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THE RISE IN VIOLENCE AGAINST MINORITY INSTITUTIONS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM, AND HOMELAND SECURITY

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2022

Serial No. 117–56

Printed for the use of the Committee on the Judiciary



Available via: *http://judiciary.house.gov*

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE
48–066 WASHINGTON : 2022

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THE RISE IN VIOLENCE AGAINST MINORITY INSTITUTIONS

Thursday, February 17, 2022

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM, AND HOMELAND SECURITY

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Washington, DC

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:06 a.m., via Zoom, Hon. Sheila Jackson Lee [Chair of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Jackson Lee, Nadler, Bass, Demings, McBath, Dean, Scanlon, Cicilline, Lieu, Cohen, Biggs, Tiffany, Fitzgerald, and Owens.

Staff Present: John Doty, Senior Advisor and Deputy Staff Director; Arya Hariharan, Chief Oversight Counsel; David Greengrass, Senior Counsel; Moh Sharma, Director of Member Services and Outreach & Policy Advisor; Jacqui Kappler, Oversight Counsel; Cierra Fontenot, Chief Clerk; Keenan Keller, Chief Counsel; Mauri Gray, Deputy Chief Counsel; Natalie Knight, Counsel; Veronica Eligan, Professional Staff Member/Legislative Aide; Jason Cervenak, Minority Chief Counsel for Crime; Ken David, Minority Counsel; Andrea Woodard, Minority Professional Staff Member; Kiley Bidelman, Minority Clerk; and Carter Robertson, Minority USSS Detailee.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Good morning. The Subcommittee will come to order.

Without objection, the Chair is authorized to declare recesses of the Committee at any time.

Again, good morning to everyone, and welcome to today's hearing on The Rise in Violence Against Minority Institutions.

I would like to remind Members that we have established an email address and distribution list to circulate exhibits, motions, or other written materials that Members might want to offer as part of our hearing today. If you would like to submit materials, please send them to the email address that has been previously distributed to your offices, and we will circulate the materials to Members and staff as quickly as we can. Your vital information is important to the historical record of this Committee hearing.

I would also ask all Members to please mute your microphones when you're not speaking to the hearing's business. This will help prevent feedback and other technical issues. You may unmute yourself anytime you seek recognition.

I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

Today's hearing on the rise in violence against minority institutions will continue this Subcommittee's inquiry into domestic terrorism and investigate the rise in attacks directed against minority institutions and places of worship across the Nation.

For too many years now, every ethnic group in the United States has been touched by the increase in domestic terrorism and hate crimes, many in the tragic form of mass shootings. I know that if I opened up this moment to Members, each of my Members on this Committee might cite some incident in their community.

Just recently, in Harris County, northeast Atascocita and northwest Cypress, anti-Semitic and racist messages were posted at the doors of homeowners. It's everywhere.

These tragedies and their circumstances are all too familiar to each of us: The shooting spree at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, which left 22 dead and 24 more injured; the rampage of Philadelphia's Tree of Life synagogue, where 11 people were killed; the racist attack on the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin, which left six people dead; the brutal murder of nine worshippers in the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina; three Muslim college students executed in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, supposedly over parking but tinged with hostility to the young people's look; and the spa shooting in Atlanta that killed eight people, including six women of Asian descent. In each instance, the perpetrator had previously exposed—espoused racist and xenophobic beliefs against minorities.

Last year, this Subcommittee held a hearing on the rise of domestic terrorism in America to discuss the surge of White supremacy and right-wing extremism and to discuss Federal law enforcement's failure to address domestic terrorism and acts of violence driven by racially motivated hate and, of course, animus toward religious minorities.

It appears that trends have not changed and the rise in violence continues. Once again, we watched in horror on January 15 of this year as a gunman stormed into a synagogue, this time in Colleyville, Texas, taking four people hostage and holding them for almost 12 hours. Miraculously and, in part, due to training the congregation received following other anti-Semitic attacks, those who were held hostage managed to escape, including under the leadership of their rabbi.

Then, as Black History Month began, more than 20 historically Black colleges and universities across the country became the targets of repeated bomb threats, even starting as early as January, which paralyzed these vital institutions of higher education, disrupting learning by forcing them to suspend classes, striking fear in the hearts of young students, faculty and staff, parents and the communities that surround and support them, reopening wounds of these—of those who recall the threats, bombings, burnings, and lynchings of the not-too-distant past. We have to take these threats to young people and institutions of learning, minority institutions, very, very seriously. Because what is a threat can become devastation tomorrow. What is a threat today can become devastation tomorrow?

The threats which began in January, including at Prairie View A&M University, not far from my district in Prairie View, Texas, intensified in frequency in February, and the number of schools targeted grew in number by the day. Howard University, which sits not far from this Nation's capital, have received at least five bomb threats in the past 2 months, the most recent being communicated on Monday. This is unacceptable.

At least one caller claimed to be affiliated with a violent neo-Nazi group known to have participated in the racist Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville in 2017, which resulted in the barbaric death of Heather Heyer. Both the FBI and ATF are currently investigating the bomb threats, as they should, which limits the amount of information we can receive or discuss. However, we do know these crimes are being investigated as racially motivated, and we look to soon having full investigations by both the FBI and the ATF.

Threats of violence and intimidation against minority institutions are intended to incite fear and anxiety among diverse communities, are deeply rooted in the fabric of the United States history. Let it be very clear that attacks on students and institutions are attacks on communities and families and surrounding areas.

In the turbulent years of post-civil war reconstruction, at least 2,000 Black people were lynched, along with thousands who were harassed, beaten, and threatened simply because they chose to live as they should as free men and women. When reconstruction ended, southern States regained control of their governments and enacted Jim Crow laws that legalize discrimination, with many elected officials being Members of the Ku Klux Klan, making White supremacy the law of the land.

During this same period, Chinese immigrants endured hateful acts of racism as White workers begin to see them as competition first for gold and later for scarce jobs. Racism and xenophobia against Chinese Americans, Asian Americans led to the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, which banned Chinese laborers from entering the United States for 10 years and prohibited Chinese immigrants already here from becoming citizens. By 1924, the United States had taken steps to shut down nearly all immigration from Asia and to enact a quota system that severely restricted immigration from eastern and southern Europe.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the Klan maintained its anti-Black doctrines, added to its vile rhetoric anti-Jewish, anti-Catholic tenets, all in the name of White supremacy and racial purity. The Klan maintained a strong foothold in politics and continued harassing and killing African Americans with impunity. According to the Equal Justice Initiative, more than 4,084 racially motivated lynchings occurred in 12 southern States between 1887 and 1950.

As African Americans struggled for equal rights under the law, the Klan murdered and threatened civil rights workers, bombed churches, and beat and spat upon nonviolent protesters, like Congressman John Lewis and the Freedom Riders. By 1975, Klan Members had bombed almost 70 buildings in Georgia and Alabama, burned 30 Black churches in Mississippi, murdered 10 people in Alabama.

Sadly, the views and acts of hate committed by White supremacists reverberate throughout American history. We still hear their echoes today as men holding tiki torches march and chant, "Jews will not replace us."

When Members of the Proud Boys, a far-right organization identified by the Southern Poverty Law Center as a hate group and classified by the FBI as having White nationalist ties, burned Black Lives Matter flags in front of two historically Black churches in the Nation's capital, we remember the burning crosses placed in yards as warnings.

When young Black scholars are threatened with the possibility of bombings, we remember four little girls who died in their church, the 16th Street Baptist Church, in Birmingham was bombed in 1963.

These racist beliefs of the past are taking hold and, again, threatening our places of refuge and safety, such as HBCUs, churches, synagogues, and temples, which renewed fervor in the new age. We cannot allow this to continue.

Extremist ideology is not abstract danger. It harms Americans from a wide swath of backgrounds, including our frontline law enforcement officers, and we never know when or where it will strike again. We salute their service, especially those who made the ultimate sacrifice in keeping our communities safe from domestic extremist terrorism, and we're reminded of January 6th and the brave law enforcement officers who stood the guard to protect us, to protect the United States, and protect the citadel of democracy.

FBI Director Christopher Wray declared that 2019 was the deadliest year for domestic extremist violence since the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. In 2020, the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program reported 8,263 hate crimes, including 11,129 offenses. Of these incidents, 62 percent were motivated by racial or ethnic bias, 20 percent were motivated by bias against persons' sexual orientation, 13 percent were motivated by victims' religion.

However, the FBI's reporting of hate crimes is thought to be a severe undercount since it relies on local law enforcement to voluntarily submit data. We must do better to collect the data and Act upon it. The Federal government possesses vast statutory authorities and resources to prevent attacks, prosecute those who commit them, fortify targeted institutions from further attacks, and arm citizens with the knowledge of how to protect themselves. Yet, we are failing the American people who do not do more to face this threat.

The bipartisan Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act, of which I'm a cosponsor, is one measure that would strengthen the Federal government's effort to respond to domestic terrorism. This legislation would authorize the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Justice, and the FBI to analyze, investigate, monitor, and prosecute domestic terrorism jointly, promote information sharing among Federal law enforcement agencies, and take preventative measures focusing Federal resources on the most significant threats.

I look forward to hearing from our distinguished guests, Witnesses who will speak directly to the continuing violence, threats of violence, and trauma being inflicted upon minority communities

across this country. Fear cannot be an option in this Nation. Healing must be. We must bring people together, and we must pass legislation here in the United States Congress to be signed by the President that helps to heal the Nation and protect the Nation as well from the scourge of domestic terrorism.

I hope that our discussion today will lead us to solutions that address the deficiencies in our domestic terrorism strategy to keep all Americans safe. We must get to the bottom of racial antagonisms and as well as religious antagonisms and others that keep us separated.

Without objection, I will submit into the record the following documents: An op-ed by our colleague, Congressman Kweisi Mfume entitled, "Terrorists Won't Stop Our HBCUs." Representative Mfume is an alumnus of Morgan State and represents Morgan State which sits in his district. He has also served as Chair of the Board of Regents at the university for over a decade and has expressed to me his deep concern for the attacks on HBCUs and has really contributed in his request to this hearing. We thank him very much for his leadership, and we look forward to working with him even though he's not a Member of this Committee.

A joint letter from the United Negro College Fund and the Thurgood Marshall College Fund; written testimony from the Muslim Advocates; a letter from the American Council on Education; a letter from the National Action Network.

We'll have all of these submitted into the record, without objection.

[The information follows:]

MS. JACKSON LEE FOR THE RECORD

AFRO NEWS
THE BLACK MEDIA AUTHORITY

OPINION

Op-Ed: Terrorists Won't Stop Our HBCUs

by **Congressman Kweisi Mfume**
February 9, 2022



Congressman Kweisi Mfume

By Congressman Kweisi Mfume

In order to ensure the safety of all Americans, it is essential that we reshape how we view and approach the growing threat of terror to our nation.

In 1995, we were shocked at the gruesome nature and carnage left behind by the Oklahoma City Bombing. Six years later, on that horrific day of September 11, 2001, nearly three-thousand Americans lost their lives as terror took the form of nineteen hijackers who penetrated the country that we call home. These individuals were driven by hate to carry out those horrific deeds. Decades later, hate towards our country and all we stand for as Americans has evolved into a new form of terrorism; one that is bred from within our borders and often over the internet.

Running parallel to the threat of foreign actors, there is a modernized breed of evil our intelligence agencies must combat – the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) identifies them as domestic violent extremists (DVEs) and homegrown violent extremists (HVEs). Both foes formulate from within our own borders to endanger the lives of Americans.

Look no further than the attacks on the Capitol Building, just a year ago, to see the very real effects of this modern caliber of terrorism. With the connectivity of the internet and social media fostering misinformation and hate, and an ability to organize like never before, we should all be weary of what is lurking in the online world, and its capability to spawn real-world violence.

It is time for these "Americans," who fit the mold of what a modern-day terrorist has become, to be condemned as no different than the nineteen hijackers who forever ruined almost 3,000 families on 9/11. And the threats they pose should receive a response just as consequential as the one taken by our government following the tragedies that shook our nation to its core in 2001.

As we try to understand and decipher the danger Americans face today, I want to pinpoint what U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland shed light on as the top domestic violent extremist threat facing the United States: "racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists, specifically those who advocate for the superiority of the white race."

On Tuesday, January 5, 2022, at least eight historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), institutions that represent a beacon for Black culture, received bomb threats. Spelman College, the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Florida Memorial University, Howard University, Norfolk State University, North Carolina Central University, Prairie View A&M University in Texas, and Xavier University of Louisiana were the schools targeted by these threats. Fortunately, no explosions were carried out.

However, just a few weeks later, more than a dozen HBCUs braced for cover as threatened lives hung in the balance. The FBI made known that "hese threats are

being investigated as racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism and hate crimes."

As the calendar transitioned from January to February, it marked our country's observance of Black History Month, a tradition with roots dating back to the earlier 1920s. I wrote on this subject at the start of the month, commenting that in order to carry on the legacies of African Americans who came before us, it essential to continue the fight they began.

The timing of this year's terrorists is probably not a coincidence. They targeted institutions heralded for their academic prestige and ability to nurture African Americans who will pen the next chapter of Black history.

The FBI currently has narrowed its search to six "tech savvy" juveniles following further investigation into these most recent threats made in early-February. These terrorists exemplify the ever-growing presence of the new breeding ground for racist terror the internet presents.

No longer do these white supremacists only meet in fields, cloaked in sheets to conceal their identities, but they also hide behind the cowardly anonymity of the internet. To those who posed these threats, wishing death upon innocent students, you may *feel* protected behind that screen, but know that you are not. Our intelligence communities are evolving alongside of you.

If centuries of Black history have taught the world anything, it is that African Americans will not sway nor be deterred on our path towards equality, even when a loaded gun gripped by racism is indiscriminately pointed in our direction. As the battlegrounds shift from the ones my ancestors fought on over the course of two centuries, our resilience will never quiver. I have faith that one day this country will have racism eradicated from its soil, and these sinful individuals will merely be a footnote in our story. But until then, we must continue to fight back.

I will do everything in my power to put the force of Congress behind the efforts of our intelligence and law enforcement agencies to bring forth justice and restore safety as a freedom Americans are promised.

The opinions on this page are those of the writers and not necessarily those of the AFRO. Send letters to The Afro-American • 145 W. Ostend Street Ste 600, Office #536, Baltimore, MD 21230 *or fax to 1-877-570-9297 or e-mail to* ***editor@afro.com***

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TMCF, UNCF Release Joint Statement on Recent Terrorist Threats to HBCUs and on FBI Briefing

February 7, 2022



Media Contact

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Over the past month, more than two dozen historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have received terroristic threats in an apparent attempt to disrupt and, presumably, sow fear in our campus communities. These attempts to intimidate the HBCU community reached a peak on Tuesday, Feb. 1 — the first day of Black History Month — when 13 HBCUs were forced to disrupt their normal operations due to coordinated threats posed to their respective campuses.

The United Negro College Fund (UNCF) and The Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF) are pleased that the federal government has characterized its ongoing investigation into these threats as "threats of terror with the utmost seriousness" and as acts of domestic terrorism, as announced during a recent briefing by the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Given the federal government's characterization of these threats, we anticipate and expect that the Justice Department will fully prosecute the individuals responsible for these heinous acts and we look forward to the swift conclusion of this matter.

