

# SPLC REPORT

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## Victory over Klan

### *SPLC wins \$2.5 million verdict for teen attacked by Klansmen*

The Southern Poverty Law Center scored a crushing jury verdict against the leader of the Imperial Klans of America (IKA) and one of his chief lieutenants following a three-day trial in Kentucky that included dramatic testimony about a plot to assassinate SPLC founder Morris Dees.

The \$2.5 million verdict on Nov. 15 likely dealt a fatal blow to the IKA, one of the most dangerous Klan networks in America. IKA leader Ron Edwards resigned from his post a week after the verdict. And SPLC attorneys are moving to seize Edwards' interest in the IKA's 15-acre compound in Dawson Springs, Ky., site of an annual gathering of Klansmen, neo-Nazis and racist skinheads.

The jury reached its decision after hearing witnesses describe the July 2006 attack on Jordan Gruver, a teen who was brutally beaten by Klansmen on a recruiting mission at a county fair in Brandenburg, Ky.

The trial highlighted the growing number of hate crimes committed against Latinos in this country. Jordan is a U.S. citizen of Panamanian-Indian descent, but the Klansmen who beat him called him an "illegal spic."

In seeking a verdict large enough to demolish the IKA, the SPLC trial team followed a legal strategy it has used to bankrupt numerous other hate groups over three decades.



Chief trial counsel Morris Dees holds the IKA's secret handbook as he questions Klan leader Ron Edwards.



### THE STORY

Read a detailed account of the three-day trial on pages 1 and 2 in the special insert.



### THE PLAYERS

Read summaries of the main characters' roles in the trial on the insert's page 3.



### IN THE COURTROOM

Review a timeline of the SPLC's victories against hate groups on the insert's page 4.

### FIGHTING HATE

## Obama plotter had ties to group sued by SPLC

As details of a white supremacist plot to assassinate President Barack Obama emerged in October, the SPLC revealed that a racist skinhead group to which one of the suspects belonged had close ties to a Klan leader successfully sued by the SPLC.

The elder Edwards resigned his post days after the SPLC won a crippling \$2.5 million verdict against the Klan group in November for a 2006 attack on a teenager at a fair in rural Kentucky. Jarred Hensley of Cincinnati, a former IKA mem-

But, Cowart is described as "member #3" of the SWA on the group's web page on a social networking site. That description means Cowart was the third to sign up for an account on that site.

#### Birthday party for Hitler

On Cowart's Supreme White Alliance page, he describes himself as "easy going and easy to get along with, as long as you are White!" A photo obtained by the SPLC shows Cowart at a birthday party held for Adolf Hitler along with others linked to the alliance. The group is displaying a birthday cake marked with the SWA acronym.

The SWA page on the social networking site also carries a page entitled "Daniel's Friends" that lists the current SWA president, Steven Edwards, as Cowart's friend.

It's not clear if Cowart's alleged partner in the Obama plot, Paul Schlesselman, was a member or associate of the group. The SWA posting suggests that he was not.

The two men were arrested after federal agents uncovered what they described as a plot to go on a multi-state "killing spree." In an affidavit, the ATF said that the two men, both of whom were described as holding "strong" white supremacist beliefs, had met via the Internet in late September.

They later got together and allegedly decided to kill dozens of African Americans before attempting to assassinate Obama. In a blog posting, former IKA member Hensley commended the two, writing that they deserved the "Roman salute," referring to the seig heil.

#### Rash of racial incidents since election

The plot to kill Obama is one of the most serious examples of the undercurrent of racism among Americans that bubbled to the surface during the presidential campaign. Since the election, there has been a rash of racial incidents — cross burnings, black figures hung from nooses, vandalism, racist graffiti and threats.

On Dec. 6 in Shreveport, La., a black man was hospitalized overnight after he was brutally beaten by three white men because he wore an Obama T-shirt. In New York, a black teen was attacked with a bat on election night by four white men who shouted "Obama." In Idaho, young elementary students on a school bus chanted "assassinate Obama." In Los Angeles, swastikas and racial slurs were spray-painted on cars, sidewalks and houses. And there was a series of disturbing anti-Obama incidents on university campuses across the country.



Daniel Cowart has ties to Klan leader sued by the SPLC.

Daniel Cowart was a member of the Supreme White Alliance (SWA), a group formed earlier this year and led by Steven Edwards. Edwards is the son of Ron Edwards, who served as the imperial wizard, or national leader, of the Imperial Klans of America (IKA).

ber who was also named in the SPLC case, is the SWA's second-in-command.

The SWA posted a note after the arrests saying that a "probate" member — clearly Cowart, although the site didn't mention his name — had been booted out some time ago.

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AP PHOTO/BRIAN BOHANNON

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The Southern Poverty Law Center is dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry and to seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of our society. Using litigation, education, and other forms of advocacy, the Center works toward the day when the ideals of equal justice and equal opportunity will be a reality. The Center also sponsors the Civil Rights Memorial, which celebrates the memory of individuals who died during the Civil Rights Movement, and the Civil Rights Memorial Center.

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## A MESSAGE FROM CENTER PRESIDENT RICHARD COHEN

## Despite Obama victory, strong racial divide remains

Like many others on election night, I marveled at the scenes of jubilation on TV as people across the country and the world celebrated Barack Obama's victory.

I can think of only one other historical event in recent decades that prompted such a spontaneous outpouring of joy — the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

The reaction to Obama's victory, I suspect, resulted from a combination of factors. First, with our nation facing a crumbling economy and two protracted wars with no end in sight, voters were hungry for a new leader who would take our battered country in a new direction.

Second, as in 1989, a mighty barrier had been smashed to bits.

Obama's election is a powerful testament to racial progress in this country. A number of SPLC members sent messages to us (see letters below) suggesting that our many years of fighting bigotry and teaching tolerance were factors that helped pave the way for this historic moment. If that's true, the credit really lies with our thousands of supporters, because it's their commitment to racial justice that inspires and sustains us.

But for all the elation, it would be naïve to believe Obama's victory signals that race is no longer relevant in our country.

This is plainly evident from an analysis of exit polls — and from the emergence of a racist backlash in the aftermath of the election.

In Alabama, just 10 percent of whites cast ballots for Obama —

a sharp drop from the nearly 20 percent who voted for Democratic nominee John Kerry in 2004. This decrease came in spite of strong political headwinds facing the GOP. In Mississippi, only 11 percent of whites chose Obama, and in Louisiana, just 14 percent did.

It would be wrong, of course, to suggest that every white person who voted for Republican John McCain is a bigot. There are stark differences between the two major parties on matters of policy that have little or nothing to do with race.

But the lopsided nature of the white vote in many quarters shows clearly that there remains a strong racial divide in our country. Hundreds of years of slavery and Jim Crow racism have left a stubborn residue of bigotry that will likely persist for years to come.

Since Lyndon Johnson was elected more than four decades

ago, no Democrat has won a majority of the white vote nationally. It was Johnson who signed the major civil rights laws of the mid-1960s, toppling institutional barriers to equal rights for blacks. Shortly

thereafter, Richard Nixon launched the GOP's "Southern strategy" — an effort to exploit racial polarization to win votes. Since then, white Southerners have voted overwhelmingly for Republicans in most presidential elections.



Richard Cohen

**Bigotry not limited to South**

And it's not just the South where bigotry still lingers. The rash of racially charged incidents following Obama's election — cross burnings, racist graffiti, effigies, threats and intimidation — across the country proves the point. In Massachusetts, for example, a black church was burned in a suspicious fire on election night. In New York, a black teen was attacked by bat-wielding white men who shouted "Obama." And in Idaho, schoolchildren reportedly chanted "assassinate Obama" on a bus.

Threats to Obama have been more numerous than to any

previous president-elect, according to the Secret Service. These included a plot by two racist skinheads to kill Obama and dozens of other African-Americans (see story, page 1). One of the skinheads was a member of a group closely associated with the Imperial Klans of America, the group whose leader we recently faced in court.

White supremacist leaders, meanwhile, report they are seeing a surge in interest in their organizations. They believe the election will rally whites to their cause, especially with the country struggling with a faltering economy and a contentious immigration debate.

No one stated this more clearly than Jeff Schoep, the leader of the neo-Nazi National Socialist Movement. "Historically, when times get tough in our nation, that's how movements like ours gain a foothold," he told USA Today. "When the economy suffers, people are looking for answers. ... We are the answer for white people."

It's a perfect storm for racist extremists looking to scapegoat minorities for the nation's troubles.

Obama shattered the ultimate political barrier, becoming the first non-white president. But a post-racial America? There is work yet to be done.

## MAILBOX

In the 1960s, the twin issues of race and peace occupied all of my attention. Over the years, I started to feel that I would not live to see progress on either front. On Nov. 4, with the election of Barack Obama, I dared to believe again that race can be minimized as a means of assessing a person's character and worth. During the past decade, the positions of the SPLC have kept an ember of idealism alive in me that the election of Obama fanned into a flame. Thank you.

**W. S.**  
Fairfax, Virginia

With the election of Barack Obama, I like to think that America is getting past its hate, but I know it's not, and the SPLC is more important than ever. Keep fighting the good fight — we are with you!

**M. S.**  
Sellersville, Pennsylvania

Like many Americans, I was moved to tears of joy, relief and pride in my country election night as I watched the results and Obama's acceptance speech. I fell asleep on a high after (yet again) reminding my four kids that this is the

first time ever that anyone other than a white man will be president of our country. My children, who are various mixes of African American, Latino and white, seemed to really get it and also fell asleep with big smiles once they understood that all the grownups weren't crying for sad reasons.

