

SPLC REPORT

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FIGHTING HATE

Terror from the radical right

SPLC, Homeland Security warned of rising right-wing extremism

When a gunman steeped in white supremacist paranoia shot and killed a security guard at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the SPLC quickly identified the alleged gunman as a man with a decades-long history of racial extremism.

The SPLC's record of tracking extremists made it a near-constant presence in news reports about the shooting — providing much-needed insight for a nation that in recent months has been wracked by a string of extremist attacks.

The June 10 attack gave new credence to a Department of Homeland Security intelligence assessment that warned of a growing threat of terrorism by right-wing extremists. The report, issued in April, mirrored the SPLC's earlier findings that extremists are being reinvigorated by fears of immigration, the election of President Obama and the nation's economic woes.

"The DHS report was a perfectly sober assessment of the current economic and political climate in the country — a climate similar in many ways to that of the 1990s, which gave rise to a deadly militia movement," said Mark Potok, director of the SPLC's Intelligence Project, which monitors hate activity. "Tragically, there are people willing to resort to violence because they believe their country and culture are under attack."

Gunman known to SPLC

As the SPLC documented, the alleged gunman in the Holocaust museum shooting, James von Brunn, is the author of the 1999 book, "Kill the Best Gentiles," a racist and anti-Semitic tome. It argues that whites are seeing "today on the world stage a tragedy of enormous proportions: the calculated destruction of the White Race and the incomparable culture it represents." The book is dedicated to prominent neo-Nazis and racists.

Von Brunn, 88, also ran the website holywesternempire.org, which was listed as a hate site by the SPLC.

The DHS report also warned that "rightwing extremists will attempt to recruit and radicalize

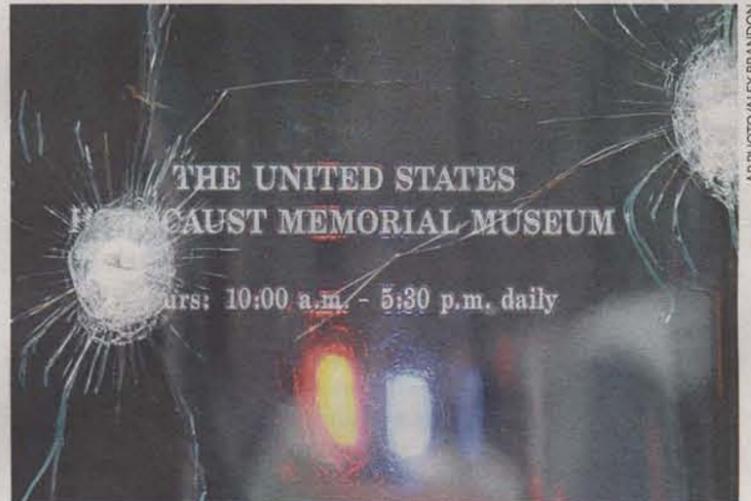
returning veterans in order to exploit their skills and knowledge derived from military training and combat." The SPLC has uncovered significant evidence over the past three years suggesting that current Pentagon policies have failed to keep neo-Nazis and other white supremacists from joining and serving in the armed forces.

The DHS warning about right-wing extremism ignited a firestorm of criticism by pundits, politicians and other commentators on the right, who characterized the DHS report as an attack on conservatives and veterans — an absurd contention for anyone who actually read the document.

Televangelist Pat Robertson, the gay-bashing founder of the Christian Coalition, even said the DHS report "shows somebody down in the bowels of that organization is either a convinced left winger or somebody whose sexual orientation is somewhat in question."

But in the wake of the museum attack, many are re-evaluating the report, even on Fox News. As Fox anchor Shepard Smith covered the museum tragedy, he referred to the maligned report.

"They were warning us for a reason," he said.



AP PHOTO/ALEX BRANDON

Other recent attacks and plots by right-wing extremists

» On May 31, Dr. George Tiller, a prominent physician in Kansas, was fatally gunned down during a church service. Authorities have charged Scott Roeder, a man with a long history of anti-abortion and antigovernment extremism.

» In April, two Okaloosa County, Fla., sheriff's deputies were killed in a shootout. The wife of the alleged killer — Joshua Cartwright — said her husband believed the U.S. government was conspiring against him and was "severely disturbed that Barack Obama had been elected president."

» Also in April, three Pittsburgh police officers were shot and killed. The suspect, Richard Andrew Poplawski, posted to the racist website Stormfront and subscribed to anti-Semitic,

antigovernment extremist conspiracy theories.

» The day after Obama's inauguration, a man went on a rampage in Brockton, Mass. He shot to death two African immigrants and sexually assaulted and shot a third. The man arrested, Keith Luke, reportedly told police he had been reading white supremacist websites for months and was "fighting for a dying race."

» In Belfast, Maine, James G. Cummings, a neo-Nazi, was shot to death by his wife this past December. A cache of radioactive materials suitable for building a "dirty bomb" was discovered. His wife reportedly told police that her husband was "very upset" over Obama being elected president and had been in contact with white supremacist groups.

IN THIS ISSUE

UNDER SIEGE
Life for Latino Immigrants in the South

SPLC report finds
Latinos targeted
for abuse
PAGE 4

SPLC supporter
dies in Iraq
PAGE 7



SPLC files
complaint after
worker sexually
assaulted
PAGE 5

SEEKING JUSTICE

SPLC sues Mississippi county to stop abuse of children at detention center

"D.W." had been confined to a filthy cell at the juvenile detention center for only a week when he tried to hang himself with a bed sheet.

