in America," with \$120 million in assets.

As of October 2008 the net assets of the SPLC were \$170,240,129, The merchant of hate himself, Mr. Dees, was paid an annual \$273,132 as chief trial counsel, and the SPLC's president and CEO, Richard Cohen, \$290,193. Total revenue in 2007 was \$44,727,257 and program expenses \$20,804,536. In other words, the Southern Poverty Law Center was raising twice as much as it was spending on its proclaimed mission. Fund-raising and administrative expenses accounted for \$9 million, leaving \$14 million to be put in the center's vast asset portfolio.

The 990 non profit tax record for the SPLC indicates that the assets fell by about \$50 million last year, meaning that like almost all non profits the SPLC took a bath in the stock crash. So what was the end result of all that relentless hoarding down the year, as people of modest means, scared by Dees, sent him their contributions. Were they put to good use? It doesn't seem so. They vanished in an electronic blip.

But where are the haters? That hardy old stand-by, the KKK, despite the SPLC's predictable howls about an uptick in its chapters, is a moth-eaten and depleted troupe, at least 10 per cent of them on the government payroll as informants for the FBI. As Noel Ignatiev once remarked in his book *Race Traitor*, there isn't a public school in any county in the USA that doesn't represent a menace to blacks a thousand times more potent than that offered by the KKK, just as there aren't many such schools that probably haven't

been propositioned by Dees to buy one of the SPLC's "tolerance" programs. What school is going to go on record rejecting Dees-sponsored tolerance?

Dees and his hate-seekers scour the landscape for hate like the arms manufacturers inventing new threats and for the same reason: it's their staple.

The SPLC's latest "Year in Hate" report claims that "in 2008 the number of hate groups rose to 926, up 4 per cent from 2007, and 54 per cent since 2000." The SPLC doesn't measure the number of members in the groups, meaning they probably missed me. Change that total to 927. I'm a hate group, meaning in Dees-speak, "one with beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people," starting with Dick Cheney. I love to dream of him being water-boarded, subjected to loops of Schonberg played at top volume, locked up naked in a meat locker. But the nation's haters are mostly like me, enjoying their (increasingly circumscribed) constitutionally guaranteed right to hate, solitary, disorganized, prone to sickening relapses into love, or at least the sort of amiable tolerance for All Mankind experienced when looking at photos of Carla Bruni and Princess Letizia of Spain kissing.

The effective haters are big, powerful easily identifiable entities. Why is Dees fingering militia men in a potato field in Idaho when we have identifiable, well-organized groups which the SPLC could take on. To cite reports from the Urban League, and United for a Fair Economy, minorities are more than three times as likely to hold high-cost subprime loans, foisted on them by predatory lenders, meaning the big banks; "all black and latino subprime borrowers could stand to lose between \$164 billion and \$213 billion for loans taken during the past eight years."

Get those bankers and big mortgage touts into court, chief counsel Dees! How about helping workers fired by people who hate anyone trying to organize a union? What about defending immigrants rounded up in ICE raids? How about attacking the roots of southern poverty, and the system that sustains that poverty as expressed in the endless prisons and Death Rows across the south, disproportionately crammed with blacks and Hispanics?

You fight theatrically, the Dees way, or you fight substantively, like Stephen Bright, who makes only \$11,000 as president and senior counsel of the Southern Center for Human Rights. The center's director makes less than \$50,000. It has net assets of a bit over \$4.5 million and allocates about \$1.6 million a year for expenses, 77 percent of its annual revenue. Bright's outfit is basically dedicated to two things: prison litigation and the death penalty. He fights the system, case by case. Not the phony targets mostly tilted at by Dees but the effective, bipartisan, functional system of oppression, far more deadly and determined than the SPLC's tin-pot hate groups. Tear up your check to Dees and send it to Bright, (<http://www.schr.org/>) or to the Institute for Southern Studies (<http://www.southernstudies.org.html>) run by Chris Kromm, which has been doing brilliant spadework on the economy, on poverty and on exploitation in the south for four decades.

Pigs, Cows, Sheep, Bison: Meat and the March of Empire

As Mexico reels from the swine flu panic, there's angry talk of the disastrous impact on that country of North American methods of intensive livestock production. The initial

swine flu deaths came near the huge pig factories in the state of Veracruz, owned by Granjas Carroll, a subsidiary of Smithfield Farms, centered in North Carolina and now expanding into Eastern Europe. Intensive pork production in North Carolina in the 1990s sponsored the emergence of the H1N1 swine flu virus in 1998, the year North Carolina's pig population hit ten million, up from two million just six years earlier, achieved by cramming 25 times more pigs into each factory, each one a stinking nightmare to the people living nearby.

In our latest newsletter I visit the world that intensive livestock raising has made, from the Valle in Mexico destroyed by Spanish sheep ranching in the 16th century, to the trashed landscapes of Texas and California today. In the same brilliant issue Steven Higgs probes the safety of nanotechnologies. Moms, hold that nano-toy, and that nano make-up! And Senator Jim Abourezk looks back on the occupation of Wounded Knee, and the role he played.

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