**S. B. F.**  
Alameda, California

To have witnessed the election of Senator Obama as our next president is one of the most amazing events in my life. Looking at the faces in the crowds, I saw reflected there my own emotions: a true sense of belief that we are going to be a part of the change that our great country has needed for so long.

**K. J. L.**  
Phenix City, Alabama

I will do all I can to help President Obama change the direction of the country, as SPLC is doing. Please keep working for justice. I filed and am following through on a discrimination complaint on behalf of Native American kids in a Montana school. I don't know if I'll prevail, but I

will try. I am inspired and encouraged by you. Thank you.

**L. M. B.**  
Nisland, South Dakota

Just a week ago, it seemed too much to hope for — our first black president. The spirit of tolerance is surely strengthened. And yet there will always be ignorant and angry people who must be restrained. I pray for your safety and the safety of our new First Family. Your work is more important than ever.

**J. N.**  
Hayfork, California

I am a great fan and supporter of the work of the SPLC, and your work has helped to bring about the historic election of President-elect Barack Hussein Obama, one of those singular moments that we'll all remember for the rest of our lives. Thank you!

**L. B.**  
Bloomington, California

I currently make monthly donations to your organization and have always been impressed by your work and dedication. Your work, and the recent election of Barack Obama

gives me such great hope! I feel so proud for our country.

**K. K.**  
West Des Moines, Iowa

Our visit to the SPLC in July 2007 and meeting Morris continues to inspire us. Please know that the recent presidential election was made possible by the mirror SPLC holds up to our great country's collective face, forcing us to be honest with ourselves. I am proud of the reflection I see today!

**P. G.**  
Piedmont, California

I appreciate the work that you do. The presidential election has surprised many people. I, personally, am very proud of the outcome. I am not proud of the bigotry that President-elect Obama's win has exposed. It is shocking to me to find out how many of my friends and co-workers are and were closet bigots and truly feel in their hearts that America will be hurt, just because of the color of a man's skin. It is shameful, and I am ashamed of them.

**H. F.**  
Texas

## FIGHTING HATE

# FBI confirms SPLC findings on neo-Nazi presence in military

More than two years after an SPLC investigation revealed that alarming numbers of neo-Nazi skinheads and other racist extremists were infiltrating the U.S. armed forces, new evidence indicates the problem has probably worsened.

In response, SPLC President Richard Cohen wrote to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates warning of the danger posed by an increasing presence of white supremacists in the U.S. military.

"Although there may never be a fail-safe system that prevents extremists from infiltrating the military, we believe that a thorough review of the existing safeguards is in order," Cohen wrote in the Nov. 25 letter.

Two years ago, Cohen wrote to then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, but the Pentagon refused to acknowledge the problem.

## Military reduces recruiting standards

Since then, potentially violent extremists have continued to take advantage of lowered recruiting standards and lax enforcement of the military's vague anti-extremist regulations. Once in the military, they receive combat training and gain access to weapons and explosives.

Among the new evidence is a recently released FBI Intelligence Assessment, "White Supremacist Recruitment of Military Personnel Since 9/11," which was released to law enforcement agencies nationwide. The report confirms that white supremacist leaders are making a concerted effort to recruit active-duty soldiers and recent combat veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Sensitive and reliable source reporting indicates supremacist leaders are encouraging followers who lack documented his-

stories of neo-Nazi activity and overt racist insignia such as tattoos to infiltrate the military as 'ghost skins,' in order to recruit and receive training for the benefit of the extremist movement," the report says.

The FBI report details more than a dozen investigative findings and criminal cases involving Iraq and Afghanistan veterans as well as active-duty personnel engaging in extremist activity in recent years.

## 'Potential to pass training to others'

"Looking ahead, current and former military personnel belonging to white supremacist extremist organizations who experience frustration at the inability of these organizations to achieve their goals may choose to found new, more operationally minded and operationally capable groups," the report concludes. "The military training veterans bring to the movement and their potential

to pass this training on to others can increase the ability of lone offenders to carry out violence from the movement's fringes."

The SPLC is engaged in an ongoing effort to identify and reveal members of white supremacist organizations who claim to be serving in the military. For example, the SPLC recently found that 46 members of the white supremacist social networking website New Saxon identify themselves as active-duty military personnel. Six of these individuals are members of "White Military Men," a New Saxon sub-group.

Earlier this year, the founder of White Military Men identified himself in his New Saxon account as "Lance Corporal Burton" of the 2nd Battalion Fox Company Pit 2097, from Florida. Under his "About Me" section, Burton writes: "Love to shoot my M16A2 service rifle effectively at the Hachies (Iraqis),"

*Continued on page 8*



## Morris Dees Justice Award presented

University of Alabama School of Law Dean Kenneth Randall and Morris Dees flank Cheryl Little on Nov. 20 after presentation of the 2008 Morris Dees Justice Award to her in a ceremony in New York. She is executive director of the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, a nonprofit legal assistance organization in Miami. The renowned international law firm Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom partnered with the law school to create the award in honor of Dees, an Alabama graduate, for his lifelong dedication to public service.

## THEY SAID IT

"He wants you to be sure your child can speak fluent illegal alien."

— G. Gordon Liddy, reacting July 9 on his Radio America program to Barack Obama's comment about the importance of learning a second language.

"[Barack Obama] ... would deliver us unto a culture of corruption, murder and conquest."

— Glenn Spencer, leader of the American Border Patrol nativist group, commenting on Obama's immigration views in his online American Patrol Report on July 25.

"Mexicans are trashy. All they do is work and make love, I think. Everywhere you look, it's like little Mexico around here."

— Johnston County, N.C., Sheriff Steve Bizzell, quoted in a Sept. 7 story in the *Raleigh News & Observer*.

"We need to get our troops out of Iraq and put them on the streets of America to protect us from the scourge of illegal immigrants ... raping, murdering like a scythe across America."

— Michael Savage, on the Aug. 4 edition of Talk Radio Network's "The Savage Nation," commenting on the right-wing Italian government's decision to deploy soldiers on city streets to combat violent crime allegedly committed by undocumented immigrants.

## INTELLIGENCE BRIEFS

### Hate groups claim post-election membership surge

Even as they rail against the election of the nation's first black president, white supremacist leaders are claiming that people have flocked to their organizations since Barack Obama won the presidential election.

"The League of the South is reporting a surge in new members within hours of the results from yesterday's elections," proclaimed an e-mail sent by the neo-Confederate group to its supporters on Nov. 5.

Don Black, who runs the leading white supremacist hate site Stormfront.org, boasted in an online post that his website was seeing six times its usual traffic the day after the election.

Billy Roper, chairman of the neo-Nazi group White Revolution, predicted that "more and more white Americans [would be] waking up" and instructed followers to be prepared. "[W]e are on the crest of [the storm's] wave. People will be coming forward, shaking the cobwebs from their numbed minds, and they will need us to lead them."

### Anti-Latino hate crimes continue to rise

Hate crimes targeting Latinos increased again in 2007, capping a 40 percent rise in the four years since 2003, according to FBI statistics released in October.

The shocking murder of an Ecuadorean man by seven Long Island, N.Y., teens in November shone a bright spotlight on such crimes. According to news reports, the teens regularly went "hunting" for Latinos to attack.

As anti-immigrant propaganda has increased on both the margins and in the mainstream of society — where pundits and politicians have routinely vilified undocumented Latino immigrants with a series of defamatory falsehoods — hate violence has risen against perceived "illegal aliens."

At the same time as anti-Latino violence has spiked, the SPLC has reported a major increase in hate groups — from 602 in 2000 to 888 in 2007, a 48 percent jump. This growth has been driven almost entirely by the immigration debate.

**Teen accused of murdering gay classmate had skinhead literature**  
Ventura County, Calif., prosecutors have decided to add

a hate crime enhancement to the premeditated murder charge against 14-year-old Brandon McInerney, who allegedly gunned down gay junior high school classmate Lawrence "Larry" King, 15, earlier this year. The hate crime charge was tacked on after investigators discovered a "trove" of neo-Nazi literature and drawings in McInerney's bedroom.

According to a court document, the materials seized from McInerney's room included white supremacist literature and drawings concerning "a racist skinhead philosophy of the variety espoused by Tom Metzger, David Lane and others."

McInerney is awaiting trial as an adult for the Feb. 12 murder of King, who was shot in the head in a classroom full of students at E.O. Green Junior High School. Witnesses said that King, who had recently revealed that he was gay and started to wear make-up and jewelry, had a verbal confrontation with McInerney regarding King's sexual orientation the day before the killing.

McInerney's public defender said his client had the skinhead items only because he was researching a term paper on Adolf Hitler.

### David Duke hosts shortened EURO conference

The European American Unity and Rights Organization (EURO), a white nationalist hate group founded by notorious ex-Klan leader David Duke, held its annual conference Nov. 8 at the Memphis Plaza Hotel & Suites.

Originally scheduled for three days, the conference was hastily relocated and shortened to one day after the owners of a hotel in Olive Branch, Miss., where the gathering of racists was initially booked, cancelled their contract with Duke, citing safety concerns.

During his keynote address, Duke was rewarded with loud cheers when he promised a bright future for all who share his racial views.