Unfortunately, these terrorist acts fall squarely into a recent trendline documented by the Center for Strategic and International Studies that reflects a sharp increase in right-wing extremist attacks and plots in the United States in recent years. HBCUs, as institutions founded for the original purpose of educating and uplifting former enslaved people and their descendants, have been at the forefront of social and economic justice advocacy for more than 180 years. Our universities' missions and their historic legacies naturally put them at odds with the enemies of equality which, even in the 21st century, makes our institutions and their students, staff, faculty and administrators an apparent target for extremism. Notwithstanding these attempts to terrorize our community, our HBCUs remain unbroken and unbowed.

The actions of a misguided few will not deter our institutions from fulfilling their collective mission to educate our nation's next generation of teachers, entrepreneurs and leaders. We are hopeful that congressional, state, community and philanthropic leaders will join with us and offer the support that is needed for us to offer our students the sense of security needed as we move forward with the same sense of resilience we have shown since the founding of the first HBCU in 1837.

Reflecting on these incidents, we are reminded of the words of the late Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, which still are instructive today:

"I wish I could say that racism and prejudice were only distant memories. We must dissent from the indifference. We must dissent from the apathy. We must dissent from the fear, the hatred and the mistrust... We must dissent because America can do better, because America has no choice but to do better."

Tagged as: NEWS | PRESS RELEASE | DR. LOMAX | HBCUS | LEGAL | MEMBER HBCUS

MUSLIM ADVOCATES

Written Testimony of
Farah Brelvi and Asifa Quraishi-Landes
Interim Co-Executive Directors
Muslim Advocates

Hearing on
The Rise in Violence Against Minority Institutions

United States House of Representatives
Committee on the Judiciary
Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security

Thursday, February 17, 2022

I. Introduction

On behalf of Muslim Advocates, we welcome the opportunity to submit this testimony on the rise in violence against minority institutions. We will focus on attacks against Muslim institutions, and on the particular phenomena that enable and lead to these attacks. Muslim Advocates is a national civil rights organization working to ensure that American Muslims and all Americans may live free from hate and discrimination. To that end, we monitor anti-Muslim hate attacks, provide support to affected communities, and pursue solutions to promote community safety and hold perpetrators accountable.

II. Attacks on Muslim Institutions

According to FBI data, which is notoriously underreported, hate crimes are at a 12-year high.[1] (The total number is higher than we can measure, as these crimes are notoriously underreported.) Many factors contribute to this, including attacks against minority communities by public officials,[2] racial scapegoating vis-a-vis COVID-19, backlash and misinformation about the national movement for racial justice, fear-mongering about Afghan

[1] Reuters, "Hate Crimes Hit 12-Year High in United States in 2020," August 30, 2021, https://www.usnews.com/news/top-news/articles/2021-08-30/hate-crimes-hit-12-year-high-in-united-states-in-2020-fbi.

[2] William Cummings, "Trump tells congresswomen to 'go back' to the 'crime infested places from which they came,'" July 14, 2019, https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2019/07/14/trump-tells-congresswomen-go-back-counties-they-came/1728253001/.

refugees following the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, and encouragement of white nationalism, which federal officials acknowledge is the greatest domestic terror threat to Americans today.[3] White nationalist messaging reverberates throughout our country now, manifesting in hate crimes and bigotry targeted at many marginalized groups, including American Muslims: a recent survey found that 50 percent of Muslims in the United States experienced anti-Muslim bias in the past 12 months.[4]
In such a climate, it is no surprise that Muslim institutions have experienced increased attacks, often correlated to foreign policy events or anniversaries of terror attacks. Mosque incidents over the past 12 months include:

- A bloody pig's head mask was placed at an Austin mosque on the 20th anniversary of 9/11, alongside a sign proclaiming, "Muslims: you are as unclean to God as a pig is to you. Have your idolatry washed clean by the blood of Jesus Christ."
- "Death to Palestine" was found spray painted on a Brooklyn mosque on Eid, presumably in reference to Israeli attacks on Muslim worshippers on the night before Eid in Jerusalem.[5]
- A religious flag was burned and "Trump" was spray painted at a mosque in Long Island, NY.[6]

In addition to these incidents, mosques and Muslim institutions are often targeted before they've even broken ground, due to a long history of public opposition to Muslim spaces.[7] For example, Muslim Advocates has represented Muslim groups facing bigoted community opposition for building mosques and cemeteries.[8]

III. Anti-Muslim rhetoric from public officials contributes to a climate of hate which can result in physical attacks.

Given the venue for this testimony, we would be remiss not to mention the crucial role that elected officials play to alleviate or exacerbate this problem. Our representatives in Congress

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[3] Eileen Sullivan and Katie Benner, "Top law enforcement officials say the biggest domestic terror threat comes from white supremacists," May 12, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/12/us/politics/domestic-terror-white-supremacists.html.
[4] Othering & Belonging Institute, Islamophobia Through the Eyes of Muslims, September 2021, https://belonging.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/2021-10/Islamophobia%20Through%20the%20Eyes%20of%20Muslims.pdf.
[5] WABC-TV, "'Death to Palestine' spray painted on Brooklyn mosque," May 13, 2021, https://abc7ny.com/tayba-islamic-center-mosque-vandalism-ramadan-eid-al-fitr/10626345/.
[6] WABC, "Long Island mosque vandalism: Religious flag burned, base spray painted with pro-Trump graffiti," May 20, 2021, https://abc7ny.com/islamic-center-of-suffolk-county-shah-e-najaf-mosque-vandalized-hate-crime/10667203/#:~:text=BRENTWOOD%2C%20Long%20Island%20(WABC),graffiti%20on%20the%20marble%20base.&text=%22They%20also%20had%20to%20bring,upsetting%20hate%20crime%20to%20us.%22.
[7] Jennifer Merolla, "Freedom from Religion? Public Opposition to Mosques," August 20, 2010, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/freedom-from-religion-pub_b_687554
[8] https://muslimadvocates.org/2020/10/victory-after-lawsuit-va-county-lifts-block-on-muslim-cemetery/

can choose to promote hate, or to promote respect, truth, freedom and fairness. This is not about "political correctness" or free speech; it is about the responsibility of elected officials to uphold the Constitution, respect the dignity of their office, and to promote unity and social cohesion.

Sadly, Representatives Lauren Boebert (R-CO) and Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) have chosen hate. Recently, they have taken to referring to their Muslim colleagues in Congress as the "Jihad Squad," cracking jokes about suicide bombers,[9] and accusing Muslim Representative Ilhan Omar (D-MN) of wanting to "force the entire world to submit to Islam."[10] While these actions were met with condemnation from Democratic leaders, Republican leadership was silent, and no official sanctions have been pursued to date.

Evidence shows that these kinds of actions (and failure to act) by Congress have real-world consequences. Hateful comments from elected officials have been found to directly connect to incidents of hate speech.[11] When members of Congress use their platforms to encourage hate and fear of an entire religion, their supporters listen and send hate and threats to Muslim members of Congress, to their staff and to all American Muslims. For years, Representatives Omar and Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) have regularly received death threats specifically singling them out and targeting them because they are Muslim. When Congressional leaders fail to hold fellow members of Congress accountable for hate-mongering, those members will only double down on their bigotry. By doing so, they normalize and encourage anti-Muslim hate among their supporters.

Lonnie Coffman's actions are a chilling example of the harms that hateful rhetoric can cause. On the day of the January 6, 2021 insurrection, Coffman drove to Washington, D.C. with bombs, guns and a list that singled out Rep. André Carson (D-IN) as a Muslim.[12] He was arrested before he was able to achieve any of his apparent plans, but he was permitted to plead to relatively minor charges that carry a maximum penalty of less than nine years.[13]

IV. Mistrust of law enforcement is a barrier to solutions that rely on law enforcement.

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[9] Jason Lemon, "Marjorie Taylor Greene Attacks Ilhan Omar, 'Jihad Squad' After Boebert Apology," November 27, 2021, https://www.newsweek.com/marjorie-taylor-greene-attacks-ilhan-omar-jihad-squad-after-boebert-apology-1653686.

[10] Muslim Advocates, Screenshot of @Mtgreenee Twitter account posting, December 14, 2021, https://muslimadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Greene-Screenshot.png.

[11] Liz Zhou, "There need to be consequences for Rep. Lauren Boebert's Islamophobic comments," December 4, 2021, https://www.vox.com/22814386/lauren-boebert-islamophobic-comments-omar-house-republicans.

[12] Lawrence Andrea, "Man arrested in D.C. with explosives had threatening note mentioning Rep. André Carson," January 12, 2021, https://www.indystar.com/story/news/crime/2021/01/12/lonnie-coffman-included-rep-andre-carson-threatening-note/6644525002/.

[13] Carol Robinson, "Lonnie Coffman pleads guilty in Jan. 6 riots: Says Molotov cocktails were old; complains about jail conditions," November 12, 2021, https://www.al.com/news/2021/11/lonnie-coffman-pleads-guilty-in-jan-6-riots-says-molotov-cocktails-were-old-complains-about-jail-conditions.html.

While American Muslims, particularly Black Muslims, have been targeted by law enforcement long before 9/11, the legal legacy of 9/11 has been a dramatic increase in massive, dragnet surveillance and large-scale spying operations on Muslim communities. We have been mapped, entrapped, infiltrated, and routinely monitored. Muslims all over the country have been targeted by law enforcement, not based on wrongdoing, but simply because their religion, ethnicity, and/or national origin has been used as a proxy for criminal activity.[14] The FBI's own training materials, produced in 2011 in response to Freedom of Information Act requests, demonstrate that its actions were guided by false stereotypes rather than sound policing: counterterrorism training materials about Muslims and Islam were rife with grossly inaccurate, inflammatory, and highly offensive assertions.[15]

It should therefore not be surprising that the vast majority—87.5 percent—of Muslims who experience anti-Muslim hate do not report it.[16] When Muslims are attacked by civilians who hold the same biases underpinning the laws and policies that hold all Muslims presumptively suspect, it stands to reason that Muslims will be wary of approaching law enforcement for solutions. For Black Muslims, who make up one-fifth to one-third of all American Muslims, the ongoing reality of unjustified police violence is a longstanding barrier to approaching law enforcement.[17] In addition, Muslims of all races may believe that inviting law enforcement's attention will result in increased investigations or surveillance; they may face language barriers, fear public retaliation, and/or believe that law enforcement will not take their concerns seriously, or be able to help even if they do.[18]

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

Anti-Muslim fear-mongering and bigotry has been on the rise in America. Public officials are increasingly fanning the flames of hate, abandoning their responsibility to promote freedom, truth and fairness. As a result, today, it is becoming increasingly acceptable to demonize Muslims and vandalize mosques. American Muslims are hesitant to rely on law enforcement approaches to protect their communities and institutions.

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[14] Muslim Advocates, "Losing Liberty, https://muslimadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Losing_Liberty_The_State_of_Freedom_10_Years_After_the_PATRIOT_Act.pdf; see also https://theintercept.com/2020/06/25/defund-police-dhs-cve-program/.

[15] See Muslim Advocates, "Letter to DOJ Inspector General on Use of FBI Training Materials," September 15, 2011, https://muslimadvocates.org/2011/09/letter-to-doj-inspector-general-on-use-of-fbi-training-materials/.

[16] Othering & Belonging Institute, Islamophobia Through the Eyes of Muslims, September 2021, https://belonging.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/2021-10/Islamophobia%20Through%20the%20Eyes%20of%20Muslims.pdf.

[17] https://time.com/5884176/islam-black-lives-matter-policing-muslims/ ; https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/02/25/516468604/black-muslims-face-double-jeopardy-anxiety-in-the-heartland.

[18] Beverly McPhail, Hating Hate: Policy Implications of Hate Crime Legislation, 74 THE SOCIAL SERVICE REVIEW, 74(4), at 641 (Dec. 2000).

To combat rising anti-Muslim discrimination, harassment and hate incidents particularly targeting institutions, Muslim Advocates makes the following recommendations for members of Congress:

1) Refrain from engaging in hate speech about Islam and Muslims and be sure to condemn and hold accountable colleagues who do make such hateful comments. Rather than continuing to sow the division that threatens the very fabric of American society, members of Congress must foster unity to collectively address the many challenges we face.
2) Address the failures of past and present federal law enforcement programs that have mischaracterized and criminalized American Muslims' religious expression, perpetuated patently false stereotypes about Muslims, permitted racial and religious profiling, and ultimately resulted in bad federal policing. Specifically, we ask Congress to:
    a. Request an audit of all federal law enforcement and intelligence gathering training and educational materials to identify information that is factually incorrect or exhibits bias against any race, ethnicity, religion, or national origin. Hold a hearing to share findings and examine the impacts of these materials.
    b. Condition homeland security funding on a mandatory retraining program for all federal, state, and local law enforcement officials who have been subjected to biased and discriminatory training provided by the federal government or with federal funds.
    c. Require that DHS condition law enforcement and homeland security funding for state and local governments (including TVTP grants) on carrying out training or otherwise using federal funds in a manner that upholds our nation's commitment to equal treatment and equal justice under the law and barring the use of trainers or materials that exhibit bias against any race, ethnicity, religion, or national origin.
    d. Demand accountability of federal agencies for permitting racial and religious profiling in law enforcement intelligence activities.
    e. Discontinue funding of, and demand transparency from, the Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention grant program, and Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3)
        i. Aside from messaging, it is not clear to us whether either of these programs are anything but a reformulation of previous, flawed federal government countering violent extremism programs.
        ii. There is no indication that current grantees are pursuing evidence-based approaches.

iii. There are no publicly available assessments of the effectiveness of past grants and whether these experiences contain any lessons for future efforts.[19]
iv. CP3 must sspecifically address the concerns Muslim Advocates outlined in a letter to Acting DHS Secretary Chad Wolf on June 1, 2020.[20]

3) To date, there still has not been a full, public, and independent accounting and review of the Patriot Act & other surveillance powers granted by Congress to the FBI and other institutions within the Executive branch. The Committee is well-positioned to initiate this public reckoning.
4) Ensure that law enforcement resources are targeting the biggest domestic threat to Americans, which is white nationalism. Profiling and surveilling American Muslims not only violates our constitutional rights and liberties: it detracts from the real threat, stigmatizes our communities, and damages trust, all of which make our nation less safe.
5) Direct federal resources to community approaches to safety: invest in our communities' self-determination by redirecting grants from Department of Homeland Security programs to community-based security approaches that do not rely on law enforcement.

[19] In a February 2021 report, DHS concurred with a recommendation by the GAO that DHS implement evaluation measures for TVTP, stating that its Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Grant Program Evaluation Plan documents its planned evaluation method. Copies of this Plan are not readily available, and no results have been published. https://www.gao.gov/assets/720/712452.pdf.
[20] https://muslimadvocates.org/2020/06/civil-rights-and-community-groups-ask-dhs-to-halt-discriminatory-surveillance-grant-program/

ACE® American Council on Education®

February 14, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Room H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Room H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Room S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Room S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader Schumer and Leader McConnell:

After working and consulting with UNCF, the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, and the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, the American Council on Education and the undersigned associations and organizations write to seek your assistance on an urgent matter of national importance.

