

FAITH FRONT PAGE MONEY POLITICS U.S. WORLD

## Franklin Graham: SPLC is a 'sham'

**'It's a shame that anyone would even consider its opinion'**



**By WND Staff**

**Published August 21, 2019 at 8:00pm**



**Franklin Graham**

Evangelist Franklin Graham warns anyone who would consider the advice of the Southern Poverty Law Center that the organization is a "sham."

While it once focused on fighting the KKK, SPLC now routinely slaps the "hate" label on Christians and Christian organizations because of their religious beliefs.

"Southern Poverty Law Center is a sham," Graham wrote on Facebook. "This left-wing secularist group falsely labels Christian and conservative organizations that defend life, marriage, and religious freedom as 'hate groups.' These lies against great organizations including Family Research Council and Alliance Defending Freedom even led to the vicious attack described in this link."

Graham, the CEO of both Samaritan's Purse and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, said it's "a shame that anyone would even consider SPLC's opinion – they have a history of corruption and virtually zero credibility."

He referenced a USA Today op-ed by former Family Research Council staffer Jessica Prol Smith recalling that a deranged gunman inspired by SPLC's "hate" campaign tried to kill her and other FRC employees at their Washington headquarters seven years ago.

"I wrote and edited for the Family Research Council, a public advocacy organization that promoted the principles I have cared about since childhood: protecting the family, promoting the dignity of every human life and advocating for religious liberty," she wrote in an op-ed headlined "The Southern Poverty Law Center is a hate-based scam that nearly caused me to be murdered."

"It reads like a tagline, but it's also just what I believed and the way I chose to match my career with my convictions," she explained.

Aug. 15, 2012, was the day the gunman came to the FRC offices with, as he explained to law enforcement later, the intent to kill as many people as he could.

His conviction was the first under the 2002 Anti-Terrorism Act.

Smith's office was put on lockdown in response to the attack.

"While I was missing lunch, a crime scene played out in the office lobby below me. My coworker and friend Leo wasn't armed, but he had played the quick-thinking and inadvertent hero, disarming a young man on a mission to kill me and as many of my colleagues as possible. The gunman had packed his backpack with ammo and 15 Chick-fil-A sandwiches – later admitting that he had planned to smear them on our lifeless faces as a political statement. Leo took a bullet in the arm but managed to hold the attacker until law enforcement arrived," she wrote.

"It was the type of violent incident that one could expect a group that purportedly monitors 'hate,' like the Southern Poverty Law Center, to notice, research and decry. In fact, we were on the center's radar but for all the wrong reasons. The assailant acknowledged later in FBI testimony that he had selected our office precisely because the SPLC had labeled my employer a 'hate group,'" she said.

Smith quoted former SPLC employees calling the organization an "obscenely wealthy marketing scheme."

Her new employer, Alliance Defending Freedom, also has attracted the attention of SPLC.

"If the SPLC thought that its hate would intimidate or silence me and my colleagues, they're sadly mistaken. I'm lucky – blessed, really – that I didn't take a bullet for my beliefs back in 2012. But the center's ugly slander and the gunman's misguided attack have sharpened my resolve and deepened my faith in my Savior, who commands my destiny and shields me from the schemes of man. The same is true for my colleagues."

Smith said SPLC, as an institution, "has thoroughly disqualified itself as an arbiter of justice."

### **'Long-established fact'**

In April, a U.S. senator asked the Internal Revenue Service to review SPLC's tax-exempt status.

Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., said in a letter obtained by the Washington Free Beacon that reports have "confirmed the long-established fact that the SPLC regularly engages in defamation of its political opponents. In fact, SPLC's defining characteristic is to fundraise off of defamation."

And since "engaging in systematic defamation is not a tax-exempt purpose," the IRS needs to review SPLC's status and "take immediate action."

"While IRS guidance lists several examples of tax-exempt purposes, engaging in defamation as a business model is of course not one of them," the senator wrote. "The SPLC defames other organizations in several ways. Each year, the SPLC

publishes a so-called 'hate map,' which ostensibly identifies hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and the Nation of Islam. But under the guise of its 'hate map,' the SPLC also lists its mainstream political opponents and faith-based groups, including reputable organizations such as the Family Research Council, the Alliance Defending Freedom, and the Center for Immigration Studies."

He pointed out SPLC also targets individuals, and its political agenda and activism has resulted in real injury.

Cotton also noted the SPLC's slush funds.

"Reportedly and inexplicably, \$121 million of these assets are parked in offshore accounts," the letter said.

One former SPLC worker, Bob Moser, in an article about SPLC, wrote, "We were part of the con, and we knew it."

His comments were triggered by SPLC's firing of founder Morris Dees earlier this year. A week later, the group's president, Richard Cohen, quit.

WND also has reported the American Freedom Law Center sued two Michigan officials for a policy directive that targets groups based on SPLC's hate-group designation.

Author and pundit John Stossel once called SPLC a hate group itself.

SPLC also was sued by a lawyer who claims SPLC paid for stolen documents in an attempt to get him fired and destroy his future work prospects.

And a previous case brought against SPLC was settled by a payment of more than \$3 million to Maajid Nawaz and his Quilliam Foundation, who sued after SPLC put them on its "hate" list.

As many as six dozen other organizations targeted by the SPLC are considering legal responses.

One significant blow to the SPLC happened in April, when Twitter distanced itself from the leftist organization.

"It is long overdue that social media companies stop using the hypocritical SPLC as a reliable source to police their content and discriminate against pro-family and conservative nonviolent organizations," Mat Staver, chairman of Liberty Counsel, said at the time. "The rest of the tech companies should follow Twitter's lead and divorce from the SPLC.

"It appears to have taken a major implosion within the SPLC for others to finally see what organizations like Liberty Counsel have been saying all along."

WND reported when the Family Research Council and more than five dozen other conservative groups and individuals released a letter asking for news agencies to cut off their ties to the "discredited" SPLC.

"We call on all media, corporations, social media companies, and financial institutions to immediately stop relying on their discredited and partisan 'hate' and 'extremist' lists," said the letter, signed by FRC's Tony Perkins, Lt. Gen. (Ret.) William G. Boykin, J. Kenneth Blackwell of the U.N. Human Rights Commission, Tim Wildmon of the American Family Association, Gary Bauer of American Values, Ryan Mauro of Clarion Project, Michael Farris of Alliance Defending Freedom and many others.