"We are going to have a tremendous movement in this country for our organization and people's rights and destiny and heritage and freedoms," Duke said. "Just the same way you have groups such as the NAACP ... people from the ADL ... we're going to have the biggest organization of any group in the United States for our people."

## TEACHING TOLERANCE

## SPLC's 'Mix It Up' program taking root in America's schools

When the SPLC first proposed Mix It Up at Lunch Day, the program was regarded as a novel approach to a problem that was rarely discussed in the open — the self-segregation of kids in American schools.

"With some schools, the problem of cliques and group segregation among the students is undeniable," said Mix It Up director Samantha Briggs. "In others, they just don't think it's a problem that exists at their schools."

"However, if you let the students tell their own story about the social climate, the reality of in-school divisions is almost sure to surface."

Seven years after the program's launch, more than 8,000 schools across the country participated in Mix It Up at Lunch Day, an annual event that encourages students to spend their lunch hour with someone who isn't in their usual clique. The event never fails to spark conversations about the racial, ethnic and class barriers that divide students — and conversations about how to break down those barriers.

"Mix It Up Day is a fantastic way that the youth of today, adults of tomorrow, can begin to instill this change," said Richard Walsh, a sophomore at Chillicothe High School in Ohio. "It allows students of every diversity and cultural background to have insight

into other people's lives and how they live. This alone will tear down social boundaries that hold back our society."

Across the country, schools are making Mix It Up at Lunch Day their own and adopting it as a new tradition.

Briggs traveled to Westford, Mass., to observe firsthand as a school held its first "mega-Mix." Blanchard Middle School went beyond the "typical" Mix It Up at Lunch Day event, devoting an entire day to activities designed to break down social barriers.

**Students saw need**

On the face of it, Blanchard's student body — which includes white, Asian-American and Latino children — doesn't seem to have a lot of trouble getting along. Yet when Blanchard teachers surveyed the students, they found that almost half felt their fellow students were "too quick to categorize people," and more than a third had felt unwelcome at one point in their time at the school. Roughly eight in 10 said the cafeteria was the place where "cliquishness" was at its worst.

Mix It Up, with its six-year track record of success in schools in all 50 states, offered Blanchard teachers a concrete way to address the problem. With a full day of icebreakers, teamwork-

based games and student-centered workshops, the middle-schoolers took an in-depth look at their own biases.

"It's the beginning of breaking down some of the walls,"

Not every school held an all-day "mega-Mix" like Blanchard, but many schools have taken Mix in their own direction. One California school held a "Unity Day" inspired by Mix It Up.



Students at Franklin Middle School in Green Bay, Wis., were among the thousands across America who participated in Mix It Up at Lunch Day on Nov. 13.

said Blanchard guidance counselor Lisa Searle. "With kids, you can't just say what they can't do ... you have to point them in the direction of what they can do and how they can be a positive leader."

Many others have made Mix It Up at Lunch Day the anchor of an annual "Unity Week" or "Diversity Week."

Mix It Up at Lunch Day never fails to generate headlines in newspapers around the coun-

try. But this year, the program's greatest validation may have come from a story published before the Nov. 13 event. Just days before this year's Mix, *The New York Times* ran a feature article on the research of Elaine and Art Aron of Stony Brook University, who found that even a few hours of close contact with people of other races and ethnic backgrounds can create a significant reduction in biased attitudes. While the Arons' study wasn't inspired by Mix It Up at Lunch Day, it does suggest that the Mix model works.

**Program has year-round impact**

While Mix It Up at Lunch Day has become a November tradition for many schools, the Mix It Up program has a year-round impact in schools. Starter kits for teachers include a planner that contains lesson plans for a year-long anti-bias education program. In January, students "mix it up" during "No Name-Calling Week." In February, in honor of Black History Month, students will analyze the problem-solving strategies of African-American leaders.

"Mix It Up at Lunch Day is a great way to get people talking about our biases and barriers," Briggs said. "But we're realists, and we know that to sustain systemic change, schools need to 'mix it up' throughout the academic year."

## SEEKING JUSTICE

## Thousands of workers to recover lost wages in SPLC forestry case

A federal judge's ruling in early October means that thousands of foreign guestworkers represented by the Southern Poverty Law Center will recover wages owed to them by one of the nation's largest forestry contractors.

U.S. District Judge Clarence Cooper found that SPLC lawyers can seek unreimbursed expenses incurred by guestworkers employed by Eller and Sons Trees Inc. of Franklin, Ga. The summary judgment also found that actual damages sought by these workers can exceed \$500,000. The employer had sought to cap the damages.

Now that SPLC lawyers have won the major legal arguments in the case, they must prove how much money is owed to more than 3,000 workers who came to this country through the federal government's temporary guestworker program.

"This is a great victory for these forestry workers," said Mary Bauer, director of the SPLC's Immigrant Justice Project. "For too long this industry has seen guestworkers as a

disposable workforce to be used, abused and thrown away. This decision is a signal that those days are coming to an end."

**Findings provide future protection**

The ruling contains several key legal findings that can be used in the future to protect guestworkers from abuse, including a finding that held the president of the company, Jerry Eller, personally liable — a finding that can prevent companies from simply declaring bankruptcy to avoid a judgment.

Lured from Mexico and Guatemala, the guestworkers planted pine trees in the Southeast, the nation's largest timber-producing region. Eller and Sons Trees has been described as the largest forestry contractor in America.

The class action lawsuit — *Escolastico de Leon-Granados et al. v. Eller and Sons Trees, Inc.* — alleges violations of minimum wage and overtime protections, as well as other violations of the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection

Act. It was under this act that the judge found the actual damages sought by the workers could exceed \$500,000.

The court also found that the representations an employer makes to the government on the H-2B visa applications — such as the total hours the employees will work per week — can be enforced by the workers even if they are unaware of what the employer reported to the government. This finding would hold an employer liable for a 40-hour work week promised on its application to the federal government, even if the employer never made such an agreement with his workers.

The judge found that an employer cannot drive a worker's pay below the minimum wage rate by deducting expenses for things that primarily benefit the employer. This is a major issue for guestworkers, because they often find themselves deep in debt from fees charged for recruitment, travel and visa expenses.

*Continued on page 8*

## SPLC introduces 'Dobbsy Award'

Peddling phony propaganda that denigrates an entire group of people may not be an enviable skill, but certain "mainstream" figures have become so accomplished at defaming immigrants, minorities and others that the SPLC has created a tongue-in-cheek award for the worst offenders.

Naturally, it's called the Dobbsy.

The award is named in honor of CNN anchor Lou Dobbs, who has repeatedly spread discredited propaganda about immigrants. After the award was announced in September, readers sent their nominations and one man stood head and shoulders above the rest to claim the inaugural Dobbsy — Neil Cavuto of Fox News.

The host of "Your World with Neil Cavuto" used his Sept. 18 program to blame the subprime mortgage meltdown on poor

minorities who have dared try to own a home.

"I don't remember a clarification call that said, 'Fannie and Freddie are a disaster. Lending to minorities and risky folks is a disaster,'" he said on the program.

By playing Pin-the-Blame-on-the-Minority, Cavuto exemplified what it means to be a Dobbsy winner.

Make your nomination for a Dobbsy at [www.splc.org/blog/dobbsy-awards](http://www.splc.org/blog/dobbsy-awards). Include any links or other supporting evidence debunking the nominee's statements. A nominee will be selected periodically for the award, and at some point, **Hate Watch** readers will be asked to select a Dobbsy of the Year.

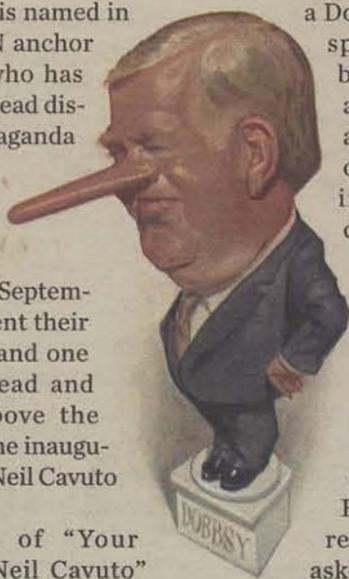


ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL ADEL

## SEEKING JUSTICE

# SPLC sues Tennessee cheese company after workers threatened, held hostage

The SPLC has sued a Tennessee cheese factory after a dozen Latino workers were arrested, jailed and threatened with deportation when they demanded their paychecks.

The Oct. 16 lawsuit charges that Durrett Cheese Sales of Manchester, Tenn., its president and several members of the Coffee County Sheriff's Department conspired to violate the rights of the workers by falsely charging them with trespassing after they stopped working and demanded paychecks that had been delayed several weeks.

"The company used the Coffee County Sheriff's Department and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement [ICE] to retaliate against employees exercising their legal rights to stage a peaceful work stoppage," said Mary Bauer, director of the SPLC's Immigrant Justice Project. "The sheriff's department didn't even bother to protect the rights of these workers."

Filed in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee in Nashville, the lawsuit alleges violation of federal law, including the Fair Labor Standards Act. It also alleges violation of the Tennessee Human Rights Act, infliction of emotional distress and malicious prosecution.

**Company targeted indigenous group**  
Durrett hired indigent Mexican workers to perform various jobs at the factory, including the slicing, packaging and processing of cheese. The company specifically targeted members of the Mixteco indigenous group in the Manchester area to work at the factory. These workers were subjected to a hostile, intimidating and abusive work environment, where they were referred to as "stupid Indians" and "donkeys." Non-Latino workers did not experience the same delay in their paychecks, threats or derogatory remarks.