In recent weeks, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have been subjected to repeated, systematic threats to their students and campuses. These acts of terror deliberately strike at institutions that have a unique significance to Black Americans and to American higher education. HBCUs are targeted precisely because they serve as powerful symbols of Black Americans' strength and achievement. All of America's colleges and universities pledge to do everything we can to support and enhance these incredible institutions.

Regrettably, threats like this are nothing new for HBCUs and their communities. They have faced, and faced down, too many attacks over time, are rightfully proud of their legacy, and will not be deterred by more threats of violence.

Just because attacks like these recent bomb threats are not new does not mean we must not act. We appreciate that the FBI and other law enforcement agencies are actively investigating these threats. But we also need action from Congress in this moment.

First, these crimes must be fully and aggressively investigated, and the offenders prosecuted in accordance with the grievous harm they have caused. We urge you to work with your congressional colleagues and the Administration to ensure that is the case.

Second, we ask you to immediately pass H.Con.Res. 70 to put Congress on record on this matter of national importance.

Finally, the egregious nature of these crimes, their scope and scale, and the racist motivations behind them deserve specific attention. Congress has both the unique authority and responsibility to address this. For this reason, we request you hold congressional hearings on an expedited basis, with a focus on the persistent issues underlying these crimes and how to prevent future occurrences.

We reiterate that for too many of our students and colleagues, the threats against HBCUs across the country are a reminder of the reality of racial violence and inequities that are present every day. Congress can take meaningful action to address the very real harm that has been caused. We urge you to do so, and quickly.

Sincerely,



Ted Mitchell
President

On behalf of:

Achieving the Dream
ACPA-College Student Educators International
ACT
American Association of Colleges and Universities
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Association of University Professors
American College Health Association
American Council on Education
American Dental Education Association
American Federation of Teachers
American Indian Higher Education Consortium
APPA, "Leadership in Educational Facilities"
Association of American Universities
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
Association of Community College Trustees
Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Association of Research Libraries
Center for American Progress

Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities
College Board
Common App
Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area
Council for Advancement and Support of Education
Council for Higher Education Accreditation
Council for Opportunity in Education
Council of Graduate Schools
Council of Independent Colleges
Council on Social Work Education
EDUCAUSE
ETS
Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce
Georgia Budget and Policy Institute
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
Institution for Higher Education Policy
KIPP Public Schools
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education
National Association of College and University Business Officers
National Association of Colleges and Employers
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
National Association of System Heads
National Collegiate Athletic Association
National Council of University Research Administrators
New America Higher Education Program
Phi Beta Kappa Society
SACSCOC
Silicon Valley Leadership Group
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
The Education Trust
The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice
The Institute for College Access & Success
Third Way
Thurgood Marshall College Fund
UNCF
Yes We Must Coalition

Cc: The Honorable Patty Murray
The Honorable Richard Burr
The Honorable Bobby Scott
The Honorable Virginia Foxx
The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
The Honorable Jim Jordan
The Honorable Dick Durbin
The Honorable Chuck Grassley

National Action Network

Rev. Al Sharpton, *President & Founder* | Rev. Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, *Chairman*

February 16th, 2022

House Committee on the Judiciary
Chairman Jerrold Nadler
2141 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC, 20515

Dear Chairman Nadler,

There has not been a week this month without a bomb threat at an HBCU, and the recent timing and scope of targeting Historically Black Colleges and Universities ("HBCUs"), high schools, and faith institutions echos this nation's violent history and continues to be a chronic and pervasive part of the life experience for people of color and ethnic backgrounds to have their vulnerable communal spaces threatened. Black History Month started with bomb threats targeting 16 HBCU's coupled with recent religious and high school institutions. On January 5, eight HBCUs reported bomb threats. These incidents are not isolated. People of color or ethnic backgrounds that have experienced violence believe every danger is real.

We are one of many groups advocating for justice and equity formed in response to the experience and threat of discrimination within the civil rights movement. The National Action Network (NAN) is one of the leading civil rights organizations in the Nation, with chapters throughout the entire United States. Founded in 1991 by Reverend Al Sharpton, NAN works within the spirit and tradition of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to promote a modern civil rights agenda that includes the fight for one standard of justice, decency, and equal opportunities for all people regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, citizenship, criminal record, economic status, gender, gender expression, or sexuality.

Our nation should ensure its citizens are safe and supported regardless of race or religious beliefs – whether in a place of worship, at school, or away at college. These incidents have a long history of weaponizing fear as a tool of domestic terrorism through the lens of White supremacy. According to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), White supremacy is a term used to characterize various belief systems central to which are one or more of the following fundamental tenets: 1) whites should dominate people of other backgrounds, especially where they may co-exist; 2) whites should live by themselves in a whites-only society; 3) white people have their own "culture" that is superior to other cultures; 4) white people are genetically superior to other people. White supremacy is far more encompassing than simple racism or bigotry.

National Action Network

Rev. Al Sharpton, *President & Founder* | Rev. Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, *Chairman*

The visibility of HBCUs has increased in recent years, thanks to the achievements of high-profile alumni such as Vice President Harris, Sen. Raphael G. Warnock (D-Ga.), and Stacey Abrams and staff like Deon Sanders. As HBCUs have become more visible while U.S. racial tensions abound, the schools have become more apparent targets, as demonstrated by the hoax of a bomb threat. These threats, like violence and defacement against synagogues, mark an increased willingness to attack the cultural and educational institutions of groups traditionally targeted by prejudice.

Multiple studies have charted the impact of exposure to racism on people of color. On October 19, 2021, several leading pediatric organizations declared a national state of emergency for child and adolescent mental health, in part due to the immense toll of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Emergency Taskforce on Black Youth Suicide and Mental Health released a report documenting the alarming increases in Black youth suicide rates. In 2019, the American Academy of Pediatrics released a policy statement naming racism as a driver of health inequities in Black children and adolescents, including but not limited to mental health. Black teenagers may experience racism, often in the form of race-related bullying, more than five times per day, with a greater number of experiences tied to greater intensity of depressive symptoms. These institutions are where our students and community members are supposed to feel the safest from a world of anti-blackness and white supremacy.

We applaud the subcommittee for bringing this hearing to the forefront and sending a letter to Attorney Merrick Garland and FBI Director Christopher Wray on February 3rd with the Congressional Black Caucus Chair, Rep. Joyce Beatty, and Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (TX-18). We also call on the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Intelligence & Counterterrorism to conduct a parallel investigation as they have done with similar issues in the past.

Mr. Chairman, this is urgent. We will continue to call on those in positions of power, campus, community, and elected leaders to commit resources to identify and mitigate threats to HBCUs, Black students, and faith institutions.

National Action Network

Rev. Al Sharpton, *President & Founder* | Rev. Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, *Chairman*

Yours in progress,

Ebonie Riley
Vice President of Policy and Strategic Partnerships
National Action Network

Tylik M. McMillan
National Director of Youth and College
National Action Network

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I now recognize the gentleman from Utah, Mr. Owens, for his opening statement.

Mr. Owens, welcome, and thank you very much.

Mr. OWENS. Thank you, Chair Jackson Lee, Chair Nadler, and Ranking Member Biggs. Thanks for the opportunity for me to share my statement this morning.

I have to apologize in advance, I have to leave early, so I want to thank the Witnesses now for their participation.

The violent crime rate in America is rising and that is simply not acceptable. Americans of all races, class, and social economic conditions have been affected. Too many Americans are scared and worried about their safety and that of their children, neighbors, and our law enforcement officers.

So, while the increase in violence against historically Black colleges and universities, HBCUs, are concerning, and I'll add, the increase in violence against Asian Americans, Jewish Americans, and police officers are also concerning, it's puzzling to me that we as a Crime Subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee aren't doing more to examine this frightening increase in violent crime.

My first point is that this overall rise in crime has killed or harmed more minorities and Black Americans than the unfortunate bomb threats at the HBCUs. According to a new study by the University of California, Davis, the recent rise in violent crime across the United States has been concentrated on low-income communities of color, which have also been—disproportionately experienced the impact of school closures during this pandemic.

To further illustrate this point that violence in America harms minority communities, I request unanimous consent to submit for the record a recent Wall Street Journal article entitled, "Black Children's Lives Matter, Too," by Sylvia Bennett-Stone. Ms. Bennett-Stone is a Black mother whose 19-year-old daughter, Krystal, was killed by a stray bullet in 2004 as she made the fatal decision to stop and fill her car with gas. As Ms. Bennett-Stone says, too many communities throughout our Nation have become like war zones.

[The information follows:]

MR. OWENS FOR THE RECORD

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https://www.wsj.com/articles/black-childrens-lives-matter-too-blm-shooting-crossfire-murder-homicide-violent-crime-crt-defund-police-woodson-center-11643926156

OPINIONCOMMENTARY

Black Children's Lives Matter, Too

The rampant violent crime that leaves so many mothers grieving needs to end.

By Sylvia Bennett-Stone

Feb. 3, 2022 6:39 pm ET



When you've lost a child, especially to violence, it's easy for something to transport you suddenly back to the moment you found out your baby was gone. When I learned that a 6-month-old Grayson Matthew Fleming Gray was shot and killed in Atlanta last week as he rode in his car seat with his mom, my chest clenched so tightly that I had to gasp for air. My precious 19-year-old Krystal also was killed in crossfire in 2004, after she made the fatal decision to stop for gas. In those terrible moments when I'm taken back to that night, I can't breathe.

In 2021, 311 American children under 12 were shot and killed. But I haven't seen anyone marching in the streets demanding justice or declaring that their innocent lives mattered. On New Year's Day, the 4-year-old niece of George Floyd was shot and wounded as she slept in her bed. Will anyone remember baby Grayson's name besides his family, who must now find a way to live with their emptiness and grief? How can we tolerate these kinds of deaths in our communities? Why is there no outrage?

The country seems too busy arguing about ideology that doesn't mean anything to a grieving mother and pouring millions of dollars into the race grievance industry. Some people even make reckless demands to defund the police, which will only endanger more children. If young black lives lost to crossfire don't matter to us now, when will they? It shouldn't take the bloodshed of even more innocent children before we become "woke" to this issue.

Some, like me, have personally experienced the loss of a child to street violence and are working to end it. Too many communities throughout our nation have become like war zones. The way to fix this is through grassroots organizations with a track record of stopping violence. Among other things, my initiative, Voices of Black Mothers United, runs grief support groups in 22 states, advocates for the rights of victims of violence, and works with neighborhood violence-prevention projects.

My grandma raised nine children as a widow and, despite a lack of economic and educational opportunities, five of those nine were college graduates. Many other black parents of my grandma's generation did the same, bringing up big families and reaching success against the odds. Their struggle with poverty and disadvantage never meant they turned to lawlessness or rampant violence. They found a way forward regardless, often relying on one another when times were difficult.

What has changed? I believe it's the weakening of moral standards and a devastating combination of hopelessness and anger.

My grandparents' generation had unconditional love for one another. Although not all related by blood, they considered the people around them family. They would share what they had to feed and clothe one another. Neighbors would discipline each other's children without retaliation. People held themselves and others to a high moral standard.

I hear too many people in our communities say "it's not my business" and turn away. Well, it is your business because, the truth is, if your family is not safe, then my family is not safe. Crossfire deaths make that clear.

Too many self-proclaimed spokespersons for the communities struggling with violent crime insist we have no responsibility or control over our circumstances. They intone a mantra of victimhood rather than instilling positive, empowering messages in our children of what they can be. I remind my son and grandchildren that they can do anything they want in life as long as they keep the Ten Commandments as their guide. I address them as kings and queens so they don't forget who they are.

Don't get me wrong, the activists who complain about "the man" keeping us down aren't the only ones to blame. We've heard that message for years, yet black people still rose above it. What is different now? As I see it, the difference is us. We are allowing external obstacles to become an excuse for our failure to be there for our children, for taking the easy route of giving them things instead of discipline and love. Change can begin when we instill hope instead of hopelessness in their minds and hearts—and among as many children in our neighborhoods as we can.

To the mother and family of 6-month-old Grayson Matthew, I send my condolences and prayers. Together, we can all learn to breathe again.

Ms. Bennett-Stone is the national director of Voices of Black Mothers United, a project of the Woodson Center.

Mr. OWENS. My second point, violent crimes is harming all classes of Americans throughout our country. In the last few years, hate and violent crimes have increased against African Americans, Asian Americans, and Jewish Americans. I must say at this point, something very concerning to me is that we're finding that a majority of Asian Americans attacks have been done by Black Americans. So, hate is hate no matter what color the perpetrator is, and we have to figure out a way to stop this.

Overall, FBI data for 2020 points a 25 percent increase in murders from the previous year and the largest increase since the FBI began keeping these records in 1960. Quite simply, violent crime is spiking. Here are some headlines from the last 48 hours highlighting this problem: "New York City seeing spike in violence against Asian Americans," Yahoo News; "35-year-old woman stabbed to death in Manhattan apartment in seemingly random act," ABC News. By the way, the victim in this crime was an Asian American. "Seattle mayor calls for more police with violent crime hitting highest in 14 years:'Status quo is unacceptable,'" FOX News. Again, it is no wonder that Americans of all races, classes, and socioeconomic situations are concerned.

My third and final point is that the solutions to our crime problems will require input and help from across the board, including families, communities, and institutions of faith, but the solutions must include respect for our law enforcement officers. Instead of showing up for our law enforcement officers and solving recruitment and pay problems, we have Members of this Committee who have called for defunding the police.

Here are a few statistics about the heroic efforts of our police officers. According to the FBI, 59 officers have been killed in the line of duty between January 1 and September 30 of 2021. This marks a 50 percent increase in the number of police officers killed when compared to the same period the previous year.

Again, according to FBI reports, records, nationally 60,105 law enforcement officers have been assaulted while performing their duties in 2020. This represents an increase in 4,000 assaults from the previous year. Just last month, January 2022, over 30 police officers were shot and five killed in the United States. This is a 67 percent increase from last January.

Madam Chair, I repeat, the threats of violence at HBCUs are concerning, but we are ignoring the bigger problem. Congress must do its part in addressing the spike in crime. I therefore call on the Committee to hold hearings on the following topics: The correlation between defunding the police and the spike in violent crimes; the problems of law enforcement leaving the profession and violent attacks on police; and, finally, the number of children who were killed by violence in their neighborhoods. According to NPR, over 1,000 children were killed or injured by gunfire in 2021.

As I've mentioned numerous times before this Committee, my dad taught at an HBCU, Florida A&M in Tallahassee, 40 years. I'm concerned about anything that negatively impacts our institutions of learning. This national crime spike is impacting every institution and families of every background. Unfortunately, poor, Black families are disproportionately bearing the brunt of this evil.

I thank you, and I yield back.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. COHEN. Madam Chair, may I ask my friend, Mr. Owens, a question—

Mr. OWENS. Yes.

Mr. COHEN. —if he would yield?

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Cohen, would you—

Mr. OWENS. Yes, please do, uh-huh.