His mental health had deteriorated rapidly during his confinement at the Harrison County Juvenile Detention Center in Biloxi, Miss.

But rather than provide him with counseling, guards at the detention center harassed and taunted him. They told him his mother no longer cared and would not visit him again. They said they could do whatever they wanted to him.

That wasn't some empty threat. The 17-year-old African-American youth endured a

brutal physical assault by guards who slammed his face into a concrete floor.

D.W.'s story isn't unique.

It echoes the stories of dozens of other children who spent time at the detention center.



W. R., one of the SPLC's clients, was held in the Harrison County Juvenile Detention Center for two months this spring.

In separate interviews, these youths said they were confined to filthy, bug-infested cells for 23 hours each day. Some cells were so overcrowded that children slept on the floor on thin mattresses that smelled of urine.

The SPLC has filed a federal class action suit to stop the "shockingly inhumane" treatment of children at this juvenile detention center and to force officials to provide sanitary facilities and mental health treatment to young people confined there. The lawsuit, *D.W. et al. v. Harrison*

County, Miss., was filed April 20 in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi on behalf of D.W., whose name is being withheld due to his age.

The detention center has been operated by a private corporation, the Mississippi Security Police, for more than nine years at an annual cost of \$1.6 million.

Less than two months after filing the lawsuit, a federal judge approved an agreement with county officials that allows SPLC attorneys to meet with children held at the facility, review records and monitor conditions at the juvenile detention center — a potential first step to resolving the lawsuit.

Continued on page 8

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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

Terrorism threat from right-wing extremists real

The tragic murder of a security guard at the Holocaust museum last month and the assassination of a prominent Kansas physician 10 days earlier should serve as reminders to us that the threat of terrorism from right-wing extremists is very real.

Both of these murders were part of a pattern of recent attacks — including the slaying of five law enforcement officers — committed by extremists.

The killers in these cases were all inspired by the hate movement in America. What's most alarming is that this movement today is being aided and abetted by the increasingly unhinged rhetoric we hear every day on talk radio and cable TV from the likes of Rush Limbaugh, Glenn Beck and Michael Savage.

Rants take darker tone

Limbaugh and a few others, of course, have specialized in political demagoguery and outrageous comments for years. But their rants began to take an even darker tone last year when Barack Obama's presidential campaign caught fire. And politicians and their followers on the far right jumped on board.

Remember last year when attendees of McCain-Palin campaign rallies reportedly shouted "terrorist!" and "kill him!" about Obama? That was a mere foreshadowing of the apocalyptic

narratives being spun today by the talkers on the right.

Just after the election, for example, Savage, who reaches a weekly audience of 8 million people on nearly 400 radio stations, predicted this about the Obama administration: "[T] here's gonna be a wholesale firing of competent white men in the United States government." This past May, he talked again about a dire future: "[Y] our guns are seized, your free speech is gone, your children are in the hands of perverts."

U.S. Rep. Paul Broun of Georgia joined in the post-election warnings, suggesting that Obama might establish a Gestapo-like security force in America. "I'm not comparing [Obama] to Adolf Hitler," Broun told *The Associated Press*. "What I'm saying is there is the potential."

Well, yes, Congressman Broun, you did compare our highly popular, democratically elected president with perhaps the most evil human being of all time.

Over at Fox News, Beck took the Nazi imagery to a new level, using his national platform to discuss the preposterous

assertion that FEMA is setting up concentration camps. On his April 1 program, he declared, "Fascism is coming unless we remind them that it is we the people who run this show. ... We've been on the road to fascism for a while."

Limbaugh joined the chorus when he proclaimed in a recent interview, "[F]ascism. We must not be afraid to use that word, either."

Some of the rhetoric actually justifies taking up arms against the government. This was Dick Morris on Fox: "Those crazies in Montana who say, 'We're going to kill ATF agents because the U.N.'s going to take over' —

well, they're beginning to have a case."

On Clear Channel's "The War Room with Quinn and Rose," co-host Jim Quinn said, "When you hear that Quinn's guns have been confiscated, you will know that Quinn is dead."

Texas governor joins talks
Texas Gov. Rick Perry even joined in the revolutionary talk by suggesting that Texas consider seceding from the United States.

When mentally unstable extremists who are stewing

in hate and rage hear their paranoia and fringe worldview validated and reinforced day after day by supposedly "mainstream" figures, is it any wonder they decide to take up arms against their imagined enemies? We've always worried about those extremists who hear voices in their heads. Today they're hearing their views echoed 24 hours a day in the media and on the Internet.

The day after Obama's inauguration, a man went on a rampage in Brockton, Mass., killing two African immigrants and sexually assaulting a third. Police said he also planned to go to a local synagogue and kill as many Jews as he could during bingo night. Fortunately, he was caught before he could carry out the plan. He told police he had been reading white supremacist websites for months and was "fighting for a dying race."

There are other troubling signs.

Gun sales are skyrocketing, and ammunition is flying off the shelves. Hate groups and antigovernment "Patriot" militias appear to be re-energized. These groups, infused with racist views, have a real hatred for their government and are true believers of the most radical conspiracy theories.

They are active. And they are training with weapons.

We're entering dangerous territory here.



Richard Cohen

MAILBOX

I'm so proud to be a member of the SPLC! Just added my name to your [online] map against hatred. Thank you all for your critical and moving work to help make America the beautiful.

P. A.
Naperville, Illinois

Keep up the good work. SPLC is a beacon of light against the storm of ignorance, intolerance and apathy that seems to be gathering in the U.S. I wish you nothing but the best.