The company, in fact, repeatedly failed to pay the Latino

workers on time before and after filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in August 2007. Some workers sometimes worked for more than a month without pay. Other times they were underpaid or paid with checks backed with insufficient funds. Durrett also repeatedly changed their pay dates. One supervisor threatened that if the workers quit they would not receive any of their back pay.

On Oct. 22, 2007, the workers refused to leave the company break room and return to work until they received their back pay. When a supervisor fired them and told them to leave, they refused.

#### Company called sheriff

The sheriff's department was called and the workers were arrested even though the police were informed that the workers were involved in a pay dispute. The workers were jailed for trespassing — a charge dropped

*Continued on page 8*



Tyler Edmonds was 13 when he was sentenced to life in prison.

## SEEKING JUSTICE

## Youth's acquittal shines light on children tried as adults

The acquittal of a Mississippi teen in a high-profile murder case could end the state's practice of trying young children as adults and locking them up with grown men and women — changes championed by the SPLC's Mississippi Youth Justice Project (MYJP).

Tyler Edmonds, 17, was found innocent of a 2003 murder during his retrial in November. Edmonds was only 13 when he was sentenced to life in prison for the shooting death of his brother-in-law. He appealed and won a second trial, during which his defense said he was coerced into making a false confession in 2003.

After the acquittal, some Mississippi legislators recognized the need to reform a justice system that brutalizes children while providing few opportunities for rehabilitation.

"We must seize this moment to prevent other children from being imprisoned for life by an unfair justice system," said Mississippi Rep. George Flaggs.

He said Mississippi law must be changed to allow juveniles convicted of adult crimes to be eligible for parole. Currently, children as young as 13 who are charged with serious crimes, such as murder, sale of drugs and armed robbery, are tried as adults. Convictions can carry a life sentence without hope of parole.

#### System destroys lives

"Tyler Edmonds' case is a classic example of how Mississippi's justice system destroys young lives," said MYJP director Bear Atwood. "We're working on a campaign to usher in real reform that puts young lives back on track."

MYJP has already played a key role in the passage of

legislation to reform the state's juvenile justice system, including the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2005, the Mississippi Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Act of 2006 and the appropriation of more than \$7 million in state funding for alternatives to incarceration.

During Edmonds' appeal, MYJP, with the Mississippi Psychological Association and the Mississippi Families as Allies for Children's Mental Health, filed a "friend of the court" brief on behalf of Edmonds. The brief asked the court to recognize that Edmonds deserved the legal protections afforded to minors. It also asked for the reversal of his murder conviction.

Edmonds wrote and thanked MYJP after receiving a copy of the brief. "You did an excellent job, and I was very proud to know you all did that for me and all children in our judicial system."

#### Lawmakers seek reform

Some lawmakers said they expect to see reform legislation introduced in 2009.

They noted that taxpayers benefit and communities are safer when juveniles have access to rehabilitation. Research has shown that youths who stay in the juvenile justice system, as opposed to being tried in the adult system, are less likely to commit crime and more likely to become productive citizens.

"It's unconscionable that our state goes out of its way to prevent the rehabilitation of our children," said state Sen. Willie Simmons. "Yet Mississippi has no problem with making a 13-year-old juvenile share a jail cell with 30-year-old man. What does that say about us?"

## TEACHING TOLERANCE

## SPLC grant addresses textbook bias

If slavery is America's original sin, then why do the words "racism" and "discrimination" never appear in some of the country's most widely used history textbooks?

Wisconsin elementary teacher Bob Peterson asked that question earlier this year when his school district began looking to the nation's four biggest textbook publishers to find a new social studies text for Milwaukee schools.

"Publishers often market their textbooks as 'multicultural' or 'diverse,' but not a single one of the 5th-grade textbooks under consideration even contained the word 'racism,'" said Peterson, who teaches at La Escuela Fratney, a dual-language public school in Milwaukee. "There's a silence on race, labor issues and imperialism that is very noticeable."

With a \$5,000 grant from the SPLC's Teaching Tolerance project, Peterson set out to provide an alternative to the story being told by America's history texts. Multimillion-dollar textbook companies are taking notice.

Peterson assembled his own team of textbook reviewers, drawn from communities that were left out of or underserved by most major American text-

books. Dubbed the Social Studies Task Force, the group included representatives from the NAACP, the American Jewish Committee and labor unions, among others.

#### Major omissions found in texts

The group found major omissions in all the textbooks under consideration. The books vaguely referred to "mistreatment" of Native Americans, with one prompting students to ponder what "some American Indians learned after they moved to Spanish missions." Mention of strikes or other worker movements was almost nonexistent. And leaders of color — from Frederick



Bob Peterson

Douglass to César Chávez — made cameo appearances at best.

How did this happen? A handful of publishers produce most K-12 textbooks, Peterson notes, and those publishers market their books to large states such as Texas and California. Political pressure groups also focus their efforts on the "big states," and publishers take care to avoid un-

comfortable subjects for fear of losing big contracts.

Peterson and the task force are using the Teaching Tolerance grant to set up a website (<http://ssr.texodev.com>) where teachers can go to post their own lesson plans and source material designed to fill in the gaps in the major textbooks. The project has brought Peterson to the attention of the nation's major textbook publishers — some of whom are now talking about producing supplements to cover issues that are left out of their history books.

The school board is also listening. It has put Milwaukee's purchase of a new social studies textbook on hold until so it can negotiate with the Social Studies Task Force and find the best way to proceed.

"Teaching our children about race and social justice is one of the most important things we can do," Peterson said. "We can't just leave this responsibility in the hands of a corporation. We need to make sure every voice is heard."

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### SPLC donor visits

Longtime SPLC supporter Brenda Prothro (right) poses with SPLC founder Morris Dees during her November 17 visit in Montgomery. With her is friend Carol Ferguson. Both live in the Dallas area.

# Partner extends support by naming SPLC in will

Bill Hawley remembers being in his home and hearing his 2 1/2-year-old daughter singing "We Shall Overcome" one day during the 1960s.

She had learned the civil rights anthem from her mother, Carolyn Hawley.

It was just another example of Carolyn's dedication to social justice influencing others.

"She's always been interested in civil rights issues," Hawley said of his wife. "She was committed to the causes of the Southern Poverty Law Center."

An SPLC supporter since 2000, she was one of its Partners for the Future. Partners are special donors who include the SPLC in their wills or estate plans, thereby extending their support for the SPLC's work beyond their lifetimes.

She died on July 9 at the age of 69.

An elementary and pre-school teacher as well as an educational researcher, she dedicated her life to teaching and exploring how technology could be used to teach students — including students with learning disabilities. During the mid-1980s she developed interactive learning materials that used video and text to teach students and inform educational leaders.

"This was pre-Internet, before the popular use of technology we take for granted today," said Hawley, professor emeritus of education policy and leadership at the University of

Maryland and an educational advisor to the SPLC's Teaching Tolerance program.

She received her undergraduate degree with honors from the University of California, Berkeley in 1960 and earned a master's degree in information science from Vanderbilt University's Peabody College. She taught children at schools in Maryland and North Carolina.



Carolyn Hawley

"Carolyn devoted her life to the belief that education has the power to create a better and more tolerant world," said SPLC President Richard Cohen, a friend of the Hawleys. "She was a remarkable person guided by an unwavering

commitment to social justice." Carolyn's dedication to civil rights was evident throughout her life. Her husband recalled a trip through the South in 1960 where the couple resolved that they would not eat at segregated restaurants. It was a decision that left them with few options for a meal on the road.

"We basically picnicked our way through the South," he said.

After her retirement in the mid-1990s, she volunteered for a number of causes. She served on the board of directors for Bodywise in Washington, D.C. The group focuses on the health of people over the age of 50 throughout the city.

She also worked with senior citizen groups and volunteered at her church, St. Thomas Apostle, where she served on the parish council.

## Scroll of Remembrance

The Southern Poverty Law Center pays tribute to the memory of deceased supporters who included the Center in their wills or other planned gifts. The Center gratefully acknowledges their bequests, received from November 1, 2007, through November 30, 2008.

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For information about the many planned giving opportunities available at the Center — with no obligation — please contact our planned giving department by calling toll-free 1-888-414-7752 or by mailing the form below. You can also visit us online at [www.SPLCenter.org/donate](http://www.SPLCenter.org/donate) or e-mail us at [plannedgiving@splcenter.org](mailto:plannedgiving@splcenter.org).

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Civil Rights Memorial

## VICTORY IN IKA TRIAL PROMPTS OUTPOURING OF SUPPORT

The SPLC's success in obtaining a substantial verdict in its case against the Imperial Klans of America prompted hundreds of supporters to write congratulatory notes. Below is a sampling of their messages, expressing gratitude for the SPLC's work.

You have done it again. What a wonderful victory for human rights. I remember your work here in the Pacific Northwest, when you shut down the Aryan Nations in Hayden Lake, Idaho. You folks at the SPLC are truly American heroes. May you continue to have success after success. I send donations to the Center when I can. Thanks to you for all you do.

**R. K. T.**  
Seattle, Washington

I have been a member of SPLC for a number of years and have never felt more proud of this association than when I read of SPLC's victory in Kentucky at the trial against the IKA and Ron Edwards. The lawsuit brought on behalf of Mr. Gruver was a prime example of the critically important work SPLC has done over many, many years. Mr. Dees and SPLC's legal team deserve all the support we can give them for risking their lives on behalf of victims of hate violence across this great country.