Mr. COHEN. Thank you.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. —restrain so that we can allow Mr. Nadler to give his testimony?

Mr. COHEN. I think it's pertinent that we ask this question at this point.

Mr. BIGGS. Madam Chair, a point of order? A point of order?

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Biggs.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you. My point of order is this, we're in the opening statement phase of this Committee hearing. It's not appropriate for Members to then question other Members about their opening statements. If he wishes to—if the gentleman from Tennessee wishes to ask a question to Mr. Owens, I respect that. I know Mr. Owens is willing to answer that question. It would be more appropriate—

Ms. JACKSON LEE. A point of order, Mr. Biggs.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. All right. Mr. Cohen, if you would be kind to indulge us to allow the opening statements at this time.

Mr. COHEN. I yield, but I don't—I yield.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you, Mr. Cohen.

The Chair now recognizes the Chair of the Full Committee, the gentleman from New York, Mr. Nadler, for his opening statement.

Chair NADLER. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Domestic terrorism is at its highest level since the FBI began tracking it in 1994. Ten years ago, a domestic terrorist killed seven Sikh Americans in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. Five years ago, militia members bombed the mosque in Bloomington, Minnesota. Last summer, a gunman killed six people of Asian descent at a spa in Atlanta. Last month, a gunman took five Jewish Americans hostage in their Texas synagogue. Just days ago, 17 of America's prized historically Black colleges and universities were locked down by bomb threats.

Now, when we take stock of these horrific crimes and when we consider the impact of this violence on the survivors, it can be tempting to give way to despair. At base, domestic terrorism isolates us, not just by inflicting violence in our communities, but also by defining individuals who are members of those communities as "other."

Domestic terrorists want to focus—force us into that frame, a narrative of us and them. That narrative has cost us so much in recent years. Recent events have also taught us a great deal. Among other lessons, when it comes to fighting back against this sort of violence, we are all in the fight together.

Three of our Witnesses today are leaders in the communities I just mentioned, and I'm grateful they are here to share their experiences. By testifying today, you help to ensure that this Committee and the American people understand the unseen impact of

domestic terrorism, of hatred on our families and communities. All of our panelists can speak to the strength of communities that have stood up to this violence, as well as to the millions of Americans affected by domestic terrorism and hate who are not represented here.

As we examine the particular problem of violence directed at minority institutions, we would be wrong to assume that these incidents can be considered in a vacuum. Similarly, when studying these incidents, we should not be taken by the simplistic view that a crime was committed, that a culprit was caught, and that all is well. That is not how hate crime works.

Domestic terrorism has a corrosive impact, not just on the survivors or the local community affected, but on minority communities across the country. Anyone who has experienced hate understands that acts of terror or hate-based violence are never limited to just one community or just one group of people. Those who have experienced such hate know it is only a matter of time until the perpetrators move on to another target, and the next target could be your family, your house of worship, or your neighborhood.

Domestic terrorism invades our safe spaces and makes us feel like strangers in our own country. For communities that have been treated unfairly by law enforcement or by the government, the security measures designed to keep people safe can cause even more anxiety and the greater feeling of unease or otherness.

Too many communities in recent years have felt the pain and fear of hate-filled violence. For many—hate-fueled violence. For many, it has deepened existing wounds that have developed over centuries of bigotry and hate directed at them.

For example, Jewish Americans have experienced a generational trauma that is the legacy of thousands of years of anti-Semitism. Every anti-Semitic Act feels part of an ongoing story, and many other minority communities have a similar story to tell.

Domestic terrorism is planned and carried out by groups and individuals who recruit by sowing distrust in our public institutions, spreading lies to divide Americans, and casting blame on minority groups. They target the spaces we should feel safest: Our houses of worship, our community pillars, and our places of learning.

Though ideology and motivation differ from person to person and group to group, in 2020, White supremacists, extremists and militia members, and other violent far-right extremists were responsible for 66 percent of all domestic terror plots, and none of us should be shy about taking the fight to the worst perpetrators of these crimes.

The threats facing minority institutions are varied and the solutions are complex. We must begin by understanding the challenges we face by examining a range of proposals to how best to respond.

Last year, I was proud to join Congressman Brad Schneider in introducing H.R. 350, the Domestic Terror Prevention Act of 2021. This legislation would require DOJ, DHS, and the FBI to create offices that would monitor, investigate, and prosecute cases of domestic terrorism, focusing their resources on the most pressing threats. I hope that this bill can be part of this solution.

I thank the Chair for holding this very important hearing. I look forward to hearing from our Witnesses.

Before I yield back, I ask unanimous consent that a statement from Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO and National Director of the Anti-Defamation League, be entered into the record.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chair, without objection, so ordered. Thank you very much for your opening statement.

[The information follows:]

CHAIR NADLER FOR THE RECORD

Statement for the Record

The Rise in Violence Against Minority Institutions

Jonathan Greenblatt

CEO & National Director

ADL (Anti-Defamation League)

House Judiciary Committee
Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security

Washington, DC

February 17, 2022

10:00 a.m.



Working to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure Justice and fair treatment to all since 1913

INTRODUCTION TO ADL

Since 1913, the mission of ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) has been to "stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all." Today, ADL is a global leader in exposing extremism, delivering anti-bias education, and monitoring and fighting the spread of hate in our communities and online. For decades, one of the most important ways in which ADL has fought against bigotry and antisemitism has been by investigating extremist threats across the ideological spectrum, including white supremacists and other far-right violent extremists, producing research to inform the public of the scope of the threat, and working with law enforcement, educators, the tech industry and elected leaders to promote best practices that can effectively address and counter these threats.

Domestic violent extremism and hate crimes have been on the rise in recent years. Reported hate crimes targeting Black and Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) individuals and communities increased significantly over the last two years, including the terrible ongoing bomb threats against Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The Jewish community continues to be a primary target of extremists. Our hearts are with the Colleyville, Texas community that was recently shaken by the trauma of being targeted by a terrorist who took worshipers hostage during a Sabbath service at a local synagogue, one that thankfully had security-related equipment and training – resources that many faith-based communities nationwide do not have access to.

Without a doubt, right-wing extremist violence is currently the greatest domestic terrorism threat to everyone in this country. From Charleston to Charlottesville, from Pittsburgh to Poway and El Paso, we have seen the deadly consequences of white supremacist extremism play out all over this country. Moreover, at ADL we are tracking the mainstreaming, normalizing, and localizing of the hate, disinformation, and toxic conspiracy theories that animate this extremism. We cannot afford to minimize this threat. We need a bipartisan "whole of government approach" – indeed, a "whole of society" approach – to counter it, and the work must start today.

CURRENT TRENDS

Overall Rise in Hate Crimes

As an initial matter, we know from the available data that hate crimes overall were at historic highs in 2020 as the pandemic raged. The FBI's annual hate crimes report revealed that 2020 saw a 13 percent increase in reported hate crimes from the previous year and represented the highest total in almost two decades. A total of 8,263 hate crime incidents were reported, an increase from 7,314 in 2019. As has been the case consistently since hate crimes reporting began, race-based, and specifically anti-Black, hate crimes represented the largest portion of reported hate crimes. In 2020, there was a sharp increase in reported hate crimes targeting Black people; that number rose approximately 49 percent, from 1,930 in 2019 to 2,871. The number of reported anti-AAPI hate crimes increased significantly as well from 179 to 294. Reported gender-identity-based hate crimes also rose, from 198 to 266, which is the highest it has been since the FBI began collecting data on this category of hate crimes in 2013. Although reported "anti-Hispanic-or-Latino" hate crimes decreased slightly, the number is still the second highest it has been since 2010. Hate crimes targeting the Jewish community made up nearly 55 percent of all religion-based hate crimes in 2020. The increase in reported hate crimes came even though, for the third straight year, the number of law enforcement agencies providing data to the FBI declined.

However, the overall numbers reported by the FBI fail to tell the full story of hate crimes and bias-motivated incidents in this country. The FBI's hate crime data is based on voluntary reporting by local law enforcement agencies and appropriate characterization of crimes as having been perpetrated, at least in part, with bias motivation. For a variety of reasons, dozens of large cities either underreport or do not report hate crime data at all. For that reason, experts, including at ADL, know that the real volume and scope of hate crimes targeting all marginalized communities is even higher than the FBI reporting indicates.

Data collection efforts by other organizations also reveal significantly higher numbers of hate-motivated incidents, many of which do not rise to the level of a crime. For example, Stop AAPI Hate counted more than 10,000 hate incidents between March 2020 and September 2021 targeting AAPI persons and conducted a survey finding that nearly one in five Asian Americans experienced a hate incident during the past year. The potentially deadly nature of the attacks on this community was brought into stark relief in March 2021 when a shooter targeted three spas in the Atlanta metropolitan area, killing eight people, including six Asian women.

Colleyville and Antisemitic Violence

Antisemitism is an ongoing threat to the American Jewish community. According to the FBI's annual data on hate crimes, crimes targeting the Jewish community consistently constitute over half of all religion-based crimes. The number of hate crimes against Jews has ranged between 600 and 1,200 each year since the FBI began collecting data in the 1990s. There were 683 hate crimes against Jews in 2020, 963 in 2019 and 847 in 2018.

A violent attack against the Jewish community occurred just recently, on January 15, 2022, when a gunman entered Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas, during services, taking three congregants and the rabbi as hostages. Though the standoff thankfully ended with all hostages freed and physically unharmed, the violent act reinforced the urgent need to address the threat of antisemitic violence – experienced by the Colleyville community and far too many others. The fact that the Colleyville attacker travelled from the United Kingdom underscores that there can be foreign influences on domestic terrorism, either through incitement, coordination, or direct participation.

Rising Antisemitism

ADL has recorded a 60 percent increase of antisemitic incidents over the past five years. While antisemitism has commonalities with racism, anti-Muslim bias, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, misogyny and other forms of hate and discrimination, it also has certain unique characteristics as a specific set of ideologies about Jews that has migrated across discourses – and across centuries. In almost every part of our society, this hatred has been conjured and adjusted to suit the values, belief, and fears of specific demographics and contexts. Thus, the underlying conspiracy theories employing Jew-hatred morph to fit the anxieties and upheavals of the time – for example, that Jews were responsible for the Black Death in medieval times and for "inventing," spreading, or profiting from COVID-19 in the 21st century. Or that Jews exercise extraordinary power over governments, media, and finance – from the charges of a conspiracy to achieve world domination set forth in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and used by the Nazis, to thinly veiled antisemitism blaming "globalists" and "cosmopolitan elites" for all the ills of the world and for conspiring to impose a "New World Order." We cannot fight antisemitism without understanding how it is both intertwined with other forms of prejudice and

how it is unique. ADL's resource, Antisemitism Uncovered: A Guide to Old Myths in a New Era, offers comprehensive information about the history and current manifestations of antisemitism.

Each year, the ADL Center on Extremism tracks incidents of antisemitic harassment, vandalism, and assault in the United States. Since 1979, we have published this information in an annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents. In 2020, ADL tabulated 2,024 reported antisemitic incidents throughout the United States. This is a 4 percent decrease from the 2,107 incidents recorded in 2019 but is still the third-highest year on record since ADL began this tracking. Known extremist groups or individuals inspired by extremist ideology were responsible for 331 incidents in 2020, up from 270 incidents in 2019. This represents 16 percent of the total number of incidents in 2020.

More recently, analysis from the ADL Center on Extremism reveals that antisemitic incidents in the U.S. more than doubled during the May 2021 military conflict between Israel and Hamas and its immediate aftermath compared to the same period in 2020. After peaking during that period, incident levels gradually returned to a baseline level.

Threats to HBCUs

Over the last several weeks, America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have been targeted by widespread and repeated bomb threats. While the cases are still under investigation, law enforcement authorities reportedly believe the threats are racially motivated. It is no coincidence that HBCUs, a longstanding symbol of Black resilience and excellence, were targeted at the start of Black History Month and during a time of widespread and "equal opportunity" hate, which has affected marginalized communities nationwide.

Murder and Extremism: By the Numbers

New research from the ADL Center on Extremism finds that, in 2021, domestic extremists killed at least 29 people in the United States, in 19 separate incidents. This represents a modest increase from the 23 extremist-related murders documented in 2020 but is far lower than the number of murders committed in any of the five years prior (which ranged from 45 to 78). While this could be cause for optimism, more likely it is the result of COVID-19 lockdowns reducing mass gatherings and the increased attention of law enforcement following the January 6th, 2021 insurrection.

Most of the murders (26 of 29) were committed by right-wing extremists, consistent with trends lasting more than a decade in this country. Of the 333 right-wing extremist-related killings over the last 10 years, at least 73 percent have been at the hands of white supremacists.

White Supremacist Propaganda

The ADL Center on Extremism tracked a near-doubling of white supremacist propaganda efforts in 2020, which included the distribution of racist, antisemitic, and anti-LGBTQ+ fliers, stickers, banners and posters. The 2020 data shows a huge increase of incidents from the previous year, with a total of 5,125 cases reported to ADL (averaging more than 14 incidents per day), compared to 2,724 in 2019. This is the highest number of white supremacist propaganda incidents ADL has ever recorded. The number of propaganda incidents on college

campuses dropped by more than half, perhaps due to COVID-19 restrictions.

One of the most prolific of the white supremacist groups engaged in vandalism and the distribution of propaganda in 2020 is Patriot Front. Patriot Front split from another white supremacist group, Vanguard America, which had participated in the deadly Charlottesville Unite the Right rally in 2017 and whose symbols were carried by the man convicted of ramming a car into a group of counter-protesters, killing Heather Heyer. Many of those associated with Vanguard America who subsequently associated with Patriot Front had been at the 2017 Unite the Right Rally.

Propaganda gives white supremacists the ability to maximize media and online attention, while limiting the risk of individual exposure, negative media coverage, arrests, and public backlash that often accompanies more public events. The barrage of propaganda, which overwhelmingly features veiled white supremacist language with a "patriotic" slant, is an effort to normalize white supremacists' message and bolster recruitment efforts while targeting marginalized communities including Jews, Black people, Muslims, non-white immigrants and LGBTQ+ people.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing Modern Terrorist Threats

We need a whole-of-government approach to address the extremist threat that the Jewish community, and many others, are facing and will continue to face in the years to come. The framework that ADL has created – the PROTECT plan – is a comprehensive, seven-part plan to mitigate the threat posed by domestic extremism and domestic terrorism while protecting civil rights and civil liberties. Together, focusing on these seven categories can have an immediate and deeply significant impact in preventing and countering domestic terrorism – more so than any one action, policy, or law – and can do so while protecting civil rights and liberties and ensuring that government overreach does not harm the same vulnerable people and communities that these extremists target.

- **Prioritize Preventing and Countering Domestic Terrorism:** We urge Congress to adopt a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to preventing and countering domestic terrorism.
- **Resource According to the Threat**: We must ensure that the authorities and resources the government uses to address violent threats are proportionate to the risk of the lethality of those threats. In other words, allocation of resources must never be politicized but rather based on transparent and objective security concerns.
    - Legislation that facilitates transparency in resourcing can help ensure this crucial oversight, such as the transparency mechanisms and related measures in the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act, H.R. 350 (DTPA). We urge Congress to pass the DTPA immediately; doing so can help lay a foundation on which to build an effective and comprehensive approach to addressing the threat.
- **Oppose Extremists in Government Service:** It is essential that we recognize the potential for harm when extremists gain positions of power, including in government, law enforcement, and the military.
- **Take Domestic Terrorism Prevention Measures:** We must not wait until after someone has become an extremist or a terrorist attack has happened to act. Effective and promising

prevention measures exist, which should be scaled.