I. K.
Portland, Maine

Thank you for your dedication and hard work. I just sent in my dues. My dollars are tight, but it is important for me to support you. Nothing surprises me anymore. From what I read, my home state of New Jersey has the highest amount of hate crimes in the U. S. Lucky me. I am vigilant. I take nothing for granted. Your *Intelligence Report* is shocking, to say the least. I pass it on to my sons. Good luck.

R. T.
Montclair, New Jersey

It is so reassuring to know that people like you are on the job day and night to help law enforcement and citizens like me to understand and be aware of these many problems in our country regarding hate and discrimination. Thank you all. It is a joy for me to support you with gifts of money and my thoughts and prayers. Please continue to fight this good fight. Thank you. And God bless you all.

M. E.
Moneta, Virginia

Thanks for the continuing e-mails. I feel better as a member of the Center, even if it is only \$10 per month. It helps me psychologically to know that I am making a statement of my beliefs, and it also makes me feel safer.

T. O.
Austin, Texas

I am sick at heart over the inflammatory language and rhetoric prevalent in the ultra conservative media. And while I am a great believer in the First Amendment right of free speech, I am also a great

believer that the media need to consider carefully the consequences of their words. I have no doubt that phrases such as "Doctor Killer" and "I want him to fail" are exactly the kind of license some individuals need to take violent action. Thanks for all the SPLC is doing!

N. K.
Richmond, California

As soon as I heard about the [Holocaust museum] shooting, I thought of SPLC and felt grateful to be a supporter.

L. R.
Lynbrook, New York

Thank you for your help with getting me the teaching kit *A Place at the Table*. The SPLC is doing something no one else is doing. You make me a better teacher.

M. S. B.
Ripon, California

Just want to give two thumbs up for all your valuable work and education. I have daughters who are now just entering the field of law, and they, too,

are fighting for those who have little means or voice to fight for themselves. Thank God for you, them, and for all those working to help make all lives equal and just in our United States of America.

K. B.
Earlham, Iowa

Just a small incident but one in which high school students were able to recognize that hate really does exist in our nation. I teach a class in Shakespeare, and one of the plays we study is *Richard III*. As a preliminary assignment, I asked students to list the qualities of an arch villain and subsequently to identify individuals who embodied those qualities. First among their choices was Adolph Hitler. However, they could not identify any contemporaries who fit the epithet arch villain. I was able, at that point, to share with them copies of SPLC's publications so they could see that evil exists today as well as in history.

F. D.
Albuquerque, New Mexico

FIGHTING HATE

Immigrants scapegoated after swine flu outbreak

This spring's swine flu outbreak provided a bonanza for immigrant bashers eager to exploit fears of a potentially dangerous virus originating in Mexico. From nativist leaders to mainstream talk show hosts, propagandists vilified Mexican immigrants as disease carriers who were spreading the virus because of poor hygiene. Often, the rhetoric got downright ugly.

"So now, in addition to venereal disease and the other leading exports of Mexico — women with mustaches and VD — now we have swine flu," proclaimed Boston radio host Jay Severin. "We should be, if anything, surprised that Mexico has not visited upon us poxes of more various and serious types already, considering the number of criminalians [sic] already here." Severin was suspended indefinitely from his afternoon show on WTKK-FM.

And nationally syndicated radio show host Michael Savage told listeners that they would be *risking their lives to eat at a restaurant that employed undocumented workers*, according to Media Matters for America, a monitoring group. "Go ahead, idiot," he said. "Go ahead, go and eat in a restaurant now with illegal aliens all over the kitchen, and you don't know if they were in Mexico yesterday or two days ago because your wonderful government doesn't give a rat's behind who's in the kitchen or whether they wiped their behind with their hands."

The swine flu rants were the latest onslaught of demonizing rhetoric aimed at immigrants with brown skin — rhetoric that has coincided over the past several years with an apparently dramatic increase in hate crimes targeting Latinos. Although the virus has not turned into the global pandemic that some experts had feared, it showcased just how far nativists were willing to go to blame immigrants for a public health problem.

"As many Christians have often spoken, 'The Lord Works in

"Could this be a terrorist attack through Mexico?"

Mysterious Ways,'" wrote Barbara Coe, leader of the California Coalition for Immigration Reform (CCIR), in a mass e-mail to her supporters. (CCIR is listed by the Southern Poverty Law Center as a hate group.) "Wouldn't it be even MORE interesting if some of the anti-American-pro-illegal alien AMNESTY traitors (posing as U.S. elected officials) who just visited Mexico, also contracted the disease and shared it with THEIR loved ones? We wonder if they would still vote for 'Open Borders?'"

And Jackie Juntti, the self-described "Grassroots Granny" who runs a particularly hard-line nativist e-mail list, called for sealing the border, then took a racist jab at President Obama.

"[W]e have government refusing to close the borders (how did that Mexican kid get from Mexico to Houston to die this week? — he crossed the border!!!) or to halt all visits to Mexico by Americans. We have [Obama] telling us to cover our mouth if we cough. Someone should cover his lying lips with gorilla glue."

Michael Savage suggested that Mexican immigrants were being used as biological weapons. "Could this be a terrorist attack through Mexico? Could our dear friends in the radical Islamic countries have concocted this virus and planted it in Mexico knowing that you, [Homeland Security Secretary] Janet Napolitano, would do nothing to stop the flow of human traffic from Mexico? And they are a perfect mule — perfect mules for bringing this virus into America."

