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OPINION | REVIEW & OUTLOOK

# Who Watches the 'Hate' Watchers?

The Southern Poverty Law Center's recent turmoil is a sad irony.

By [The Editorial Board](#)

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Morris Dees, co-founder Southern Poverty Law Center, in 2016.

PHOTO: RICHARD SHOTWELL/INVISION/ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Southern Poverty Law Center, which turned fighting “hate” into big business, is taking a long look in the mirror. Two weeks ago the SPLC fired its co-founder, Morris Dees, with only a vague statement that employee conduct must reflect the organization’s values.

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The SPLC then hired Tina Tchen, a former chief of staff for Michelle Obama, to conduct what the board chairman called a “top-to-bottom external review of our workplace culture and our past practices and policies.” Then last Friday the SPLC’s president, Richard Cohen, stepped down “to give the organization the best chance to heal.”

News reports detail a staff revolt. In a letter to management, employees complained that “allegations of mistreatment, sexual harassment, gender discrimination, and racism threaten the moral authority of this organization.” Women reportedly claimed inappropriate remarks and touching by Mr. Dees, though he denies this.

It’s another sad turn for a once-noble cause. Mr. Dees, 82, started the SPLC in 1971 and made its name by suing Ku Klux Klan groups into oblivion. But the SPLC’s definition of “hate” expanded as it turned into a left-wing fundraising racket.

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Last month it breathlessly reported that, thanks to Donald Trump, “the number of hate groups operating across America rose to a record high—1,020.” But they include, for example, the Alliance Defending Freedom. That nonprofit won a Supreme Court case last year on behalf of Jack Phillips, a Colorado baker who didn’t want to make a cake for a gay wedding.

Warnings about a tidal wave of “hate” are what keep funds flowing into “Poverty Palace,” as some SPLC workers have called its headquarters. Its endowment is now \$470 million. Donors should take this moment, if they haven’t already, to find a better cause.

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