- **End the Complicity of Social Media in Facilitating Extremism:** Congress must prioritize countering online extremism and ensuring that perpetrators who engage in unlawful activity online can be held accountable. Online platforms often lack adequate policies or enforcement practices to mitigate extremism and hate equitably and at scale. Federal and state laws and policies require significant updating to hold online platforms and individual perpetrators accountable for enabling hate, racism, and extremist violence across the internet. In March 2021, ADL announced the REPAIR Plan, which offers a comprehensive framework for platforms and policymakers to take meaningful action to decrease online hate and extremism.
- **Create an Independent Clearinghouse for Online Extremist Content:** Congress should work with the Biden-Harris Administration to create a publicly funded, independent nonprofit center to track online extremist threat information in real-time and make referrals to social media companies and law enforcement agencies when appropriate.
- **Target Foreign White Supremacist Terrorist Groups:** Congress must recognize that white supremacist extremism is a major global threat of our era and mobilize with that mindset.

Nonprofit Security Grant Program

The Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) is an essential tool in protecting nonprofits, including houses of worship and other faith-based organizations. The program can be used for training and equipment to secure facilities, such as synagogues like the one in Colleyville, Texas, whose leadership took advantage of the program. Far too many houses of worship do not. And those that do apply have a frustratingly low likelihood of receiving financial relief from the program for securing themselves. For houses of worship, community needs should be more front of mind than providing for their own security or raising funds for security precautions.

In the last grant cycle, 3,361 applicants requested $399,763,916 in NSGP grants, according to FEMA. Congress had only funded the program at $180 million, providing for a maximum of only 45 percent of security costs that nonprofits had assessed were necessary for their community's security. That funding gap represents almost $220 million in unfunded liabilities for nonprofit organizations in an era of high and rising threats from domestic violent extremists. While the synagogue in Colleyville had fortunately been aware of this opportunity – and received some benefits from it – try to imagine all of the synagogues, churches, gurdwaras, and other community pillars lacking resources, and further, those that lack even the awareness of the program at all. While it might be fair to say that not all applications for funding are perfectly executed, it would also be fair to note that these are community institutions – not professional government contractors – navigating complex bureaucratic requirements when they should be focused on their communities. In this era of extreme threats to houses of worship, our communities deserve more.

Recommendations for Reforming the Nonprofit Security Grant Program

NSGP poses a significant opportunity to help secure our communities. Even modest reforms can provide significant support. ADL recommends that Congress take on the following reforms:

- **Significantly increase the pool of available funding for NSGP:** Funding NSGP at $360 million last year would have ensured that 90 percent of applicants received funding. For many grant programs, funding a small percentage of applications is a signal of the competitiveness of the program. However, NSGP does not fund nonprofits performing government services, it funds nonprofits who need government support. It should not be competitive, it should be helpful. We should expect even more applications in the future, as more organizations should be made aware of the program, and the threat trends show an increase in risk. As such, $360 million is the minimum amount that community organizations need to secure themselves in this era of severe risk.
- **Scale outreach and engagement to increase the applicant pool:** Not enough states avail themselves of the program, and many community organizations are not aware of it. Following the Colleyville tragedy, ADL heard from many community partners that they were not aware of the funding available. While ADL can make partners aware of the opportunity – and urge state governments to increase their efforts within their states – DHS must step up. DHS should significantly increase engagement with communities and with state governments to broaden the number of applicants seeking support from the program.
- **Scale outreach and engagement to guide applicants:** Nonprofits like houses of worship are not government contractors; the burdensome bureaucratic requirements of federal funding applications may be familiar to organizations with direct experience applying for federal grants, but for most NSGP applicants, applying is a new and unusual process. As such, DHS should increase its guidance to potential applicants on how to be successful when applying for funds. Applying for NSGP grants should not be a competition, pitting congregation against congregation. It should be a way to support all communities under threat.
- **Broaden the spectrum of eligible grantee expenses:** NSGP funds can be used for security training and equipment to guard against threats that are "terroristic." "Terroristic" is not a term many applicants may be familiar with. Moreover, it should be interpreted as broadly as possible, such as including threats from domestic extremist organizations based on the tactics those organizations use. As such, safeguarding against cybercrimes, such as hacking a website, and other targeted harassment that bears the hallmarks of the behavior of hate-based movements that sometimes use terrorism should be allowable expenses. The interpretation of guidance on expenses should track the guidance on threats provided by DHS and other law enforcement and intelligence entities, which note that domestic terrorism represents the top terrorist risk to Americans domestically. The full scope of domestic terrorist tactics should be considered when making programmatic decisions.
- **Provide full support to DHS to faithfully execute a scaled program:** Grant management is a technical skill, and oversight is incredibly important for large funds. DHS should not be expected to adapt to the heightened threat environment without further resources to ensure funding is spent effectively and to provide necessary outreach. DHS should receive additional staff and other resources to administer the program, as well as new funding streams for additional outreach to potential applicants.
- **Ensure transparency and oversight in the administration of the program:** While DHS must be empowered to help community members secure themselves, it cannot be allowed to operate without careful oversight. We must acknowledge that some communities may feel less empowered, not more, when seeing DHS increase its resources. The program should be reviewed through a civil rights and civil liberties lens. Further, it is difficult for the public to determine how funding has been dispersed: DHS should release a public,

annual report on the program, and Congress should ensure that the resources provided to DHS for this objective are being used proportionate to the evidence of terroristic threats.

Implementing a Comprehensive Approach to Preventing and Responding to Hate Crimes

Congress took a significant step forward in improving our nation's response to hate crimes by passing the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act in 2021, which included the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act. The bill included crucial measures to expedite an Attorney General review of hate crimes nationwide, require the promulgation of guidance to law enforcement agencies regarding best practices for establishing hate crime reporting tools and collecting data on these crimes, and created new grant programs to provide much-needed resources to establish state-run hate crime hotlines and improve hate crime reporting to the FBI. The Department of Justice has already made strong progress in implementing provisions of this law; however, full implementation of all of the important new grant programs requires that Congress appropriate funds for them. ADL urges Congress to appropriate $15 million for grant programs to implement the National Incident-Based Reporting System, to create State-run hate crime reporting hotlines, and to conduct training and develop protocols for identifying, analyzing, investigating, and reporting hate crimes.

However, passing the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act should not represent the end of Congressional efforts to address hate crimes; there remains significant work to do to implement a comprehensive and data-informed approach to this devastating problem. A necessary prerequisite to developing such an approach is having complete and reliable data about hate crimes – data that does not currently exist. Multiple factors contribute to deficits in our knowledge about the full scope and nature of hate crimes, including victimized communities' distrust and avoidance of law enforcement agencies; lack of training for officers in recognizing and investigating bias motivations; and frontline agencies' limited capacity to maintain and share records with the FBI. Some of these challenges can begin to be addressed through full implementation of the NO HATE Act; however, there remains one key weakness in the current hate crime data collection program – it relies on voluntary participation by state and local law enforcement. Congress must evaluate options for making hate crime reporting mandatory by all law enforcement agencies.

In addition to ensuring a robust system of hate crime reporting, we must also invest in community-centered approaches to preventing hate crimes from occurring in the first place. The communities that are most impacted by hate crimes must be positioned to lead efforts to develop policies and programmatic approaches to address this problem. One way that the Administration can immediately support this community-focused preventative work is through a revitalized Community Relations Service (CRS) at the Department of Justice. CRS is the only federal agency dedicated to working on the ground with community groups to resolve local conflicts and prevent and respond to hate crimes and incidents. CRS works to build relationships with community stakeholders before tragedy occurs, helping ensure that crisis response can be both timely and meaningful. CRS's focus on prevention provides a unique value-add to communities, bringing experts to help problem-solve and build local capacity to prevent and respond to conflict, tension, and bias-motivated incidents. CRS also provides crucial relationship-building programs designed to strengthen relationships between law enforcement and the community – work that is vital to effectively preventing and responding to hate crimes as many of the communities targeted by such violence often have mistrust of law enforcement rooted in historical and ongoing police violence against marginalized communities. ADL applauds the Administration's early efforts to revitalize

this crucial agency and urges Congress to increase the annual funding for this agency to $40 million. In addition, DOJ can help support community-led efforts to prevent hate crimes and address their root causes by giving priority for federal grant funding to those qualified institutions of higher education and nongovernmental organizations that propose to use funding to provide services that reduce the risk of hate crimes or to provide legal, material, social, and other support to people and institutions affected by hate crimes.

Chair NADLER. Thank you, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you. I thank the gentleman.

I now recognize the Ranking Member, the gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Biggs, for his opening statement.

Mr. BIGGS. I thank you, Madam Chair, and I'm grateful that you're holding this hearing today.

I want to express—I do express my gratitude to all the Witnesses who are here. We appreciate it. I look forward to hearing your important testimony today.

Today's hearing is entitled, "The Rise in Violence Against Minority Institutions." I think that's an important topic. I State clearly, unequivocally that placing bombs or making bomb threats or any threat of violence or violent Act against a historically Black college or university or any institution is unacceptable. It must be investigated, it must be prosecuted, and if warranted and after due process, an appropriate adjudication made. These things I don't think anybody on this Committee, or hopefully not within the sound of my voice, would disagree with this.

It is my understanding that the bomb threats that were recently made at historically Black colleges and universities, several of them, are actually being investigated now, and I am hopeful that those who were responsible will be identified and brought to justice. I think that's—if we're going to get a handle on this, you have to create the deterrent by bringing those folks in, and we want to deter further activity as well as punish those who were responsible for this.

There are other issues related to violent crime, as my colleague from Utah has mentioned, in fact, as the Chair in her statement brought forth a very broad, contextual statement about violent crime in America.

Just yesterday, I and my Republican colleagues sent the Chair a letter requesting that the Subcommittee hold a hearing to investigate the recent reports that ICE released an illegal alien with ties to terrorism from custody for the reason that he might catch COVID–19. Now, that's an outrageous thing, and this Committee should immediately hold a hearing on the matter. I call upon the chair and I look forward to working with the Chair to schedule that hearing as soon as possible.

Now, when I turn my attention to today's hearing, we see crime rates, particularly violent crime rates, accelerating all over this Nation. During the last 2 years, the United States has seen a spike in violent crime, and some may directly attribute it to the COVID outbreak and responses to that, and I don't discount that, but let's consider the numbers.

In 2020, the United States tallied more than 20,000 murders, the highest total since 1995 and 4,000 more than in 2019. Preliminary FBI data for 2020 points to a 25 percent surge in murders. This would be the largest single year increase since the agency published numbers—began publishing numbers in 1960.

Despite the rises in crime, some on this committee, some of my colleagues across the aisle continue to push efforts to defund the police. Just last week a Member of this Subcommittee doubled down on calls to defund the police, and this follows the Chair stat-

ing in 2020 that there should be substantial cut to the New York City Police budget.

So, when you cut police budgets, is there any surprise that violent crime escalates? In New York City, the NYPD's data shows that overall crime rate rose 11.2 percent in October 2021 compared to October 2020. This jump in crime continues after New York City defunded its police department by $1 billion, and now they're talking about restoring some of that.

In Los Angeles County, homicides increased 23 percent from 555 in 2020 to 683 in 2021. The increased homicide rate occurred after Los Angeles defunded its police department by $150 million.

No one should be surprised when we have prosecutors who refuse to prosecute crimes that violent crimes goes up. Just one example, and there are many, but this is one example, comes from San Francisco, where District Attorney Chesa Boudin assumed office in January 2020. Boudin announced, soon after his election, that he was not going to seek the death penalty in any future cases. He would not pursue three strikes cases and he would deemphasize the prosecution of drug cases and property offenses.

Since January 2020, gun violence and homicide have dramatically increased in San Francisco, where homicides have increased 31 percent during Boudin's first year in office. According to San Francisco Police, vehicle break-ins increased between 100 and 750 percent, depending on the neighborhood. So-called smash-and-grabs at retail stores have become a commonplace.

Is anyone surprised when we release dangerous criminals awaiting trial that violent crime goes up? As we all know in Waukesha, Wisconsin, Darrell Brooks was released on a $1,000 bond after running over a woman with a vehicle. He was released on bail, despite having a lengthy criminal history, including a charge for aggravated battery, an outstanding warrant in Nevada after skipping bail for a sex-related crime as well.

On November 21, 2021, Brooks drove his car through a Christmas parade injuring over 50 individuals and killing six, one of whom was an 8-year-old child. Brooks now faces eight counts of intentional homicide, six counts of hit and run involving death, two felonies for skipping bail, two counts of domestic abuse charges, and 61 counts of recklessly endangering safety for each injured person at the Christmas parade.

Some of you may be asking what all of this has to do with today's hearing about violence against minority institutions. The answer is simple. When you defund the police and enact policies to embolden criminals, it often is the minority communities that pay the most egregious price. Shooting homicides are concentrated in underserved, impoverished minority communities, and I argue that hits hardest on the families that have lost loved ones as a result of violent crime. The social institution of the family remains the most important in society, but it is damaged by violence.

I mentioned smash-and-grab stores—at retail stores. It's not isolated to San Francisco. It is often occurring all over the country, many times to minority owned businesses. Couple this with the mayhem and destruction, minority owned businesses suffered as a result of the 2020 riots, and these small businesses continue to

struggle to get by, especially nested in the context of the COVID pandemic.

If we really want to tackle this issue, I suggest we need to make sure that our police are adequately funded. We need to remove dangerous policies that allow violent criminals to hurt innocent victims. I think that we need to continue to talk about the nature of community, the nature of family, the nature of individual responsibility to make sure that all of us are seeking to have strength in our communities, peace in our communities, that each person may actually achieve and fulfill the full measure of the creation that God gave to each one of them.

That's my hope. I hope we come away from this hearing with shared perspectives. I know that we won't agree on everything, but I hope that we find the common areas that we can agree on and work to make this country better for every person in the country.

With that, Madam Chair, thank you, and I yield back.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I thank the Ranking Member, and just a moment for the Chair's prerogative. Let me thank both Mr. Owens and Mr. Biggs for their presentation. Let me be very brief to emphasize to our Members, who I welcome to this hearing, that this hearing should not be diminished. The crisis of attacks on institutions out of racist attitudes and anti-religious attitudes and anti-Semitic attitudes should not be diminished.

You may be somewhat premature in your statements as it relates to this Committee's agenda. I would also say that there are diverse opinions on this Committee and in this Congress. Some in this Congress believe January 6th was a tourist event, others do not.

We know that the President and Vice President are viewers of strong support of law enforcement, as there are Members on this Committee who have those views, and we respect all those views. This is a crucial and important and lifesaving effort to protect those who have been subjected to bomb threats across this Nation, and I for one don't think we should stand for it and be silent about it.