Not to be outdone, Neal Boortz spouted a similar conspiracy theory on his nationally syndicated radio show, Media Matters reported. "What better way to sneak a virus into this country than give it to Mexicans?" he asked. "So if you want to get that epidemic into this country, get it going real good and hot south of the border. And, you know, then just spread a rumor that there's construction jobs available somewhere, and here it comes."

Boortz also called the swine flu the "fajita flu."

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFS

Latino gang members indicted for racist violence

A Latino street gang in a small city in Los Angeles County waged a campaign of racist violence and intimidation that was designed to drive out the city's African-American residents, according to recently unsealed federal indictments of 147 members and associates of the Varrio Hawaiian Gardens.

Varrio Hawaiian Gardens "gang members take pride in their racism and often refer to the VH Gang as the 'Hate Gang,'" the indictment that was unsealed in May states. "VHG gang members have expressed a desire to rid the city of Hawaiian Gardens of all African-Americans and have engaged in a systematic effort to achieve that result by perpetrating crimes against African-Americans."

The reputed VHG members are charged with 476 "overt acts" of racketeering, such as murder, attempted murder, weapons trafficking and kidnapping. Among the criminal acts detailed in the indictment is one instance where gang members fired bullets into a home occupied by eight people. It's not clear from the indictment whether anyone was hit.

Latinos vastly outnumber African Americans in Hawaiian Gardens. The 2000 census, the most recent data available, shows that while Latinos make up 73% of the city's 15,000 inhabitants, only 4% are African Americans.

The VHG arrests resulted from the latest in a string of criminal investigations that have found Latino street gangs in Southern California are carrying out organized racist violence targeting African Americans in majority Latino areas.

In late 2006, the *Intelligence Report* revealed that leaders of the Mexican Mafia prison gang were directing Latino street gangs outside prison walls to carry out ethnic cleansing attacks on African Americans in order to establish purely Latino neighborhoods.

Inland Empire Skinheads busted in Hitler birthday sweep

Seven members of the Inland Empire Skinheads were arrested in a daylong sweep in southern California April 20, including two female gang members who were arrested in hospitals where they had induced labor to ensure their babies would be born on Adolf Hitler's 120th birthday.

San Bernardino County Sheriff Rod Hoops said the

arrests were the result of a nine-month investigation that was launched following an attempted murder in Hesperia, Calif., last year. Hoops said the gang has between 30 and 50 members residing in the Inland Empire, a region of southeastern California, and is closely affiliated with the Western Hammerskins, a regional division of the widespread skinhead gang Hammerskin Nation.

Hoops said his department had been tracking the Inland Empire Skinheads since 2002. In those seven years, members of the gang have been involved in murders, attempted murders, murder conspiracies, home invasion robberies, hate crime assaults, and narcotics trafficking, according to the sheriff.

The skinheads arrested this April were charged with a variety of crimes, including conspiracy to commit murder, parole violations, illegal weapons possession, armed robbery, witness intimidation, and dealing methamphetamine.

All-white jury finds teens not guilty of immigrant's murder

The U.S. Justice Department has opened a civil rights investigation into the case of two white youths acquitted of slaying a Mexican immigrant by an all-white jury in Pennsylvania. Many observers described the verdict as a blatant act of jury nullification, akin to past cases in which all-white juries in the Deep South delivered not-guilty verdicts in the murders of civil-rights activists despite what was sometimes incontrovertible evidence.

The Schuylkill County, Pa., jury found high school football stars Brandon Piekarsky and Derrick Donchak not guilty of homicide, ethnic intimidation and aggravated assault in the July 2008 beating death of Luis Ramirez in Shenandoah, Pa., where the Latino population is growing rapidly. Both were convicted of simple assault and sentenced to six months in prison.

The jury heard testimony that Ramirez, a 25-year-old father of two, was attacked by six white teenagers who yelled racial epithets as they knocked him to the ground, beat him unconscious and then repeatedly kicked him in the head. Defense attorneys claimed that Ramirez started the fight and that Piekarsky and Donchak had merely fought back in self-defense. But prosecutors said the teens were the aggressors, with Piekarsky delivering the fatal kick to Ramirez.

THEY SAID IT

"Might be a racist joke but it's still funny."

— Subject line of a Feb. 24 mass e-mail, sent by Burke County (N.C.) school board member Rob Hairfield, that contained an epithet-laden racist joke and racist photo illustrations and resulted in the board censuring Hairfield

"The U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce is effectively an organization that is interested in ... Mexico's export of drugs and illegal aliens to the United States."

— Lou Dobbs, on the March 11 edition of CNN's "Lou Dobbs Tonight," in defamatory comments for which he later offered a rare apology

"Those crazies in Montana who say, 'We're going to kill ATF agents because the U.N.'s going to take over' — well, they're beginning to have a case."

— FOX News contributor Dick Morris criticizing President Obama's policies during the March 31 edition of FOX's "Your World with Neil Cavuto"

"Poor, without skills, without language, not shar[ing] our culture, not shar[ing] our hygiene. ... It's millions of leeches from a primitive country, come here to leech off you and, with it, they are ruining the schools, the hospitals, and a lot of life in America."

— Jay Severin, during the April 30 edition of his talk radio show on Boston's WTKK-FM, characterizing Mexican immigrants in a tirade that resulted in his suspension

"There goes the neighborhood."

