

# SPLC indictment lends support to hate groups

 [salon.com/2026/04/23/splc-indictment-lends-support-to-hate-groups](https://salon.com/2026/04/23/splc-indictment-lends-support-to-hate-groups)

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**For decades, the Southern Poverty Law Center has fought hate. Now the Justice Department wants it to stop**

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Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche and FBI Director Kash Patel announce an indictment against the Southern Poverty Law Center (Nathan Posner/Anadolu via Getty Images)

[Todd Blanche](#) is a known quantity in Trump World. He [defended the president](#) in the New York hush money case involving the adult film star Stormy Daniels, and he has been a vocal advocate for [Donald Trump](#) ever since, particularly in serving as assistant attorney general. But such shows of loyalty are not enough for anyone in the president's orbit to rest easy.

Having succeeded Pam Bondi, the [recently deposed](#) attorney general, Blanche is now [doing the job](#) on an "acting basis." And he is using his tenure to [campaign for the full position](#) by attempting to show he can out-Bondi his predecessor.

As CNN [reported](#), on April 20 Blanche traveled to Florida to meet with Joseph diGenova, the Trump loyalist and newly-named counselor to the attorney general who will [lead investigations](#) into the president's perceived foes, starting with former CIA Director John Brennan. Blanche is, CNN added, "fight[ing] to prove he's the man to deliver on Trump's biggest priority: prosecuting the president's political adversaries.

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The day after his trip to Florida, news broke that the [Justice Department](#) had [secured an indictment](#) against the Alabama-based [Southern Poverty Law Center](#), an organization established in 1971 to build on the successes of the Civil Rights Movement and confront resistance to civil rights legislation and initiatives. The department's action is yet another move meant to spotlight Blanche's no holds barred campaign against individuals and groups perceived as enemies of the president and his [MAGA](#) movement — and to bolster his bid to be nominated by Trump as attorney general.

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Over its 55-year history, SPLC attorneys have won multimillion dollar judgments against white supremacist groups, helping to dismantle the vestiges of Jim Crow; advocated for women, the LGBTQ community and people with disabilities; and instituted a Teaching Tolerance curriculum that was adopted by schools across the country. (The organization also went through a troubled patch when its founder, civil rights activist and attorney Morris Dees, was ousted in 2019 after two dozen employees [reported](#) "mistreatment, sexual harassment, gender discrimination, and racism" which threatened SPLC's moral authority and integrity.) Even the conservative Heritage Foundation [credits](#) the SPLC with numerous important victories for justice.

Recently, though, conservatives have charged the organization with abandoning its mission. In their view, the SPLC [crossed a red line](#) when it labeled some right-wing organizations, including the Family Research Council, Center for Immigration Studies and Alliance Defending Freedom, as hate or anti-government extremist groups.

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Critics are particularly agitated by the SPLC's "hate map," which the organization has described as an "annual census of hate groups" meant to serve as "a barometer...of the level of hate activity in the country," and which has been published yearly since 1990. Based on research and monitoring by SPLC analysts, the chart purports to show "approximate locations" of the groups by tracking their annual activities.

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Conservative critics [accuse](#) the SPLC of becoming “an organ of defamation,” and they have held the organization [partially responsible](#) for the September 2025 assassination of conservative activist Charlie Kirk. Turning Point USA, the group he founded, was included in a retrospective report on 2024 as “A Case Study of the Hard Right.”

For the MAGA faithful, the SPLC is a stand-in for a range of activist groups that Trump and his supporters [say](#) “encompass a range of ideological motivations, including anarchist, Marxist-Leninist, autonomous Marxist, Maoist, communist, extreme socialist, eco-extremist, anticapitalist and other self-identified antifascist ideologies.”

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In the wake of conservative criticism, FBI Director Kash Patel took the first shot against the SPLC in October. For years, the organization had provided information to the bureau in an effort to help law enforcement identify hate groups. No more, Patel [wrote](#) in an X post: “The Southern Poverty Law Center long ago abandoned civil rights work and turned into a partisan smear machine. Their so-called ‘hate map’ has been used to defame mainstream Americans and even inspired violence. That disgraceful record makes them unfit for any FBI partnership.... Under this FBI, all ties with the SPLC have officially been terminated.”

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Patel’s decision was, [Axios](#) [observed](#) at the time, “the latest example of the [Trump](#) administration turning away from civil rights watchdogs by branding them as partisan and discriminatory rather than protectors of marginalized communities.”

The Justice Department’s [indictment](#) of SPLC is the second act.

The indictment [charges](#) the SPLC with 11 counts of wire fraud, false statements to a federally-insured bank and conspiracy to conceal money laundering in conjunction with the group’s use of paid informants to gather intelligence on violent, extremist groups. This is a dangerous distortion of what the SPLC was doing. Using fraud charges have become a staple in the Trump administration’s attacks on its opponents. In saying that the SPLC was funding hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan, the Aryan Nation and the National Alliance instead of informing on and fighting them, the administration is relying on an “Alice in Wonderland” approach that has become one of the hallmarks of Trumpism.

SPLC CEO Bryan Fair [laid it out](#) for the Guardian, saying that “the information the center received was frequently shared with the FBI and other law enforcement agencies. The information gathered by the informants helped save lives.” Fair explained that the initiative “was kept quiet to protect the safety of informants.”

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When he announced the indictment, Blanche [claimed](#) that “The SPLC is manufacturing racism to justify its existence.... This Department of Justice will hold the SPLC and every other fraudulent organization operating with the same deceptive playbook accountable.”

We’ve seen this act before. In the 1960s, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, segregationist Southern states [went after the NAACP](#) for its civil rights work, and the FBI and National Security Agency infamously [spied](#) on the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders.

Blanche’s attack on the SPLC is politics masquerading as law. It is reprisal and revenge against a group that had the temerity to oppose hate wherever it originates.

And don’t be fooled: If the SPLC can be brought to heel, the hate it opposes will have one less roadblock before it reaches Black and brown Americans, immigrants, women, the LGBTQ community, people with disabilities and others. Today, as in the past, they need the kind of champion the SPLC has been.

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