We will go forward with this hearing, but we appreciate your comments, and you should look forward to hearings that will be addressing those questions as well.

It is now my pleasure to introduce today's Witnesses.

Dr. Seth G. Jones is a Senior Vice President at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. He leads a bipartisan team of over 50 resident staff and a network of nonresident affiliates dedicated to providing independent strategic insights and policy solutions that shape national security.

He also teaches at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies and the Center for Homeland Defense and Security at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School. He also served as the representative for the commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations.

Dr. David K. Wilson, the tenth President of Morgan State University, has more than 30 years of experience in higher education. Dr. Wilson holds four academic degrees: A Bachelor of Science in political science and a master of science in education from Tuskegee University, a master of education in educational planning

and Administration from Harvard University, and a doctor of education in Administration planning and social policy also from Harvard. He came to Morgan State from the University of Wisconsin, where he served as chancellor of both the University of Wisconsin Colleges and the University of Wisconsin-Extension.

Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker has been the rabbi at Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas, since 2006. He graduated from the University of Michigan in 1998, and attended Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion at its Jerusalem and Cincinnati campuses, receiving his rabbinical ordination in 2006 and a Master of Arts in Hebrew letters in 2005. He is a past President of the Southwest Association of Reformed Rabbis and serves on the steering Committee of Peace Together.

Dr. Demetrick "Tre" Pennie holds a doctor of education in higher education from Texas Tech University. He earned a bachelor's in criminal justice from Midwestern State University and a master's in counseling from Prairie View A&M University in 2006. He served 4 years in the U.S. Army, is a 22-year retired police sergeant with the Dallas Police Department, and currently serves as President and executive director at the National Fallen Officer Foundation.

Mr. Pardeep Singh Kaleka is a former police officer who is currently the Executive Director of the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee. He is also a clinician who works as a deradicalization interventionist to help individuals and families to help them exist the life of violent extremism. I think it is to resist the life of violent extremism. He cofounded Serve2Unite following the murder of his father during the attack at the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin. His organization works to build positive coalitions among communities and to address conflict and reconciliation through a public health lens.

Brandon Tatum served 6 years at the Tucson Police Department and is the author of "Beaten Black and Blue: Being a Black Cop in an America Under Siege." Mr. Tatum received a Bachelor of Art from the University of Arizona, is currently working toward a master's from Grand Canyon University. As a police officer, he became a SWAT operator, field training officer, general instructor, and a public information officer.

Margaret Huang has been an advocate for human rights and racial justice for nearly 3 years—three decades, and currently serves as the President and CEO of the Southern Poverty Law Center. She previously served as the Executive Director of Amnesty International USA. She received a Master of International Affairs from Columbia University and a Bachelor of Science in foreign service from Georgetown University. She currently sits on the board of directors for the Progressive Multiplier Fund.

We are delighted to have all of you as Witnesses today. We welcome you as distinguished Witnesses and important fact Witnesses, and we thank you for your participation.

I will begin by swearing in our Witnesses. I ask our Witnesses to turn on your audio so that you can be loud and clear, and make sure that I can see your face and your raised hand while I administer the oath.

Do you swear or affirm under penalty of perjury that the testimony you're about to give is true and correct to the best of your knowledge, information, and belief, so help you God?

Can I hear the Witnesses, please?

Let the record show the Witnesses answered in the affirmative, each and every one.

Thank you so very much.

Please note that your written testimony will be entered into the record in its entirety. Accordingly, I ask you to summarize your testimony in 5 minutes. To help you stay within that timeframe, there is a timing light on your screen. When the light switches from green to yellow, you have 1 minute to conclude your testimony. When the light turns red, it signals that your 5 minutes have expired.

I do want to acknowledge to our Members that those who will be giving victim testimony will be given a little time to be able to finish, I think you should know that, out of courtesy to the victimization that they experienced. So, thank you very much for understanding.

It is now my time to recognize Dr. Jones, again, for 5 minutes. You may begin, Dr. Jones.

TESTIMONY OF SETH G. JONES

Mr. JONES. Thank you very much, Chair Jackson Lee, Ranking Member Biggs, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. My opening remarks are going to be divided into three sections. The first outlines the contours of domestic terrorism and the database that I'll be talking a little bit about, the second will actually focus on those trends, and the third are some implications for consideration for Congress.

Let me begin with the first area. What I'm going to focus on is domestic terrorism, defined by the deliberate use or threat of violence by non-state actors to achieve political goals and to create a broad psychological impact. Violence and the threat of violence are critical components of the definition we use in our CSIS database, and this definition is largely consistent with the official U.S. Government definition of domestic terrorism under 18 U.S. Code 2331.

In focusing on domestic terrorism, I do want to highlight that we're not including all aspects of hate speech or hate crimes. Those are obviously deeply concerning, but what we're just focusing on is violence and the threat of violence. Our data set includes, I think, all cases, the universe of cases that we have identified since the early 1990s.

We have worked consistently over the years with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, where I served briefly several years ago: The Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense, and the National Counterterrorism Center. So, we've shared our data and had useful back and forth.

So, let me get briefly to the second area, which is trends. The years 2020–2021, according to our data set, had the highest numbers of domestic terrorist attacks and plots in our data set. In 2021, there were 73 attacks and plots in the United States. It was slightly down from 2020.

This broad recent trend in domestic terrorist activity began around 2014, so from 2014–2021, there have been an average of about 31 fatalities per year. The number of fatalities in 2021 are kind of an average number. We've seen years with much larger numbers of fatalities, including 1995, Oklahoma City; 2001, September 11. The numbers of fatalities certainly are concerning.

Terrorist attacks and plots spanned 18 States, including Washington, DC. Many of these events took place in metropolitan areas, but these cities were dispersed across the U.S. I think it's worth highlighting some of the targets and tactics as well.

The types of weapons we're seeing used varied somewhat by perpetrator. For White supremacists and like-minded attackers, we saw a primary focus on firearms; for anarchists, antifascists, and others, we saw a primary focus on melee weapons, so knives and blunt instruments. So, some variation in the types of weapons that domestic terrorists are using.

In terms of targets, what's interesting is, according to our data, government, military, and police locations and personnel are the most frequently targeted by domestic terrorist attacks, regardless of perpetrator orientation. We do see very concerning attacks against minorities and minority institutions, not just the attack this year, but also a number of them: The Patrick Crusius murder of 22 people focused predominantly on immigrants at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas; in 2019, the Robert Bowers attack at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh in 2018. So, we have seen a very concerning focus on a range of individuals based on their racial, ethnic, religious, political makeup, including misogynistic attacks as well in the U.S.

So, very briefly, on implications particularly for Congress, I continue to believe that the U.S. Government needs to provide much more comprehensive data on terrorist attacks, plots, and I support the FBI and other agencies providing annual or biannual reports to a range of committees in the U.S.

Then lastly, strongly support continuing to support State, local, and other enforcement agencies, so they're appropriately resourced to identify and respond to attacks "left of boom."

So, with that, I will conclude my opening remarks, and obviously happy to take questions later.

[The statement of Mr. Jones follows:]

CSIS | CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Statement before the
House Judiciary Subcommittee on
Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security

"The Evolution of Domestic Terrorism"

A Testimony by:

Dr. Seth G. Jones
Senior Vice President; Harold Brown Chair; and
Director, International Security Program, CSIS

Thursday, February 17, 2022
Virtual

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Chairwoman Jackson Lee, Ranking Member Biggs, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security, thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee on "The Rise in Violence Against Minority Institutions." The threat from domestic terrorism in the United States is serious and continues to evolve, including the threat to minority populations. As this testimony highlights, objective analysis and better data are particularly important to gauge the nature of the threat and effective responses.

The rest of this testimony is divided into three sections. The first outlines the contours of domestic terrorism and highlights the data set compiled by analysts at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). The second section focuses on trends in domestic terrorist incidents and fatalities. The third provides implications for Congress.[1]

I. Domestic Terrorism

Terrorism includes the deliberate use—or threat—of violence by non-state actors to achieve political goals and create a broad psychological impact.[2] Violence and the threat of violence are important components of terrorism. This definition is largely consistent with the official U.S. government definition of domestic terrorism under 18 U.S. Code § 2331 as "acts dangerous to human life" that occur primarily within U.S. territory and are intended "(i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping."[3]

In focusing on terrorism, the data used in this testimony does not focus on the broader categories of hate speech or hate crimes. There is some overlap between terrorism and hate crimes, since some hate crimes include the use or threat of violence. But hate crimes can also include non-violent incidents, such as graffiti and verbal abuse. Hate crimes and hate speech are obviously concerning and a threat to society, but the data concentrates on terrorism and the use—or threat—of violence to achieve political objectives.

This testimony leverages a CSIS data set, which includes 1,040 cases of terrorist plots and attacks in the United States between January 1, 1994, and December 31, 2021. The data set is divided into such categories as the incident date, perpetrator, location, motivation, number of individuals wounded or killed, target, and weapons used. We have cooperated with—and provided the data to—such organizations as the FBI, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense, and National Counterterrorism Center.

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[1] This testimony draws heavily on data and analysis published in several articles, including Seth G. Jones, Catrina Doxsee, Grace Hwang, and Jared Thompson, *The Military, Police, and the Rise of Terrorism in the United States* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 12, 2021), https://www.csis.org/analysis/military-police-and-rise-terrorism-united-states; and Seth G. Jones, Catrina Doxsee, and Nicholas Harrington, *The Tactics and Targets of Domestic Terrorists* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 30, 2020), https://www.csis.org/analysis/tactics-and-targets-domestic-terrorists.

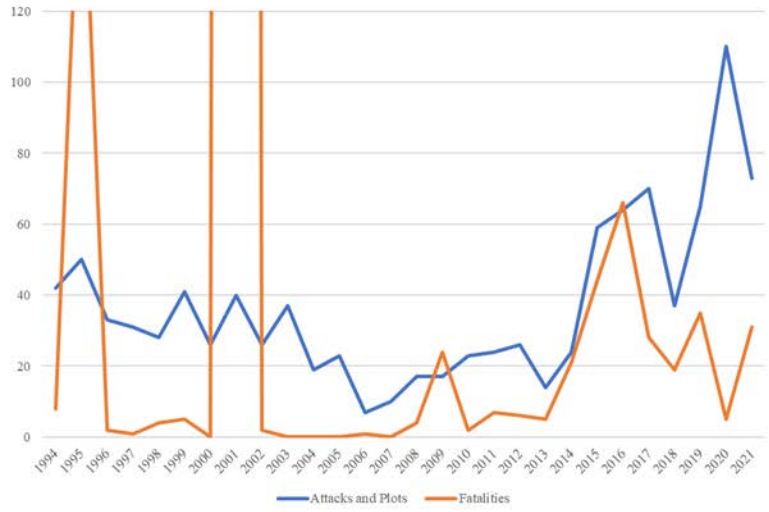
[2] On definitions of terrorism, see, for example, Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017); and Global Terrorism Database, *Codebook: Inclusion Criteria and Variables* (College Park, MD: University of Maryland, October 2019), https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/downloads/Codebook.pdf.

[3] 18 U.S. Code § 2331.

II. Trends in Incidents and Fatalities[4]

The years 2020 and 2021 had the highest numbers of domestic terrorist attacks and plots in our data set. In 2021, there were 73 terrorist attacks and plots in the United States. As shown in Figure 1, the number of fatalities increased from 5 in 2020 to 30 in 2021. This level was roughly comparable to 2019, in which there were 35 fatalities from terrorism in the United States.

Figure 1: U.S. Terrorist Attacks, Plots, and Fatalities, 1994–2021



Source: Data compiled by the CSIS Transnational Threats Project.

The recent increase in domestic terrorist activity began around 2014. From 2014 to 2021, there have been an average of 31 fatalities per year—indicating that the 30 deaths in 2021 were typical of this period. This is substantially more than the period from 1994 to 2013, during which there were only three years in which more than eight individuals were killed in terrorist attacks in the United States.[5]

The return to a higher level of fatalities in 2021 may indicate that the lower number of deaths in 2020 was an anomaly. This may have been the result of the Covid-19 pandemic and related lockdown policies disrupting routines and reducing mass gatherings, the absence of mass casualty events—including due to effective prevention efforts—or perpetrators' prioritization of less lethal

[4] Thanks to Catrina Doxsee for the research, analysis, and data in this section.
[5] The years in which more than eight victims were killed are 1995, 2001, and 2009. This was largely due to the Oklahoma City bombing, the 9/11 attacks, and the Fort Hood shooting, respectively.

methods to send a political message, particularly in the context of public demonstrations and the 2020 presidential election.

Terrorist attacks and plots in 2021 spanned 18 states and Washington, DC. While many of these events took place in large metropolitan areas, these cities were dispersed across the continental United States. The highest concentration of incidents occurred in and around Portland, Oregon, where CSIS tracked 18 terrorist attacks and plots in 2021. The next highest number of terrorist incidents occurred in New York City, where there were seven attacks and plots in 2021.

The types of weapons used and the targets selected in terrorist attacks in 2021 may provide insight into perpetrators' intentions and the threat of lethal terrorist activity. White supremacists and other like-minded attackers used more lethal weapons, such as firearms. Anarchists, anti-fascists, and other like-minded attackers primarily used less lethal methods, including melee attacks. Regardless of perpetrator ideology, most terrorist fatalities in 2021 were from firearms: 9 of the 11 fatal attacks were committed with firearms, accounting for 26 of the 30 deaths.[6]

Of the 38 white supremacist and other like-minded terrorist attacks and plots in 2021, 16 used firearms, 9 involved explosives and incendiaries, 4 were melee attacks using weapons such as knives or bludgeoning weapons, and 2 were vehicular attacks. For example, on March 16, Robert Aaron Long conducted a shooting spree at three spas in the Atlanta metropolitan area, killing eight individuals and injuring one. Long viewed the women working at these spas as a "temptation" and aimed to help other men suffering from "sex addiction" by killing them.[7]

Of the 31 anarchist, anti-fascist, and like-minded terrorist attacks and plots in 2021, 19 were melee attacks using weapons such as knives or bludgeoning objects, 3 primarily used explosives or incendiaries, 2 used firearms, and 1 was a vehicular attack. The large number of melee attacks was a diversion from the traditional reliance on explosives and incendiaries by anarchist, anti-fascist, and like-minded individuals.[8] Most of these melee attacks involved deliberate property damage, and some also included incendiaries as a secondary weapon.

Government, military, and police locations and personnel were the most frequently targeted by domestic terrorist attacks regardless of perpetrator orientation. Of the total 77 terrorist attacks and plots in 2021, 29 were directed against government, military, and police targets. These perpetrators

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[6] The finding that most fatal domestic terrorist attacks involve firearms—regardless of perpetrator ideology—is consistent with past CSIS research. See, for example, Seth G. Jones, Catrina Doxsee, and Nicholas Harrington, "The Tactics and Targets of Domestic Terrorists," CSIS, *CSIS Briefs*, July 30, 2020, https://www.csis.org/analysis/tactics-and-targets-domestic-terrorists.