**C. C. B.**  
Hudson, Wisconsin

Another well-earned victory. Though you seem extremely modest about your work, I'm not. You are up there with the best of the best that keeps my faith in America and Americans. Enjoy the holidays, and I will enjoy Thanksgiving by giving you thanks and praise.

**J. G.**  
Clovis, California

I thank Morris Dees and the SPLC staff for a job well done. Please keep up the great work and know that your efforts are appreciated by everyday people like myself. Because of people and organizations like you, I feel that I can raise my children to love, accept, help and understand human beings, no matter what. Thanks again.

**A. B.**  
Dothan, Alabama

Thank you support staff and legal team of the SPLC for a great victory against the IKA, for upholding the Constitution, for standing strong for human rights and human decency. Prospects for change lie with the new generation, for whom there is much hope. Your tolerance education programs are one of the very valuable pieces of the big picture. From the Michael Donald case to your prison litigation, the dedicated staff of the SPLC have stood strong in the fight for ending hatred and bigotry — which

threatens the very core of the United States. If the criminal justice system can't deal with thugs and hatemongers like Ron Edwards and his ilk, then take their money in civil court! Brilliant!

I plan on supporting the essential and very important work that lies ahead for the SPLC for many years to come. I will continue my personal journey to change not only my own belief system but to help others change through education and awareness.

Again, thank you. Change. It's happening, as witnessed by the last presidential election!

**B. P.**  
Chanhassen, Minnesota

How wonderful, how gratifying, how important that SPLC's Morris Dees and Richard Cohen got the right and just verdict for the victim of that heinous assault. Kudos to you for your fortitude, courage and skill. I am encouraged. One can never count on a slam dunk, even in the presence of such persuasive evidence. I just wish there was a way to delete that young man's memories. Maybe your advocacy and fight for him have overwritten some of the pain and fear. I hope so. Thanks.

**N. D. L.**  
West Hartford, Connecticut

May God bless you all for the work you do in burying hatred in America and demolishing the hate groups and hatemongers among us. Morris Dees is indeed a brave man, as are the rest of the great people in your organization. America stands a little taller because of all you do. Thank you, and continued success.

**R. M.**  
Los Angeles, California

Because our funds are so limited, we choose what organizations we support on the basis of the work they do and how effective they are. You are at the top of our very short list. Much love.

**D. & L. R.**  
Darwin, California

Congratulations on the wonderful work in Kentucky. My husband and I will be sending in a contribution to aid in the appeals process to ensure Jordan and other victims of hate crimes see the compensation they have been awarded.

So many people think that a guilty verdict with an award handed down by a jury means a big win for a plaintiff in a legal

matter when it couldn't be farther from the truth. Collecting on the award is probably the more arduous task.

There should be no doubt in the Klans' collective mind that SPLC will make good on its promise to collect the monies owed the victim of this and other hate crimes, as well as to put them out of the hate business.

**J. L. M.**  
Downers Grove, Illinois

I congratulate you on winning the case concerning Jordan Gruver. The jury made clear that people practicing old warmed-over race hate ideas are fast coming to a halt! The racists are being held accountable! Your win represents a great day for us all. Please continue your work and know that there are many of us out here who support your work.

**J. M.**  
Tampa, Florida

A heartfelt congratulations and thanks for another job well done: the successful verdict against IKA in the Gruver assault case. Long before we elected Obama, you and the work you do were one of the few things that made me proud to be an American. Keep up the good work, as I know you'll do.

**J. P. K.**  
San Jose, California

Congratulations on your outstanding work in forcing the Klan to take responsibility for its members' repulsive actions. Even though I can afford only a small donation each year, I am proud to think I am helping even a little bit. With the election of President-elect Obama, there is bound to be a backlash among the groups that preach bigotry and hate. I am glad you are on the job, shining light in the dark places where they tend to hide. Keep up the great work!

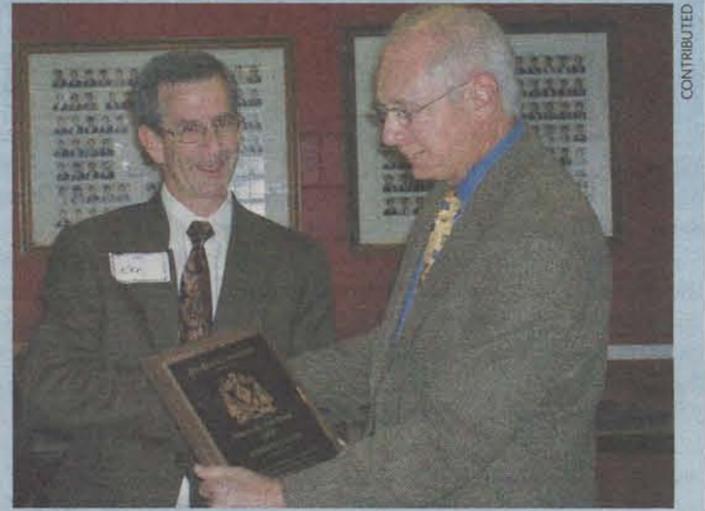
**J. L. S.**  
Riverside, California

Congratulations on the verdict for Jordan! Your hard work and diligence continues to elevate all of us and is deeply appreciated. Thank you for affirming... Yes We Can!

**C. P. R.**  
Dexter, Maine

Bravo! It gives me great joy to see my small donations doing such a big job.

**D. H. G.**  
Shallotte, North Carolina



### SPLC receives prestigious award

SPLC founder Joe Levin (right) accepts on behalf of SPLC the prestigious Gottheil Award on Nov. 1 at a ceremony at the University of Alabama. Presenting the award, which is given periodically by the fraternity Zeta Beta Tau, is Ken Grodner, a member of the ZBT Supreme Council who serves as chapter advisor for ZBT at the university. The ZBT Man of the Year award was also presented to Levin at the event.

## FBI confirms SPLC findings

*Continued from page 3*

and, "Love to watch things blow up (Hachies House)."

Also, the SPLC has alerted military authorities to a member of a neo-Nazi online forum who claimed in a June 3 post that he had just enlisted in the U.S. Army. "Sieg Heil, I will do us proud," the skinhead wrote, using the pseudonym "Sobibor's SS," a reference to the Sobibor Nazi death camp in Poland during World War II. About a month after he announced his enlistment, Sobibor's

SS, who gave his hometown as Plantersville, Ala., bragged that he had specifically requested and been assigned to MOS, or Military Occupational Specialty, 98D.

MOS98D soldiers are specially trained in the construction, use and disarming of improvised explosive devices. "I have my own reasons for wanting this training but in fear of the government tracing me and me losing [sic] my clearance I can't share them here," Sobibor's SS informed his fellow neo-Nazis.

## Workers to recover lost wages

*Continued from page 4*

Once in debt, guestworkers have little recourse if they are abused or underpaid.

The court also found that the prevailing wage rate for the area — rather than the lower minimum wage rate — is protected from such deductions under this principle. This is the first time such a decision has been reached in a contested case.

The judge in this case found that the costs of passports, visas and other travel costs not only drove the workers' pay below the protected rate level but resulted in workers having "negative incomes" in their first week

of work. The judge awarded \$53,890 to the case's named and opt-in plaintiffs for expenses that were not reimbursed during their first work week, citing the Fair Labor Standards Act. Damages for the rest of the class, which is expected to reach into the millions of dollars, have yet to be determined.

"This case is another important step in reforming the abusive practices that are rampant in the forestry industry," Bauer said. "The message is becoming increasingly clear: Guestworkers have rights." The Legal Aid Justice Center of Virginia is serving as co-counsel in the case.

## Workers threatened, held hostage

*Continued from page 5*

by the district attorney the next day. Yet the workers remained in the county jail because their employer suggested they were undocumented immigrants and conspired with law enforcement to have the workers detained by immigration officials.

ICE took the workers to a detention center in Nashville, where they were interrogated. Many of the workers are mothers of young children, some of whom are disabled or very ill. The women feared they would be deported

without saying goodbye to them and arranging for their care. An SPLC attorney eventually secured their release.

"This case is a shameful reminder there are employers who believe the color of their workers' skin or their home country determines if they will be paid for an honest day's work or even treated with basic human dignity," Bauer said. "Ignoring this abuse hurts all workers. And it makes us complicit in creating a class of worker devoid of any rights."



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## THE STORY

# Court verdict deals fatal blow to IKA

BY SONIA SCHERR

BRANDENBURG, Ky. — On a hot July night in 2006, four Klan officials prowled the brightly lit midway of the Meade County Fair in northwest Kentucky. Their mission: to recruit new members for the Imperial Klans of America (IKA), one of the largest Klan groups in America.

Around midnight, after an evening spent handing out business cards with IKA contact information to white fairgoers, they spotted a different sort of prey. Sixteen-year-old Jordan Gruver was about to buy a drink at a concession stand when the Klansmen began spewing racial epithets, including "spic." They poured whiskey in his face and spat on him. Then a Klansman struck a blow to his jaw that knocked the small teenager to the ground. At least two IKA members kicked him with steel-toed boots as he curled into a fetal position and tried to protect his head with his arms.

"As they were kicking me, I prayed to myself," Gruver testified in court. "I said, 'God, just let me make it home. Please let me make it home.'"