— Subject line of a mass e-mail depicting a watermelon patch outside the White House that was forwarded by North Carolina Alcoholic Beverage Commission Chairman Douglas A. Fox, who also wrote "how true" but was forced to resign May 5

SEEKING JUSTICE

SPLC report finds Latinos in South targeted for abuse

A new report by the Southern Poverty Law Center has found that low-income Latino immigrants in the South are routinely the targets of wage theft, racial profiling and other abuses driven by an anti-immigrant climate that harms all Latinos regardless of their immigration status.

The report — *Under Siege: Life for Low-Income Latinos in the South* — documents the experiences of Latino immigrants who face increasing hostility as they fill low-wage jobs in Southern states that had few Latino residents until recent years.

The report, released in April, came shortly before a jury acquitted two white teenagers of the most serious charges in the 2008 beating death of a Latino man in Shenandoah, Pa. — a case that highlights in violent fashion the anti-immigrant environment many Latinos told SPLC researchers they face.

Any Latino a potential target

"This report documents a society where anyone of Latino descent is a potential target for harassment and discrimination," said Mary Bauer, author of the

report and director of the SPLC's Immigrant Justice Project. "It describes the human toll of failed policies that relegate millions of people to an underground economy, where they are beyond the protection of the law."

interviews, depict a region where Latinos are routinely cheated out of wages by employers and denied basic health and safety protections. They are racially profiled by overzealous law enforcement agents and

"The assumption is that every Latino possibly is undocumented," Angeles Ortega-Moore, an immigrant advocate in North Carolina, told SPLC researchers. "So it [discrimination] has spread over into the legal population."

As Latinos have been demonized by harsh anti-immigrant propaganda, FBI statistics have shown a 40 percent increase in hate crimes against Latinos from 2003 to 2007.

Beating death illustrates hostility

The brutal beating death of Luis Ramirez in Shenandoah, Pa., in July 2008 showed that anti-Latino hostility isn't confined to the South. Ramirez, a 25-year-old undocumented Mexican immigrant, was beaten in a fight that began

after a group of high school football players who had been drinking made remarks to a girl walking with Ramirez, according to media reports. One teen later admitted in court to shouting racial slurs at the Latino and instigating the fight.

The attack left Ramirez "unconscious in a residential street, foaming at the mouth," *The New York Times* reported last year.

Ramirez, a father of two who worked in factories and picked crops, died from his injuries two days later.

Two of the teens were acquitted of the most serious charges by an all-white jury May 1, but were convicted of simple assault, a misdemeanor. Two other teens have pleaded guilty to charges stemming from the attack.

Under Siege found that the discrimination against Latinos in the Southeast constitutes a civil rights crisis that must be addressed. It concludes that comprehensive immigration reform — including a workable path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants — is the only realistic, fair and humane solution.

Reform legislation must be coupled with strong enforcement of labor and civil rights protections. This would make crime victims and communities safer, curb racial profiling and other abuses, and better protect the wages and working conditions of all workers, according to the report.

'A matter of basic human rights'

"We're talking about a matter of basic human rights here," said SPLC President Richard Cohen. "By allowing this cycle of abuse and discrimination to continue, we're creating an underclass of people who are invisible to justice and undermining our country's fundamental ideals."



Eduardo and other Latinos in New Orleans are targeted for robbery and other crimes.

Under Siege is based on a survey of 500 low-income Latinos — including legal residents, undocumented immigrants and U.S. citizens — at five locations in the South. The locations were Nashville, Charlotte, New Orleans, rural southern Georgia, and several towns and cities in northern Alabama.

The survey findings, coupled with accounts from in-depth

victimized by criminals who know they are reluctant to report crime to these same authorities. Even legal residents and U.S. citizens of Latino descent said racial profiling, bigotry and other forms of discrimination are staples of their daily lives.

A number of immigrants in the survey described the South as a "war zone."

TEACHING TOLERANCE

SPLC grant helps students with learning disabilities tell their stories

More than three decades after the passage of federal legislation meant to include them in the traditional classroom, students with disabilities are still frequently subjected to social isolation, bullying, stereotyping and other forms of discrimination.

At Harwood Union High School in Vermont, students are confronting those problems.

With the help of a grant from SPLC's Teaching Tolerance project, Harwood students created an award-winning documentary film to teach the public about learning disabilities.

The film, "Speak Out for Understanding," features Harwood students telling their own stories about what it means to live with learning challenges such as dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and Down syndrome.

The film portrays these students excelling at the activities they love — sledding on a snowboard, acing a downhill skiing slalom course, showing off cross-country running

medals or playing saxophone in the school jazz band.

The message is simple: People with disabilities are all around you, and they're doing some pretty amazing things.

Film idea came from students

Students came up with the idea for the film while attending a class taught by Maureen Charron-Shea, Harwood's speech pathologist. Charron-Shea proposed a simple idea to her students: "What if students with disabilities told their [own] stories? Would they be treated differently? Would they be better understood?"

The students took the idea and ran with it. They proposed making a film to explain their own experiences in the school system.

Charron-Shea figured they would make a five-minute presentation on her laptop. But the idea grew and grew, becoming a year-long research and production project.

According to Jeff Sharrow, education director for the Vermont Folklife Center and

an adviser to the students, the filmmaking process helped students develop their own stories until they arrived "at a place of strength."

"We kind of got through to the other side," Sharrow said. By telling their stories, he said, the students reached a place

where they achieved "a sense of wholeness."

The film has been a big hit in Vermont. Charron-Shea and her students were profiled on Vermont Public Television. Requests for copies of the film have come in from across the country and from Canada, and the film is now available on Amazon.com. The film project also won the 2009 Youth Leadership Award from the National Youth Leadership Council.