[7] Kate Brumback, "Atlanta Spa-Shooting Suspect Pleads Not Guilty in 4 Killings," Associated Press, September 28, 2021, https://apnews.com/article/atlanta-spa-shootings-robert-aaron-long-a87456e5f25f34f0acc85c41f73ffbc6; "8 Dead in Atlanta Spa Shootings, With Fears of Anti-Asian Bias," *The New York Times*, March 26, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/03/17/us/shooting-atlanta-acworth#the-suspect-in-the-spa-attacks-has-been-charged-with-eight-counts-of-murder; Alexis Stevens, "Cherokee DA Defends Plea Deal, Decision Not to Pursue Hate Crime," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, July 27, 2021, https://www.ajc.com/news/cherokee-da-defends-plea-deal-says-long-targeted-multiple-ethnicities-genders/WXOAD4JXHNGO3ML3WACU3NBV3E/; and Jina Moore, "How the Atlanta Shooting Shows the Dangers of American Evangelicalism's Trademark 'Purity Culture,'" Business Insider, March 20, 2021, https://www.businessinsider.com/the-atlanta-shooting-and-the-dangers-of-evangelical-purity-culture-2021-3.

[8] Jones, Doxsee, and Harrington, "The Tactics and Targets of Domestic Terrorists."

identified with a range of ideologies and movements, including the sovereign citizen movement, militia groups, anarchism, anti-fascism, environmentalism, and other anti-government and anti-authority philosophies. The next most common target for violent anarchist, anti-fascist, and like-minded perpetrators was businesses.

In terms of attacks against minorities and minority institutions, white supremacists have targeted individuals because of their racial, ethnic, religious, or political makeup—such as African Americans, immigrants, Muslims, and Jews. In 2022, for example, Malik Faisal Akram targeted a suburban Fort Worth, Texas synagogue. Patrick Crusius murdered 22 people—including immigrants—at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas in 2019, and Robert Bowers murdered 11 people at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 2018.

III. Implications for Congress

Congress has an important role to play in several respects.

First, the U.S. government does not publicly release comprehensive data on terrorist attacks and plots, the characteristics of perpetrators, and other factors like tactics and targets. Data analysis could offer an objective mechanism for apportioning counterterrorism resources and efforts relative to actual threats. The FBI (or more broadly the Department of Justice) and Department of Homeland Security should issue annual or biannual reports to the House and Senate Judiciary, Homeland Security, and Intelligence Committees that assess the domestic terrorism threat; analyze domestic terrorism incidents that occurred in the previous six months or one year; and provide transparency through a public quantitative analysis of domestic terrorism-related assessments, investigations, incidents, arrests, indictments, prosecutions, convictions, and weapons recoveries.

Second, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies need additional help—including resources—to identify and respond to domestic terrorism "left of boom." The Department of Homeland Security, Department of Justice, and FBI should continue to review their respective counterterrorism training and resource programs that are provided to federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies and ensure that such programs include sufficient training and resources in understanding, detecting, deterring, and investigating acts of domestic terrorism. Congress should also consider encouraging the Department of Homeland Security to increase funds for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program, which provides funding for nonprofit organizations—including houses of worship—to improve and upgrade their security.

Third, the U.S. government, its partners overseas, and the private sector need to continue to aggressively target individuals and groups that espouse violence on digital platforms. This is a war of ideas on virtual battlefields—just as much as on the streets of U.S. cities and towns. Virtually all domestic extremists use the internet and social media platforms to release propaganda, coordinate training, raise funds, recruit members, and communicate with others. Congress should continue to demand that these digital platforms take down content that supports domestic terrorism and violates their terms of service.

Terrorism, like crime, will not end. But better data collection and analysis—along with effective countermeasures—can significantly reduce the threat from domestic extremists.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you very much, Dr. Jones.
Dr. Wilson is now recognized for 5 minutes.

TESTIMONY OF DAVID K. WILSON

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much, Madam Chair Lee, Ranking Committee Member Biggs, other Members of the Subcommittee. I'm David K. Wilson, the 10th President of Morgan. Morgan is an 8,500-student high-research university here in Baltimore, Maryland.

Madam Chair, the purpose of this gathering today is to address the bomb threats made to Morgan and to more than 20 other HBCUs this year alone. I have to start by saying that as a young Black boy growing up in rural, segregated Jim Crow Alabama on a sharecropping plantation who was not permitted to, of course, attend school full time until I was in the seventh grade, I have experienced firsthand this type of trauma and this type of racial violence, if you will. This is why I have devoted my entire career to providing educational leadership to campuses, to enable them to nurture the intellectual growth of Black students and not to stifle it.

It is so unfortunate that there is so much hatred in our Nation today being held by those who are trying to simply prevent HBCUs from educating a disproportionate number of Black students. Yes, the vast majority of these more than 100 institutions have been around since the mid-19th century, and from their inception they have just simply been targets of domestic terrorism.

I have outlined in my written testimony example after example, dating back to the destruction of Wilberforce University in Ohio, of LeMoyne-Owen College in Tennessee, of Wiley College in Texas, of my own alma mater, Tuskegee University, that saw 75 Klansmen march through the campus and through town, if you will, because they did not want Black physicians to be at the John A. Andrew Hospital ministering to the needs of veterans. The list goes on and on and on. Even at my own national treasure Morgan State University, our students had to fight, fight just to integrate shops right across the street from us. They too were victims of domestic terrorism for years, but they did not give up.

Members of the Subcommittee, this is not 1865, it is not 1923, it is not 1962; this is 2022, but these domestic acts of terror persist across HBCUs. Yes, there is much too much ignorance, much too much misunderstanding that exists today about these historic institutions in American higher education.

Our HBCUs are not some radical terror camps which apparently is wrapped up in the distorted imagination of domestic terrorists. Our campuses are not places, if you will, where our students are taught to hate this country or to engage in activity to destroy the fabric of our democracy.

Quite the contrary, HBCUs have always had their foundation, if you will, as one that prepares, inspires, motivates, and encourages our students to live out the American Dream, to become the engineers and the elected officials—many of you attended our institutions—to become the doctors, the lawyers, the architects, the engineers, and the judges. That's what our institutions have been about, and we have been about that because we too believe very

strongly in the American Dream. We believe that we contribute the talent to make this country more competitive internationally.

So, I just humbly ask the Nation today: Is this not the heart of what a truly functioning, inclusive democracy should be? Well, I believe the answer is clear to all who is willing to see it. Our HBCUs are part and parcel of America. We are national treasures. We deserve the utmost veneration, we deserve the utmost respect, and we deserve the utmost protection.

So, as I bring my remarks to a close, I would simply like to say that HBCUs have created the Black middle class in this country. We will always be the truth tellers. We will always be the innovators. As we come through this bitterly polarized era of American history, our campuses are fully prepared to be the single group of institutions, if need be, that can ultimately keep our democracy from an untimely and unwarranted demise.

We will not let anything cloud our focus. Our students, if you will, deserve to feel safe and be safe. We will never, ever, ever be deterred from what our ancestors gave their blood for, and it was to ensure that these campuses were holding high the ideals in the U.S. Constitution and educate students to grow the future and, indeed, lead the world.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[The statement of Mr. Wilson follows:]

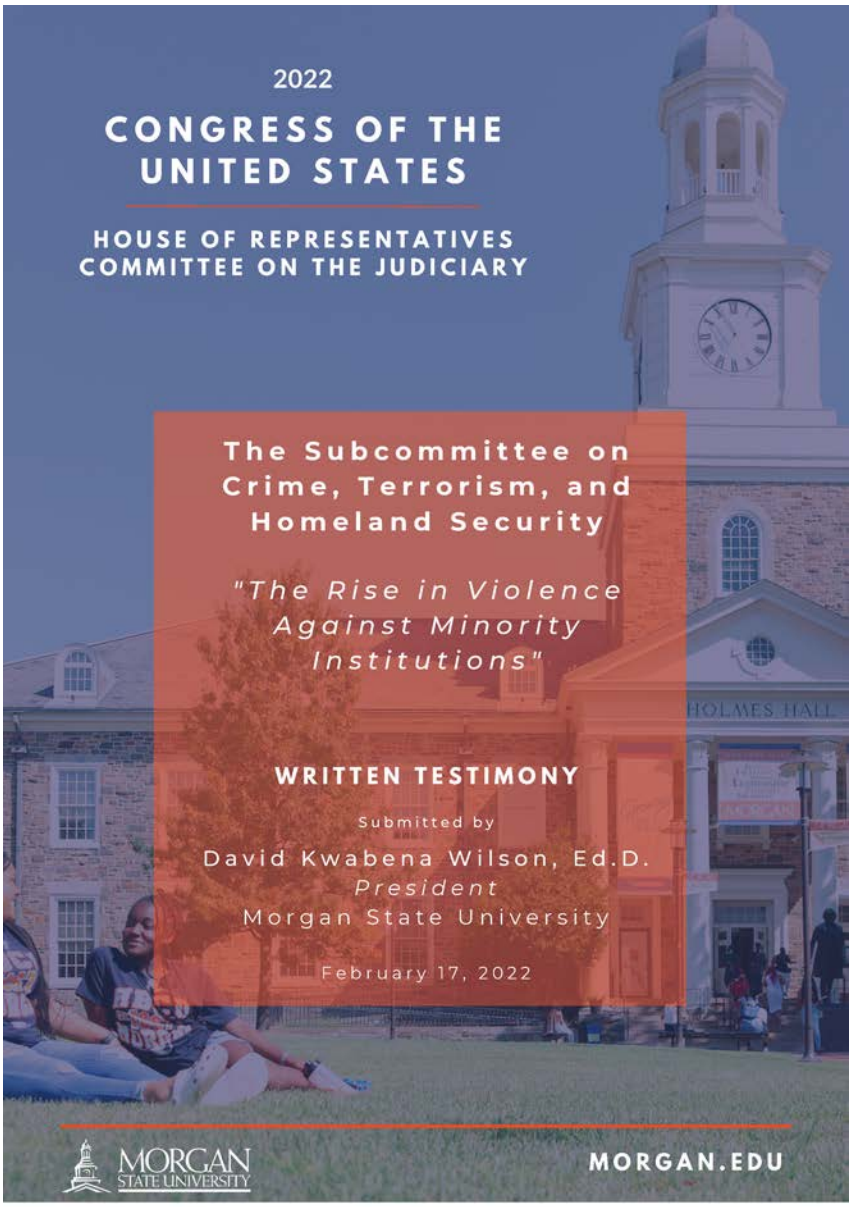

2022
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
The Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security
"The Rise in Violence Against Minority Institutions"
WRITTEN TESTIMONY
Submitted by
David Kwabena Wilson, Ed.D.
President
Morgan State University
February 17, 2022
HOLMES HALL
MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
MORGAN.EDU

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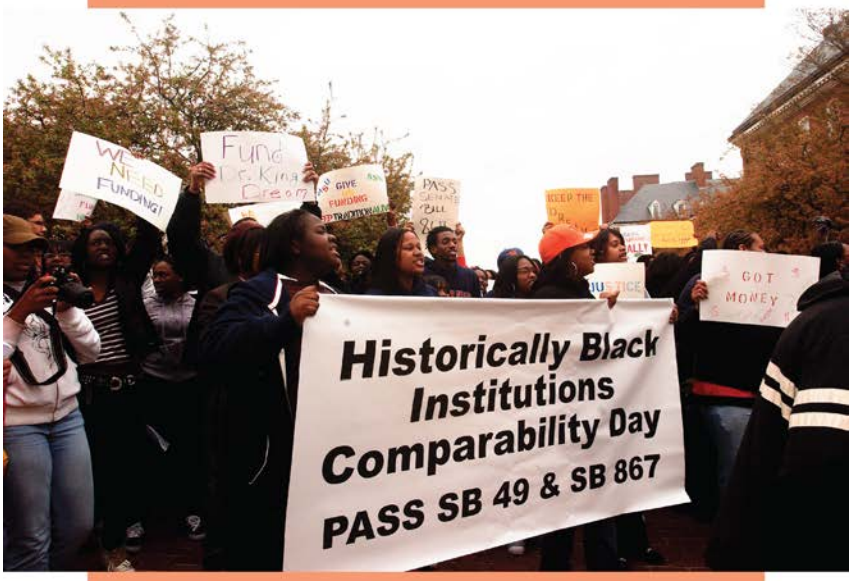
INTRODUCTION

Madam Chairwoman Lee, Ranking Committee Member Biggs, and other members of the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security. I am Dr. David K. Wilson, the 10th President of Morgan State University, an historically Black university in Baltimore, Maryland. I am currently concluding my 12th year as President of this historic institution, which, in 2016, was named a National Treasure by the National Trust for Historic Preservation — the only university in the nation with its entire campus so designated.

The purpose of our gathering today, to address the bomb threats made to Morgan and more than 20 other historically Black college or university campuses this year alone — in addition to other such threats in 2021 — is a topic that has, in all candor, tested my resolve and tried my composure during the past several weeks. During this time, I have thought constantly about the impact of these psychological assaults on the mental health of Morgan's students, who view the campus as a place of refuge and safety to enable their dreams to grow. And I have communicated regularly with our staff, faculty and counseling center about their interactions with the students, which are critical in times like these. I have also received regular reports from Morgan's Police and Public Safety division, which has done a stellar job of responding to the threats, in close collaboration with the Historically Black College and University Law Enforcement Executives and Administrators (HBCU-LEEA) and federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.

But, after serious reflection, and with the habits imbued by more than 30 years' experience in higher education, I noted an opportunity to channel our energy not only into the daunting task of security oversight and organizational response, but also into participation in a teaching moment for the nation, and especially for the perpetrators and would-be perpetrators of the terrorism in question, about the real work and true mission of the institutions commonly known as HBCUs.

Before I begin, however, I think it is important to acknowledge that, for many, my brief message today will provide an all too necessary synopsis of "HBCUs 101," so to speak, and, as such, will help to establish an historical backdrop and just cause for a sweeping resolution to the problem we have assembled to address. My goal today is merely to provide some additional context and a useful perspective to begin, once again, to grapple with an intractable national problem.



BACKGROUND (WHY HBCUS CAME INTO BEING)

Morgan was founded in 1867 as an institution to educate African-American male children for Christian ministry and to have them serve as leaders and educators of Baltimore's Black community. Baltimore's Black population of that time was composed largely of newly freed slaves who had previously been denied, by law, a formal education. By 1874, Morgan was a coeducational school, open, as it had been since its establishment, to students of all races.

One of Morgan's visionary founders, the late Reverend Samuel Green, was a slave from southern Maryland who had won his freedom and was encouraged by his slave owner to learn how to read —- although it was against the law for slaves to read. A law in place at the time, named the Fugitive Slave Act, essentially said that if a slave was apprehended north of the Mason/Dixon line, the slave could be returned to his or her owner or jailed. The Reverend Green left his owner's plantation in Dorchester County, Maryland, was caught by slave bounty hunters, and was sentenced to 10 years in a Baltimore city penitentiary, where he served five years before being released. His crime, you ask? He was in possession of a book, Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin." So, Morgan came into existence as a result of the burning desire that raged inside of the Reverend Green, and its other founders, to ensure that Blacks were literate and that they could read and understand the U.S. Constitution and be in a position to always advocate for their inclusion in it, and for the Constitution to be true to those powerful words inked on its canvas that "all men are created equal and are endowed with certain inalienable rights, among them life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."