Morris Dees questions witnesses during the trial.

In the end, Gruver did more than survive an attack that left him with permanent physical and mental injuries. As the plaintiff in the Southern Poverty Law Center's civil suit against then-IKA leader Ron Edwards, Gruver helped strike a fatal blow to the Klan group when a jury awarded him just over \$2.5 million in damages. The 12-member panel deliberated for more than six hours on Nov. 14 before finding that Edwards had failed to properly supervise the Klansmen who attacked the teenager and had encouraged their violence.

Their decision is expected to shut down the IKA, which at its peak had 16 chapters in eight

states. "We intend to collect every dime we can on the judgment and do everything within our power to put the Imperial Klans out of business," said SPLC President Richard Cohen after the verdict announcement.

In seeking a verdict large enough to demolish the IKA, the SPLC followed a legal strategy it has used successfully against many other hate groups, including the Klan organization responsible for the 1963 Birmingham church bombing that killed four girls. But the IKA case is also unique in that part of its aim was to draw attention to the growing problem of hate and violence aimed at Latinos.

### Leader accountable for members' actions

At its heart, the case was about whether Edwards — as the IKA leader, or "Imperial Wizard" — should be held accountable for the assault on Gruver, even though he was not directly involved. The SPLC filed suit against Edwards in July 2007, alleging that members of his Klan group attacked Gruver because they thought he was an illegal immigrant. In fact, Gruver was born

in Bismarck, N.D., the son of a white woman from Kentucky and a man of Panamanian-Indian descent. Also named as a defendant in the lawsuit was Jarred Hensley, who served two years in state prison after pleading guilty in criminal court to assaulting Gruver. Before trial, the SPLC reached a confidential settlement with two other Klansmen.

The three-day trial began on Nov. 12 in the Meade County Courthouse's single courtroom, just a mile from the fairgrounds where Gruver was attacked. The event brought several major media outlets to this rural county seat of just over 2,000 people some 40 miles southwest of Louisville.

### Tatoos reflect Edwards' hate

As the trial opened, Edwards, 49, a beefy man with a goatee, sported several tattoos on his shaven head, including "Aryan Justice," "Death to ZOG" [Zionist-occupied government] and "F... S.P.L.C." Hensley, 26, tall



Imperial Wizard Ron Edwards (center) poses with security personnel near the entrance to the Imperial Klans of America headquarters in Dawson Springs, Ky.

and with close-cropped brown hair, also had numerous tattoos, including the word "violence" on his knuckles, "murder" below his neck, and a swastika on his arm. Edwards often shook his head as the SPLC made its case, while Hensley tapped his foot rapidly beneath the defense table.

During opening arguments, Edwards asserted that he bore no responsibility for his Klansmen's actions because he never sent them to the fair on a recruiting mission. "I did not even know they were there," he said.

But the SPLC argued that Edwards should be held liable because he enlisted men with violent histories and then sent them out to recruit new members — all in an effort to line his pockets with membership dues. Rather than try to control his recruiters by prescribing rules to govern their conduct, Edwards added fuel to the fire by preaching hatred and encouraging violence. "They were bombarded by images of hate," said SPLC founder Morris Dees, who led the trial team.

Dees later showed photos of Nordic Fest, an annual weekend of music and speeches at Edwards' 15-acre compound in nearby Dawson Springs, Ky. Speakers called for the deaths of Latinos ("Let's send the Mexicans back in boxes...") and Jews ("A filthy Jew deserves nothing but death..."). A hate rock band led by Ron Edwards' son, Steven, sang "No Mercy," including a chorus calling for "no mercy" for "spics," "niggers," "Jews," "traitors" and "faggots." Edwards' son heads the Supreme White Alliance,

### "They were bombarded by images of hate"

—Morris Dees, addressing the court

a racist skinhead group whose second-in-command is Hensley of Cincinnati. A former member was one of two men charged in a plot to assassinate President-elect Barack Obama.

### IKA members attend trial

Several SWA members attended the trial, where security was extremely tight. State troopers stood guard outside the court-

house, concrete barricades prevented vehicles from getting close to the entrances, and snipers with binoculars kept watch from the courthouse roof. The SPLC provided its own round-the-clock security for staff members who took part in the trial.

While no incidents occurred, the threat was real. The trial attracted about a dozen supporters of Edwards and Hensley, who watched the proceedings from the courtroom's wooden benches and congregated outside the courthouse. Some of them wore skinhead-style attire, including combat boots, red braces (suspenders) and black flight jackets with white supremacist em-

blems. Others were clad in full camouflage outfits that included black berets and an IKA patch on the shoulder. Not all IKA supporters were easily recognizable: A gray-haired, bespectacled woman wearing a baseball cap, jeans and orange vest snapped photos of SPLC officials and the Gruver family. When Kentucky state troopers asked her to move

*Continued on page 2*



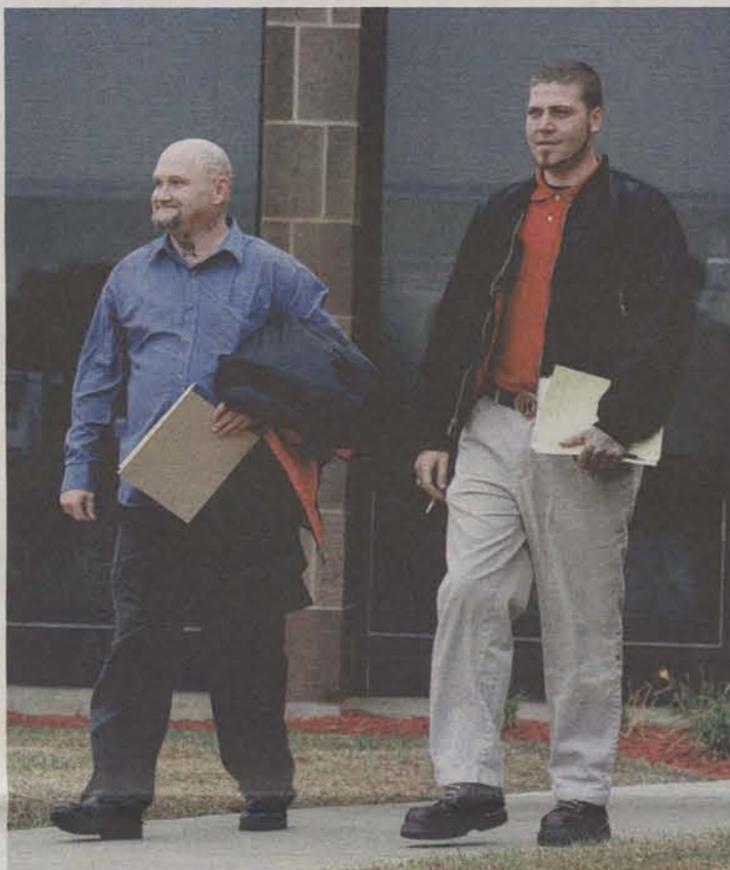
The word "violence" is tattooed on defendant Jarred Hensley's fingers.

AP PHOTO/THE MESSENGER, JIM PEARSON

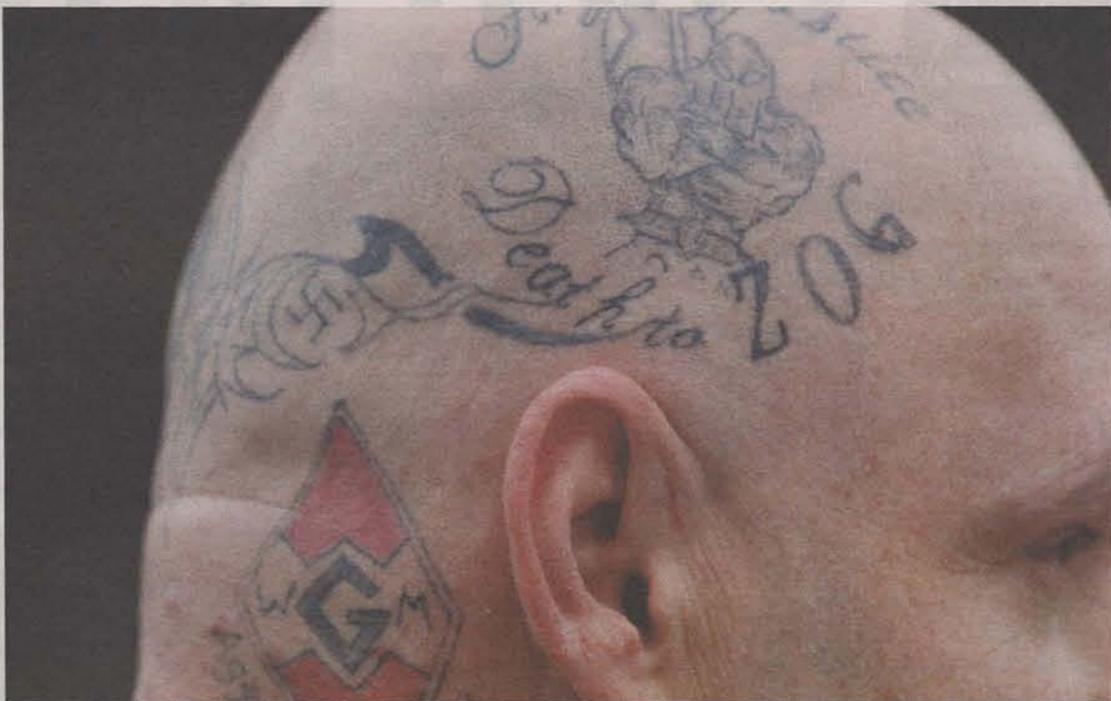
SPECIAL



TOM BRINKMAN



BILL LUSTER/LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL



BILL LUSTER/LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL



TOM BRINKMAN



SPECIAL



CONTRIBUTED

to a protest area, she unleashed a vicious tirade against Dees and the SPLC.