Project is continuing

Charron-Shea says "Speak Out" has branched out beyond the film to become a continuing project, with students producing rap music, a children's book and a website. She would like to see more schools trying similar projects.

"I'd like to see this project replicated because it is so powerful," she said. "It's the process, not the product. What's more powerful than engaging your own community in a conversation?"



Maureen Charron-Shea (right) and Deborah Lisi-Baker display the "Deborah Lisi-Baker Leaders of Tomorrow Award for Disability Awareness" that was given at the Vermont State House. Behind them are some of Charron-Shea's students.



Mary Bauer (right), director of SPLC's Immigrant Justice Project, testified in April before a House subcommittee in favor of stronger protections for low-income guestworkers.

SEEKING JUSTICE

SPLC challenges Bush rules slashing worker protections

The SPLC has taken action in court and in Congress to challenge the Bush administration's last-minute changes to the nation's guestworker program — changes that shred worker protections and make it easier to replace U.S. workers with temporary foreign labor.

The SPLC and a coalition of immigrant rights advocates filed a federal lawsuit in January charging that the new regulations seriously damage worker protections. The suit also notes that the changes could hamper the Obama administration's ability to protect U.S. workers from an influx of foreign labor that would depress wages and working conditions. The SPLC has since testified before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Domestic Policy about the destructive impact of these regulations.

"On their way out the door, the Bush administration's Department of Labor eviscerated the few protections our nation's guestworker program offered to U.S. and foreign workers," said Mary Bauer, director of the SPLC's Immigrant Justice Project. "These new regulations are a giant step backward for workers."

The regulations, which went into effect on Jan. 18, concern the H-2B guestworker program, used by businesses to hire low-skilled, temporary foreign labor. The new regulations expand the types of jobs considered to be temporary — and therefore eligible for the program — from jobs lasting no more than one year to jobs that last up to three years.

These regulations also allow employers wishing to use the guestworker program to simply vouch that they searched for U.S.

workers and were unable to find enough. Previously, employers were required to obtain certification from the Department of Labor that there is a shortage of U.S. workers.

During her April 23 testimony before the House subcommittee, Bauer called on Congress to enact legislation greatly expanding the legal rights of H-2B workers. She noted that many of the abuses in the program stem from the great disparity in power between guestworkers — who cannot change jobs under the program — and their employers. She also called for increased enforcement of laws protecting all workers, noting a decline in enforcement activity in recent years.

Program rife with abuses

"In practice, the [guestworker] program is rife with abuses," Bauer told the committee. "The abuses typically start long before the worker has arrived in the United States and continue

through and even after his or her employment here."

Guestworkers are often pushed into debt by large fees charged by labor brokers, and they are routinely cheated out of wages and subjected to abusive work conditions. The SPLC documented widespread abuses in the H-2B program in its 2007 report, *Close to Slavery*. The report describes rampant wage violations, recruitment abuses, seizure of identity documents and squalid living conditions.

The federal lawsuit, *CATA v. Chao*, was filed in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania on behalf of farmworker organizations that include the Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas, Farmworkers Support Committee, the Alliance of Forest Workers and Harvesters, and Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noreste. It also names as a plaintiff Salvador Martínez Barrera, a Mexican citizen who has worked as a guestworker and would be affected by the regulations.



Intelligence Project given award

Intelligence Project Director Mark Potok (center) and Heidi Beirich, the Project's director of research and special projects, accept a Distinguished Public Service Award on behalf of the Intelligence Project from the American Immigration Law Foundation for its "outstanding work" countering the anti-immigration movement. The award was presented March 20 in Washington, D.C.

SEEKING JUSTICE

SPLC files lawsuit after worker sexually assaulted, brutalized by manager

"Elena" thought she was going to die.

She had been dragged across the floor by her hair and was trying to squeeze through a cracked office door and escape. The plant manager who had sexually harassed her for months at work was attacking her in an office — the second attack she had endured at work.

She had complained about him earlier. No one listened.

In fact, her efforts got her suspended from work.

Now he was pressing a door against her body, crushing her as she tried to fight her way free. Struggling, Elena finally pulled away and escaped.

Her clothes torn and body battered, she left work in an ambulance.

The SPLC helped Elena with an investigation by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. It found that she was sexually harassed and retaliated against by the company. The EEOC filed a federal lawsuit against the company for violating the law. The SPLC filed a motion asking the court for permission to bring a lawsuit on behalf of Elena by intervening in the EEOC's lawsuit.

Elena's identity has been changed to protect her identity because of the nature of the complaint.

Company failed to protect worker

The complaint alleges that Tuscarora Yarns Inc. of Oakboro, N.C., failed to protect the Latina, who speaks very little English, after she reported unwelcome sexual advances, comments, innuendo and physical contact by the manager.

"It's unconscionable that Tuscarora Yarns ignored complaints of sexual harassment and allowed this manager's conduct to escalate to brutal sexual violence," said Mónica Ramírez, an SPLC attorney and project director of Esperanza, which focuses on immigrant women's issues. "Our client was severely traumatized as a result of the company's conduct."

The lawsuit is part of a nationwide campaign by the SPLC to protect women such as Elena. Low-income immigrant women are often targets of sexual violence on the job. A recent SPLC survey of Latinas in the South found that three out of four believe sexual harassment is a major workplace problem.

Women seen as easy targets

These women are seen as easy targets. Many never report the perpetrators.

They are terrified of losing their only source of income. And many of them feel great shame and embarrassment.