Most of the drama occurred inside the courtroom, however, as jurors heard from former Klansmen, the defendants, the victim and even a would-be assassin. After turning his chair to face the jury box, Kale Kelly, a former white supremacist, testified that Edwards instructed him to kill SPLC founder Morris Dees. "Mr. Edwards is a very dangerous man," said Kelly, once a trusted member of Edwards' inner circle. "He promotes violence and hatred [toward] anybody who he feels threatens him: minorities, Jews, blacks. I've lived with him. I know this."

**Edwards asked Kelly to kill Dees**

Kelly testified that he met privately with Edwards in the guard shack outside Edwards' former home in tiny Powderly, Ky. Edwards bestowed on him the rank of lieutenant in a secret cell whose mission was to kill and injure blacks, Jews, people of mixed race and anyone who opposed Edwards. The Klan leader showed Kelly a photograph of several people in camouflage, one of them with a circle drawn around his head. "He told me to take care of this individual ... by any means, to kill him," Kelly testified.

Then Edwards showed Kelly a slip of paper with a name on

it: "Morris Dees." Edwards wanted Dees dead because of the SPLC's lawsuit against the Aryan Nations, an Idaho-based neo-Nazi group. After instructing Kelly to assassinate Dees, Edwards burned the paper in a candle flame.

To carry out the plot, Kelly intended to track Dees to Idaho, while Edwards was to supply the weapon. But in April 1999, within days of his planned departure, the plot was thwarted by an FBI informant who had



Richard Cohen

infiltrated the Aryan Nations. Kelly served time in federal prison on weapons charges; Edwards was never charged.

Kelly, now married and employed, broke down on the witness stand as he told the jury that he was a changed man. His testimony cast doubt on a key component of Edwards' defense: that he always told his Klansmen to obey the law. It also contra-

dicted Edwards' earlier assertion that he had never told Kelly to kill anyone. As Kelly finished describing the plot against Dees, Edwards and Hensley looked at each other and snickered.

Not only did Edwards promote violence, he also encouraged his Klansmen to recruit aggressively in order to bring in membership fees and gifts that tended to find their way into his own pocket, according to two former IKA members.

When the four Klansmen drove to the Meade County Fair in 2006, they were following Edwards' mandate to find new members, said Matthew Roberts, former IKA "Acting Exalted Cyclops." They believed

**"We intend to collect every dime we can on the judgment and do everything within our power to put the Imperial Klans out of business."**

—SPLC President Richard Cohen, following the verdict announcement

the Meade County Fair would be fertile recruiting turf because, he said, Brandenburg "is a red-neck town."

Yet Edwards wasn't selective about whom he invited to join his group. "I don't think I've ever been in a courtroom for any trial in my life that I've seen so many criminals get on the witness stand," Dees said of the former Klansmen. "I mean, they were proud to be criminals."

During the final day of testimony, jurors heard how the Klansmen's assault had altered Gruver's life forever. Two medical doctors described Gruver's injuries, which included a broken jaw, broken teeth and permanent nerve damage. He has weakness and impaired fine motor control in his left hand that will likely be permanent. Both doctors said the assault caused him to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a mental condition that can result from traumatic events. Symptoms of his PTSD include nightmares, flashbacks, difficulty sleeping and hyper-vigilance. Although he was prescribed an anti-depressant, Gruver has become so withdrawn that he can-

not attend school or work. His mother, Cindy Gruver, testified that one year after the assault, he attempted suicide.

**Gruver offers powerful testimony**

But the most powerful testimony came from Gruver himself. Before the attack he was a high school athlete who loved to play piano, an instrument he learned from his paternal grandfather. He wrote and performed gospel

music and attended church. Two years after the assault, he stays home most days unless he has a doctor's appointment. He sets his alarm clock to wake himself up every two hours to avoid the nightmares that plague him if he sleeps longer. And he has stopped composing music or going to church. "I haven't lost touch with God," he said, "but I've lost faith."

After the SPLC rested its case and the defense declined to present testimony, the jury grappled into the night with the question of Edwards' culpability. Shortly after 9:30 p.m., as Gruver's parents, older brother and friends looked on, it awarded just over \$1.5 million in compensatory damages and \$1 million in punitive damages to Gruver.

"I hope it sends a message to every single one of them that what they do is wrong," Gruver said afterward.

Based on the jury's apportionment of responsibility for the attack on Gruver, Edwards will be responsible for 20 percent of the compensatory award as well as the entire punitive award. Punitive damages are intended to punish a defendant and serve as a deterrent to future misconduct.

"I understand the Klan's thinking, but I cannot tolerate their hatred and violence," one juror later said. "It's just too evil."

*Sonia Scherr is a writer for the Intelligence Report.*



AP PHOTO/BRIAN BOHANNON

**JORDAN GRUVER**

Jordan Gruver, now 19, is a U.S. citizen whose mother is a white woman from Kentucky and whose father is a Kuna Indian from Panama. In July 2006, when he was 16, he was enjoying the Meade County Fair in Brandenburg, Ky., when he was attacked by four Klansmen. At the time, he stood 5-foot-3 and weighed just 150 pounds. The beating left him with cracked ribs and a broken jaw and forearm. He suffers from post-traumatic stress syndrome — including nightmares and flashbacks — and damage to his hand that is likely permanent.

**His testimony**

Gruver told the jury that he was about to buy a drink from a concession stand when the Klansmen called him a “spic,” spat at him and threw whiskey in his face. Then Klansman Jarred Hensley struck a blow to his jaw that knocked him off his feet. Gruver showed the jury how he curled up in a fetal position and tried to protect his head with his arms. While he lay on the ground, Klansmen kicked him repeatedly with steel-toed boots.

**“As they were kicking me, I prayed to myself. I said, ‘God, just let me make it home. Please let me make it home.’”**



AP PHOTO/BRIAN BOHANNON

**RON EDWARDS**

Ron Edwards, 49, was the founder and “Imperial Wizard” of the Imperial Klans of America, a network of Klan groups that calls for the death of racial and ethnic minorities, homosexuals and “race traitors.” It is one of the nation’s largest Klan groups. As the highest-ranking officer, Edwards directed and led the group’s activities, including Nordic Fest, an annual gathering of extremists and their children at the IKA’s 15-acre compound in Dawson Springs, Ky.

**His testimony**

Edwards argued that he didn’t send the four Klansmen to the fair that night or even know they went there. He claimed he does not advocate violence and should not be held responsible for the attack. But witnesses testified the Klan leader was a man who promoted violence against his enemies. Edwards was contradicted by his own words when a video clip from a recent National Geographic Channel documentary about the Klan was played for the jury.

**“We can be very violent and we can be very deceptive, and we will do whatever we have to do to survive.”**



TOM BRINKMAN

**JARRED HENSLEY**

Jarred Hensley, 26, was the “Grand Titan” of the Ohio IKA, the second highest-ranking officer in the state. Hensley, who had been in prison for violent crimes, and three other IKA members attended the Meade County Fair to recruit new members. At the trial, Hensley sported numerous tattoos, including the word “violence” on his knuckles, “murder” below his neck and a swastika on his arm. He pleaded guilty to a felony charge in connection with the attack and served time in state prison.

**His testimony**

Hensley made no apologies for his views on race but denied attacking Gruver. He argued that he pleaded guilty in criminal court only because he feared a jury would convict him for his beliefs. Hensley acknowledged that although he’s no longer an IKA member, he is the second-highest leader of the Supreme White Alliance, a neo-Nazi skinhead group led by Edwards’ son.

**“I’m most likely your worst nightmare and I get my jollies from seeing everyone suffer.”**



SPECIAL

**ANDREW WATKINS**

Andrew Watkins was a national officer with the IKA, an “Imperial Gothi.” He also served as webmaster for the IKA website. Watkins was drafted for the recruiting mission at the fair and joined the attack on Gruver. At 6-foot-5 and 330 pounds, he was literally twice Gruver’s size. He pleaded guilty to the attack and served prison time. He reached a pre-trial settlement in the SPLC case.

**His testimony**

Watkins claimed he didn’t attack Gruver but that he pleaded guilty in criminal court due to his fear of being convicted for his racial beliefs. He said he was warned by Cowles not to talk to police after he was arrested for the attack at the fair.

**“(Cowles) wrote me a letter and basically what he said was, remember the five words, which is: ‘I have nothing to say.’”**



Kelly not pictured for his protection

**KALE KELLY**

A former white supremacist and member of Edwards’ inner circle, Kale Kelly was tapped by the Klan leader to assassinate SPLC founder Morris Dees in 1999. Edwards was to supply the weapon. The plot was foiled with the help of an FBI informant, but Edwards was never charged.

**His testimony**

Kelly contradicted Edwards’ courtroom claims that he doesn’t advocate violence. He described Edwards as a man who promotes violence against his enemies and looked to him to carry out this violence. Kelly, who is now married and employed, broke down on the witness stand as he told the jury he was a changed man.