"This is all about power," said Equal Employment Opportunity Commissioner Constance Barker during a recent presentation about the issue at the SPLC's Civil Rights Memorial Center. "These men know they have the leverage."

The EEOC brought a lawsuit against the company in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina, Salisbury Division. The SPLC filed the complaint on behalf of Elena on May 21.

Advances intensified over time

The SPLC complaint says the manager's advances, which intensified between April 2007 and the December 2007 attack, were so persistent and common that other co-workers took notice. At one point, the woman even asked a co-worker to help her hide from the manager.



SPLC represents "Elena" in its complaint against Tuscarora Yarns, a North Carolina company.

In October 2007, the manager attacked the woman in his office, but she managed to get free. After the factory worker reported the manager's behavior, a human resources manager responded by suspending and disciplining her. The stress from the situation resulted in anxiety and heart palpitations that grew so severe she believed she was having a heart attack and sought medical treatment.

On Dec 29, 2007, the manager called the woman into an office, ostensibly for a meeting. He then trapped her in the office and attacked her.

"No worker should ever have to endure such an ordeal," Ramírez said. "We're taking this action not only to protect future workers at this factory but to remind other companies that no employee should ever be forced to give up her dignity for a paycheck."

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Oldest soldier killed in Iraq embodied SPLC mission

At the Southern Poverty Law Center, supporters are considered heroes. One supporter in particular is a hero to all Americans.

Army Major Steven Hutchison dedicated his life to service. He first served his country during two tours in Vietnam, then he guided students in higher learning as a college professor in California.

And when he reactivated in the Army a few years ago, he wanted only to serve his country again.

After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Major Hutchison felt compelled to return to the battlefield, but his wife, Kandy, also a Center supporter, adamantly opposed the idea. Major Hutchison honored



Steve Hutchison

His brother said he was a very private person and would have preferred to just be flown home and laid to rest by Kandy. "He was my best friend and I will miss him very much," Richard Hutchison said.

Major Hutchison will be missed by the soldiers under his command as well. The team credits him with the progress they were making on their patrols in southern Iraq. His leadership was preventing deaths in the area, as

no bomb had detonated there for at least a year. His success was also impeding the smugglers along the border areas of the country, and his team felt he was specifically targeted. He was ultimately killed by the same weapon from

which he was protecting others. He didn't have to order his team to do anything. Major Hutchison's leadership style was to lead by example.

"He would embarrass them into it," his brother said. "He was the first to volunteer, especially when the younger guys didn't want to."

Major Hutchison knew the combat zone would be dangerous and that his life would be at risk. Before deployment, he put his affairs in order and his beliefs into writing by making provisions for the SPLC and other charitable organizations in his estate plans. Part of Major Hutchison's selflessness and compassion will continue at the SPLC — an immeasurable legacy of justice and tolerance in addition to his truly heroic life.

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 May 1, 2008, through May 31, 2009.

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Civil Rights Memorial

SPLC welcomes new board members

The SPLC has added two highly talented board members who bring a wealth of expertise. James Rucker, executive director of ColorOfChange.org, an online citizens' lobby of more than a half-million people dedicated to amplifying the political voice of black America, attended his first meeting in April. The other new member, Alan Howard, was voted onto the board at that meeting.

Both first came to work with the SPLC in connection with the Jena Six case.

"James and ColorOfChange are the unsung heroes of the Jena Six case," said SPLC President Richard Cohen. "They brought enormous public attention to the plight of the teens who were unfairly charged, raised money for their defense, and were instrumental in mobilizing thousands of people from across the country to go to Jena to demonstrate their support of the youths."

Prior to founding ColorOfChange.org, Rucker served as

director of grassroots mobilization for MoveOn.org, pioneering new technology in the field of online organizing while driving numerous fundraising, technology and political campaigns. He started ColorOfChange.org in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 when the government failed to provide an adequate response to the disaster, which disproportionately affected the city's African-American population.

Rucker grew up in Seaside, Calif., and has a B.S. degree in symbolic systems from Stanford University. He lives with his family in San Francisco. He is also co-founder of the Secretary of State Project, an effort to elect progressive secretaries of state as a strategy to ensure both access to the ballot and that all votes are counted.

Members involved in Jena Six case

Jena was also Alan Howard's initial connection to the SPLC.

"We got to know Alan in the summer of 2007 when he

volunteered to represent one of the Jena Six youths. Since then, he's been making extraordinary contributions to our work," Cohen said. His New York City firm, Dewey & LeBoeuf, is also devoting hundreds of hours on a pro bono basis as SPLC's co-counsel in the Signal case, a complex class action on behalf of a large group of guestworkers from India. This fall, Howard's firm will assign a lawyer to the SPLC's Atlanta office for a year.

Howard, a graduate of Yale and Harvard, continues to represent Jena Six defendant Jesse Ray Beard, who recently finished his junior year at Canterbury School in New Milford, Conn. Beard lives with the Howards and, after visiting his family in Jena, will spend the summer with them before beginning his senior year at Canterbury. The *American Lawyer* is publishing a feature about Beard's unique relationship with Howard in its annual pro bono issue this July. "Jesse is a terrific kid," said Howard.

SPLC sues to stop abuse of children

Continued from page 1

"It is a travesty that the county has chosen to let a private company profit by neglecting and abusing children," said Vanessa Carroll, a staff attorney for the SPLC's Mississippi Youth Justice Project and counsel for the children.

Most of the children confined at the facility have not been adjudicated guilty of any crime and are awaiting court hearings. Many are there for minor offenses and so-called "status offenses" like truancy.