**“Mr. Edwards is a very dangerous man... He promotes violence and hatred [toward] anybody who he feels threatens him: minorities, Jews, blacks. I’ve lived with him. I know this.”**



SPECIAL

**JOSHUA COWLES**

As the head of the IKA’s national recruitment effort, Joshua Cowles saw the Meade County Fair as an opportunity to enlist new members. He picked several IKA officials to join him at the fair and pass out business cards and flyers advertising a “white-only” IKA function. He reached a pre-trial settlement in the case.

**His testimony**

Cowles said that Edwards paid personal bills with money raised for Hensley’s legal defense in the criminal case. He described Edwards as a man with an “absolute obsession with money and greed” who used his position to benefit himself.

**“The IKA is about one man and one man only — and that’s Ron Edwards. It’s about his greed, his want to have money, his desire to get by without working, his desire to trick people into giving him money to support him.”**



SPECIAL

**MATTHEW ROBERTS**

Matthew Roberts held the position of “Acting Exalted Cyclops” in the IKA at the time of the attack. During his testimony, Roberts said Klan members considered the Meade County Fair a good recruiting site because Brandenburg “is a redneck town.” He was not named in the SPLC suit.

**His testimony**

Roberts said the Klansmen were following Edwards’ mandate to find new members when they drove to the fair. He contradicted Edwards’ testimony that he had never seen the IKA business cards handed out at the fair by confirming the cards were kept at the Klan leader’s compound. He also described Edwards as a greedy man who used the Klan as a source of income and a means to intimidate enemies.

**“I think Ron’s a coward. Some of the things he did there... I’m not a moral or just person, but some of the things that I’ve seen done even makes me sick.”**

## Fighting hate in the courtroom

Over three decades, the SPLC has toppled some of the nation's largest white supremacist organizations by helping victims of racist violence sue for monetary damages. While the groups usually don't have much money, the judgments won by the SPLC have effectively put them out of business. These courtroom victories were funded entirely by SPLC supporters; the SPLC accepts no legal fees from its clients.

### The Decatur case: A 10-year legal battle

**1980** In 1979, more than 100 members of the Invisible Empire Klan group — armed with bats, ax handles and guns — clashed with a group of peaceful civil rights marchers in Decatur, Ala. The FBI investigated the incident but could not find enough evidence of a conspiracy to charge the Klansmen involved. Undeterred, the SPLC filed a civil suit against the Invisible Empire and numerous Klansmen. During the course of discovery, SPLC investigators uncovered evidence that persuaded the FBI to reopen its case. Nine Klansmen were eventually convicted of criminal charges. In 1990, the SPLC's civil suit was finally resolved through a unique settlement. In addition to requiring Klansmen to pay damages, perform community service and refrain from white supremacist activity, the settlement required them to attend a course on race relations and prejudice.



### Protecting Vietnamese fishermen

**1981** Texas Klansmen in 1981 tried to destroy the fishing business of Vietnamese immigrants by burning their boats and threatening their lives. Armed Klansmen cruised Galveston Bay and trained in guerrilla tactics at secret paramilitary camps. The SPLC intervened and persuaded the Vietnamese fishermen to stand up for their rights. SPLC attorneys filed a lawsuit that halted the Knights of the KKK's terror campaign and shut down its paramilitary training bases.



### The Michael Donald lynching case

**1987** Nineteen-year-old Michael Donald was walking to a neighborhood store in 1981 when two members of the United Klans of America abducted him, beat him, cut his throat and hung his body from a tree on a residential street in Mobile, Ala. The two Klansmen who carried out the ritualistic killing were eventually arrested and convicted. Sensing a larger conspiracy and convinced that the Klan itself should be held responsible, SPLC attorneys filed a civil

suit on behalf of Michael Donald's mother. In 1987, the Center won an historic \$7 million verdict against the United Klans and all the Klansmen who had played a part in the lynching. The verdict marked the end of the United Klans, the group that had beaten the Freedom Riders, murdered civil rights worker Viola Liuzzo during the Selma-to-Montgomery march, and blown up Birmingham's 16th Street Baptist Church, killing four young black girls. As a result of the case, the group was forced to turn over its headquarters to Beulah Mae Donald, putting it out of business, and two additional Klansmen were convicted on criminal charges.



### Shutting down the White Patriot Party militia

**1986** In the mid-1980s, the White Patriot Party was the South's most militant Klan group. With more than a 1,000 armed members, the group held well-attended public rallies almost every week. An SPLC investigation revealed that the group was using U.S. military personnel to train Klan recruits and had acquired stolen military weapons for its secret arsenal. SPLC attorneys took the North Carolina-based White Patriot Party to court. A jury found the group and its leaders guilty of operating a paramilitary army and forced them to disband.



### Taking on the White Aryan Resistance

**1990** In 1988, Tom and John Metzger sent their best White Aryan Resistance (WAR) recruiter from California to organize a Portland skinhead gang. After being trained in WAR's methods, the gang killed a randomly chosen Ethiopian student. SPLC attorneys filed a civil suit claiming that the Metzgers and WAR were as responsible for the killing as the Portland skinhead gang. In October 1990, a jury agreed and awarded \$12.5 million in damages to the family of the victim, Mulugeta Seraw.



### The Harold Mansfield case

**1994** On May 17, 1991, Harold Mansfield, a black sailor who served in the Gulf War, was killed by a member of a white supremacist organization called the Church of the Creator. After SPLC investigators documented the group's violent history, the SPLC sued and obtained a \$1 million judgment against the so-called "Church."



### Making the Klan pay

**1998** In the largest judgment ever awarded against a hate group, a South Carolina jury in 1998 ordered the Christian Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, its state leader and four other Klansmen to pay \$37.8 million for their roles in a conspiracy to burn a black church. A judge later reduced the award to \$21.5 million. The SPLC brought the case on behalf of Macedonia Baptist Church, one of several rural black churches burned by arsonists in the mid-1990s. The judgment forced the Klan to give up its headquarters.



### Closing the Aryan Nations compound

**2000** In September 2000, the SPLC won a \$6.3 million jury verdict against the Aryan Nations and its leader, Richard Butler. The judgment forced Butler to give up the 20-acre Aryan Nations compound that had served for decades as the home of a who's who of violent white supremacists. The SPLC sued on behalf of a mother and son who were terrorized by Aryan Nations guards.



### Crushing border vigilantes

**2005** Ranch Rescue, a vigilante "border patrol" that terrorized Latinos trying to enter the U.S., was shattered and one of its leaders sent to prison after a prolonged legal battle by SPLC attorneys and law enforcement officials in Texas and Arizona. SPLC sued on behalf of two Salvadorans assaulted on a Texas ranch, winning substantial settlements in 2005.



### Winning justice for disabled man

**2007** A Texas jury awarded \$9 million in damages in 2007 to Billy Ray Johnson, a mentally disabled black man, in a lawsuit brought by the SPLC after he was taunted, knocked unconscious and dumped along a desolate road by four white men. Johnson was left with permanent brain damage. The SPLC sued after the men responsible received only light jail sentences — 30 days for three of them and 60 days for one. Johnson received much-needed rehabilitation services and now lives in a group home.



# Defeated Klan group struggling after verdict

The court victory against the Imperial Klans of America (IKA) is already having a major impact on the organization.

Eight days after the jury delivered a crippling \$2.5 million verdict, Imperial Wizard Ron Edwards, the chief defendant in the case, resigned from his post. The IKA founder announced on his website that he was stepping down "because I have not had any [time off] in many years."

He also said he needed to devote his energy to appealing the verdict, adding that he had found a Louisville lawyer to represent him on appeal. He

exhorted his followers to send in checks to help pay the lawyer's \$10,000 fee.

"I want all of you to stay strong and never give up!" he wrote on Nov. 22. "It is our right to hold the values and beliefs which we cherish — the SPLC be damned!"

It's unlikely, however, that Edwards will be able to raise much money from his fellow white supremacists — not after damning trial testimony about how he routinely lined his pockets with membership dues and "defense fund" donations.

As part of the SPLC's trial strategy, SPLC chief trial attor-

ney Morris Dees called two former IKA members to the stand to testify about how Edwards used contributions for his own purposes.

#### Edwards pocketed IKA funds

One of them, Joshua Cowles, a former IKA recruiter, described a typical occasion where Edwards paid his own bills with a \$400 donation that the Klan leader had solicited on behalf of an IKA member facing a criminal assault charge.

"The IKA is about one man and one man only — and that's Ron Edwards," Cowles said. "It's about his greed, his want to have

money, his desire to get by without working, his desire to trick people into giving him money to support him."

Former IKA members also started a website — RonEdwardsReport.info — that details a number of accusations against Edwards. "He survives on his ability to con his members and supporters," it says.

Edwards is personally liable for about \$1.3 million of the jury's verdict. He doesn't have the money to pay it, but SPLC lawyers will try to seize the 15-acre compound in Dawson Springs, Ky., that serves as the IKA headquarters and the site

of the annual hate rally called Nordic Fest.

"We intend to collect every dime we can on the judgment and do everything within our power to put the Imperial Klans out of business," said SPLC President Richard Cohen.

#### All funds collected go to Gruver

All money collected from the judgment will go to Jordan Gruver, the teenager who was beaten by Klansmen in 2006. Because the SPLC is supported by its members, the organization does not take any portion of the court awards it obtains for its clients.