The lawsuit describes how the county has failed to provide the most basic, constitutionally required services.

"Toilets and walls are covered with mold, rust and excrement," the lawsuit says. "Insects have infested the facility, and the smell of human excrement permeates the entire building. Children

frequently have to sleep on thin mats that smell of urine and mold. Defendants do not provide children with adequate personal hygiene items."

Children describe assaults

Children who have been confined there describe assaults by guards, being locked in their cells for 23 hours every day, inadequate medical and mental health care, and widespread infections caused by the filthy conditions.

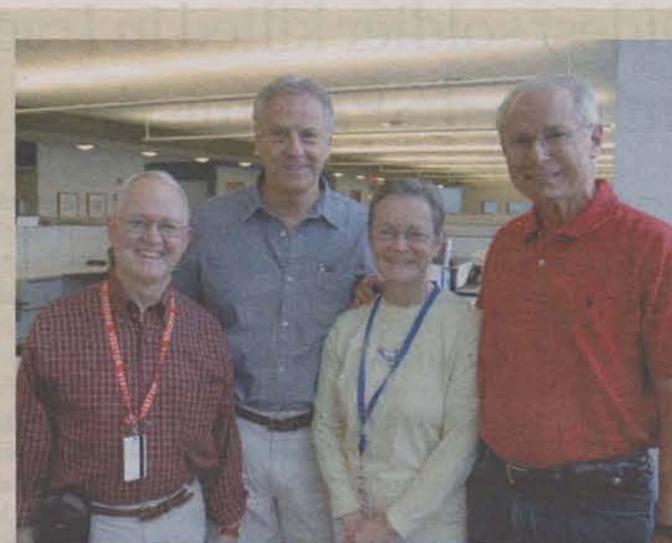
Marlon, 17, said children are treated like animals at the facility. "I've seen the guards slam kids, mace them and do things they wouldn't even do to their own dog, let alone a human."

D.W. said he was abused even while on suicide watch after he had tried to hang himself. "A guard choked me from behind and slammed me on the floor," he said. "While that guard held

me down, another guard dropped his knee in my neck, slammed my face to the floor and then pushed my face into the concrete. I couldn't breathe."

"This lawsuit demands that Harrison County ensure the safety of children in its custody," said co-counsel Sheila Bedi, SPLC's regional juvenile justice attorney. "But this lawsuit also gives the county a chance to reconsider investing \$1.6 million a year in a private, for-profit prison company at the expense of our children. Perhaps now the county will recognize that investing in communities and families is a wiser use of taxpayer dollars."

The lawsuit seeks class action status to protect all children who are currently confined at the detention center as well as those who will be confined there in the future.



Longtime SPLC donors visit

Retired teachers Richard and Victoria Looze of Wisconsin, SPLC donors since 1971, visited the Center on March 25. They were welcomed by founders Morris Dees (second from left) and Joe Levin (right).

TEACHING TOLERANCE

Essay by civil rights leader garners award for SPLC

The Association of Educational Publishers (AEP) has honored SPLC's *Teaching Tolerance* magazine for U.S. Rep. John Lewis' moving essay on the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr., written for the Spring 2008 issue.

The essay, "Reflections on a Dream Deferred," came away with the prize for Best Editorial in AEP's 2009 Distinguished Achievement Awards.

Teaching Tolerance invited Lewis, a Georgia Democrat, to write the piece as part of a magazine feature designed to help schoolchildren explore the state of black America on the 40th anniversary of King's assassination.

In the piece, Lewis celebrated the political advances made by African Americans in the South and pointed out the sizable amount of work left to be done in a country where "we are spending too many of our resources on war, instead of meeting basic human needs."

"Democracy is not a state," Lewis wrote. "It is not some high plateau that we struggle to reach so we can finally settle down to rest. Democracy is an act."

Teaching Tolerance also won a Distinguished Achievement Award for the design of the article, which included photographs documenting Lewis' participation in key events of the civil rights movement, from the Selma-to-Montgomery voting rights march to the Freedom Rides.

The essay faced stiff competition. President Barack Obama and Senator John McCain wrote the other two finalist essays for Best Editorial. The two presidential candidates penned essays on youth involvement in politics for the Fall 2008 issue of *Teaching Tolerance*.

Teaching Tolerance director Lecia Brooks said her team was honored to have contributors of such historic significance.

Teaching Tolerance picked up a second design award for illustrations accompanying "I Didn't Know There Were Cities in Africa," an article designed to help teachers debunk widespread myths and misinformation about the African continent.



Teaching Tolerance Director Lecia Brooks holds one of the Distinguished Achievement Awards for illustration.

AEP also honored *Teaching Tolerance* for "The ABCs of Family Engagement," a set of online tools to help teachers find ways to include all parents in the learning process.

"Traditional models of parent involvement often exclude many parents," Brooks said. Parent-teacher contact is crucial to academic success, but many parents can't make it to PTA meetings or teacher conferences because of child-care, transportation and work issues.

"Of course it's great to win, but our real hope is that these awards will keep the issues raised in *Teaching Tolerance* on the minds of educators," Brooks said.

The awards were presented June 12 at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.



SPLC sponsors workshop on workplace sexual harassment

Workshop participants paint bandanas during an April 22 workshop hosted by the SPLC at the Civil Rights Memorial Center in Montgomery. The bandanas serve as a symbol of women's efforts to repel sexual harassment in the fields. EEOC Commissioner Constance Barker (right) was keynote speaker at the event and was greeted by SPLC President Richard Cohen.