HISTORICAL THREATS AND ATTACKS ON THE NATION'S HBCUS

Unlike the vast majority of this nation's universities that came into existence from 1619 through the early part of the 20th century, Morgan State University, and other historically Black colleges and universities in the United States, were not racially exclusive. Rather, they were open to all who desired to benefit from their mission. As I recently wrote in a national editorial, "HBCU Strong: Bomb Threats Will Not Deter Us": "The same connective tissue supported the founding of practically every HBCU in the country: the desire to hold America accountable and have her live up to the ideals embedded in her Constitution that 'all men (and women) are created equal and are endowed with certain inalienable rights, among them life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.' " (Source: https://afro.com/wordinblack-hbcu-strong-bomb-threats-will-not-deter-us/)

The bomb threats now besetting so many of our campuses are the latest chapter in a sad and sordid history of terrorism, threats, and violence that has followed these historic institutions, and the communities in which they serve, for more than a century and a half.

Let us take a brief look at a few events from that history, beginning shortly after HBCUs had begun to emerge in the North during the antebellum period, and moving past the period soon after, when these vital institutions were founded in large numbers in the post-Civil War era South.





01 In 1865, an arsonist set fire to Wilberforce University, in Ohio, the first college owned and operated by Black people, which in 1856 was one of the last of the early HBCUs established in the North. Several of its buildings were set ablaze and damaged on the same day as the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln and days before the end of the Civil War.

02 A year later, LeMoyne-Owen College, a private HBCU in Tennessee, was also set ablaze. The fire took 46 lives and injured another 70 persons during a race massacre that summoned federal troops to the area.

03 In 1876, a suspicious fire destroyed administrative buildings at Claflin University, a private HBCU in South Carolina.

04 Roger Williams University, an HBCU in Nashville, Tennessee, was also destroyed by a suspicious fire in 1905.

05 In 1906, five of the 11 buildings on the campus of Wiley College, an HBCU in Marshall, Texas, were destroyed by fire.



(Orangeburg Massacre Demonstration)

06 Fearing the possibility of an attack during the "Red Summer" of 1919, Black World War I veterans set up armed blockades around Howard University to protect the campus and students from violent racial unrest.

07 At my alma mater, Tuskegee University, in Tuskegee, Alabama, more than 700 Klansmen paraded through the city to protest the installation of Black physicians at a hospital established for Black veterans on campus, on July 16, 1923.

08 On May 28, 1963, Black students and a white professor from Tougaloo College were brutally attacked as they sat peacefully at the "whites only" lunch counter in the segregated Woolworth's in downtown Jackson, Mississippi.

09 On February 8, 1968, white state troopers fired into a mostly African-American crowd on the campus of South Carolina State College, an historically Black college in Orangeburg, South Carolina. In what became known as the "Orangeburg Massacre," the troopers shot and wounded 28 people and killed three Black male students.

TERROR AT HOME: MORGAN CONFRONTS RACIAL TURMOIL




Morgan students triumph as 8-year rebellion ends

150 NEGROES ARRESTED IN NORTHWOOD

Protest Of Segregation Policies Of Theater Made For 4th Day

About 150 Negro members of the Civic Interest Group were arrested last night and charged with trespassing and disorderly conduct during a mass protest of segregation policies at the Northwood Theater.

Morgan has its own history of being challenged by racial terrorism. As I learned from my research soon after I arrived to lead the University in 2010, the institutions that would become Morgan State University, Bowie State University, and Coppin State University were all neighbors in an affluent, middle-class, African-American community named Gallows Hill. In an effort to keep this Black community from encroaching upon white spaces considered more important, Baltimore Mayor James Preston used his authority to declare Gallows Hill a slum. The African-American community was razed to the ground, and the three HBCUs were relocated: Bowie State moved to its present site in Prince George's County, Maryland, and Coppin State to its current site in western Baltimore City. Morgan, however, would have another home and some major challenges to overcome before finally settling at its current site in northeastern Baltimore City.

After leaving a downtown Baltimore location, Morgan College moved to western Baltimore City. Almost a decade later, it moved to a property named Ivy Mill in what was then Baltimore County, in December of 1917. In that same year, a campus of the college that had been founded in Lynchburg, Virginia, was destroyed by a suspicious fire. The students there were transferred to the new campus in Baltimore. By the spring of 1918, every adjacent neighborhood association had begun a legal campaign to deem Morgan's presence in a white Christian community unlawful. After winning a protracted legal fight, Morgan was legally permitted to remain, but its troubles with its white neighbors were far from over. In the late 1930s, a brick wall, dubbed the "spite wall" by Morgan President Dwight Oliver Wendell Holmes, was erected on the northeast boundary of Morgan's campus. Holmes was convinced that since the neighbors could not legally remove the college, they preferred not to see it. Remnants of that wall still stand today.

THE EFFECTS OF THREATS ON HBCU COMMUNITIES

Much like the physical structures that remain intact preserving the ill-effects of history upon these Black institutions, there is yet another consequence of the incessant barrage of terrorism, threats, and violence: psychological trauma. The often crippling and intergenerational effects of trauma are among the most widely reported and documented psychological afflictions of our modern era. Many Black, indigenous, and people of color in the United States, including those at HBCUs, have experienced racism, prejudice, discrimination and oppression, which is why many elect to attend HBCUs as safe harbor. Our students are able to increase identity development, improve relational management, trust, and promote the idea of safety and security within the communities we've forged since our charter. Accordingly, the experience of situational race-based trauma is limited on our campuses.

Bombings and bomb threats rooted in racist bigotry are, unfortunately, commonplace in our nation's history, a fact I learned quite well growing up in rural, Jim Crow Alabama. Receiving these recent threats is an example of historical trauma that may undermine the recipients' sense of safety, level of energy and mood. Racial stressors like these are often overlooked but are important to address.

Many students are resilient, and not all traumatic incidents will lead to psychological disorders. Not everyone who experiences a stressful event will develop trauma, initially. Some people will develop symptoms that resolve after a few weeks, while others will have more long-term effects. But coupling the anxieties aroused by the COVID-19 pandemic with these recurring bomb threats can produce a powder keg event. The response of Morgan's staff, faculty, and counseling center have been essential. Their interactions with the students provide a safe environment for critical self-reflection and dialogues about healing. Our students may endure psychological struggles following adversity, however, there is growth afterward — with personal strength, closer relationships, greater appreciation of life, better coping strategies, and a stronger sense of self as results.

> *Our students are able to increase identity development, improve relational management, trust, and promote the idea of safety and security within the communities we've forged since our charter.*

RESPONDING TO THREATS AND SAFEGUARDING HBCUS

From the onset of the bomb threats — which began at the start of the new year, when eight institutions were targeted on January 4, 2022 — HBCUs have been collaborating with one another, sharing information, and offering support. This was made possible through each institution's participation in the nonprofit Historically Black College and University Law Enforcement Executives and Administrators (HBCU-LEEA) organization. This national organization of police chiefs, executives, and security directors advances campus public safety for its students attending the nation's 105 HBCUs.

Since the first round of bomb threats to America's HBCUs, the HBCU-LEEA has served as a driving force to find those responsible and to advocate for federal intervention. At Morgan, HBCU-LEEA participating members alerted and briefed the other members of the Morgan State University Police Department (MSUPD) leadership team and the Office of the President. Armed with this information, the University began protective preparation by reviewing existing policies and procedures regarding bomb threats and organizing the MSUPD rank and file and the dispatches to be at the ready in anticipation of Morgan's receiving a bomb threat call. As a result of the HBCU-LEEA's effort, the Federal Bureau of Investigation began engaging with HBCUs and making available their resources.

On January 31, 2022, six HBCUs received bomb threats. On the next day, February 1, the beginning of Black History Month, eight HBCUs received bomb threats. Morgan was included among this third group of institutions targeted, and the threat achieved its intended goal of sowing disruption and stoking fears within our community of students, faculty, staff, parents, and alumni. HBCUs provide refuge to the students they serve and are commonly viewed as safe harbors for learning and personal development. The threats received on February 1 challenged that assertion and jeopardized all of our work toward creating a safe and welcoming environment for Morgan students.



However, Morgan's involvement with the HBCU-LEEA led to a more positive outcome. Ongoing communication with other institutions and sharing of information was highly beneficial. Leveraging lessons learned and other intelligence, Morgan was able to bolster communications with local, state, and federal partners; review and disseminate policies and procedures related to the university's response to threats; evaluate bomb threat protocols from other organizations; ensure that outdoor warning systems were operational; increase patrols with heightened inspections of buildings and grounds; appraise equipment and assess resource needs; and identify opportunities to utilize research grants and training opportunities.

On the day of the threat, all available officers were mobilized, and response plans were activated. Teams were organized, local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies were notified, and a building-by-building search was conducted, beginning with the highest priority — student residence halls. During this time, access to the campus was closed, while remote learning and telework protocols were initiated. At the conclusion of the campus-wide search, no threats were discovered, and "all clear" was given. Although the campus was deemed safe for return, the damage had been done, and the peace of mind that was once commonplace had been shattered.



IN CONCLUSION

Beyond the symbolic wall that separates racial myth from reality in our nation, ignorance and misunderstanding have ample opportunity to flourish, and the recent threats against HBCUs are prime evidence of that. What the terrorists have right about us is that historically Black colleges and universities represent the remarkable advancement of Black people in this country. It is no coincidence that an HBCU produced Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Vice President Kamala Harris, Congressman John Lewis, Congressman Elijah Cummings, Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall and so many other African-American leaders who have committed their lives to serving others. But what the would-be bombers have yet to grasp is that HBCUs also represent a matchless path for the progress of the United States of America.

These institutions are not the radical terror camps of their imagination, where students are taught to hate their country or to engage in activity to destroy the fabric of our democracy. Quite the contrary, HBCUs have always had as their foundation an approach to education that prepares, inspires, motivates, and encourages our students to live the American Dream, to become the engineers, elected officials, doctors, lawyers, social workers, architects, teachers, judges, and innovators to make America stronger and more competitive internationally. Said plainly, HBCUs are institutions rooted in truth-telling, where the accurate history of our nation, warts and all, is taught. Our students receive an education that is empowering and that enables them to be free and critical thinkers.

I ask: is this not the heart of a truly functioning, inclusive democracy? I believe the answer is clear to all willing to see.

HBCUs are part and parcel of America, national treasures, all, and deserving of the utmost veneration, respect, and protection.

In processing these threats and evaluating them in an historical context, what becomes even more evident is the legacy of resilience, rebellion, and struggle that the visionary founders of these storied institutions — these HBCUs — had to endure before birthing our current-day campuses.

The founders knew that the journey laid before them would be a rough one, with terrain arduous and rugged and rivers deep and unrelenting. Moreover, they fully recognized that they were putting their very lives on the line as they marched for, fought for, and, sadly, for many, died for the right to live free and to create institutions that would educate their sons and daughters.

When you know that powerful history of struggle to obtain access to an education — and understand what has been sacrificed over centuries by Black people — a bomb threat represents yet another ineffectual scare tactic. Bomb threats are rooted in hatred that will never deter us from what HBCUs have done so extraordinarily well for more than a century and a half: provide a consequential education to millions of students. It is irrefutable that these institutions have transformed so many lives and communities and, in the process, have brought into existence the modern-day Black middle class in this country and have sought to level the proverbial playing field.





If you come to Morgan, you will get, much as I received as an undergraduate at Tuskegee University, a real opportunity to achieve success. You will be challenged to think deeply about the issues of the past, why and how they happened, and what we, as a society, must continue to do to prevent much of what happened in the past from recurring. This is why HBCUs matter and will continue to matter.

If these bomb threats to our campuses were designed to silence us, they will fail, for we will not be moved! Maya Angelou reminded the nation in her powerful poem "And Still I Rise" that, "You may write me down in history with your bitter, twisted lies. You may trod me in the very dirt, but still, like dust, I'll rise."

HBCUs will always be the truth tellers — the innovators — and, as we come through this bitterly polarized era of American history, our campuses are fully prepared to be the single group of institutions that can ultimately keep our democracy from an untimely and unwarranted demise. We will not let anything cloud our focus or deter us from living up to the Morgan State motto: "Growing the Future, Leading the World."

Respectfully,

David K. Wilson, Ed.D.
President, Morgan State University

MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
MORGAN
STATE UNIVERSITY
GROWING THE FUTURE
LEADING THE WORLD
Thank you for the opportunity to present an oral testimony before the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security.
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Opinion

HBCU Strong: Bomb Threats Will Not Deter Us

Morgan State University President Dr. David K. Wilson breaks down why HBCUs will not be silenced by threats and hate.

by **Dr. David K. Wilson**
February 10, 2022



Photograph courtesy of Dr. David K. Wilson

When I reflect on the spate of bomb threats made to HBCU campuses over the last few weeks, I am reminded of an old Negro spiritual, "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around."

As the president of **Morgan State University**, a public historically Black research university with more than 8,000 students in Baltimore, Maryland, I've dealt with the **bomb threats** made to more than 20 HBCU campuses — this year alone — by doing everything in my power to keep our students safe.

But as I mentally processed these threats, what loomed large was the history of resilience, rebellion, and struggle that the visionary founders of these storied institutions had to endure before birthing our current-day campuses.

Those founders knew that the journey laid before them would be a rough one, the terrain arduous and rugged, the rivers deep and unrelenting. Moreover, they fully recognized that they were putting their very lives on the line as they marched for, fought for, and, sadly, for many, died for the right to live free and to create institutions that would educate their sons and daughters.

> ***Bomb threats are rooted in hatred that will never deter us from what HBCUs have done so extraordinarily well for more than a century and a half.***

When you know that powerful history of struggle and sacrifice — and understand what has been sacrificed over centuries for Black people — to obtain access to an education, a bomb threat represents yet another ineffectual scare tactic. Bomb threats are rooted in hatred that will never deter us from what HBCUs have done so extraordinarily well for more than a century and a half.

Without question, HBCUs have provided a consequential education to millions of students, enabling them to relish an ever-elusive American Dream that our early predecessors could only fantasize about experiencing. It is irrefutable that these institutions have transformed so many lives and communities and, in the process, have brought into existence the modern-day Black middle class in this country.

The same connective tissue supported the founding of practically every HBCU in the country: the desire to hold America accountable and have her live up to the ideals embedded in her Constitution that "all men (and women) are created equal and are endowed with certain inalienable rights, among them life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

This push was the impetus for what we refer to today as DEI, or diversity, equity, and inclusion. Our founders strongly believed that if America truly embraced that constitutional pronouncement, then it must open its doors to *everyone*.

To the disappointment of many, states often fell short of being united and upholding those constitutional tenets. For decades, elected officials turned their backs on their commitment to make these United States a more perfect union.

As a result, these legendary HBCU founders paved a way where one did not previously exist. They created educational institutions to **provide opportunities to students** shut out of existing higher education structures. History will forever document their impact and legacy. And what a glorious and remarkable history of achievement it has been for these schools. HBCUs are the top producers of Black doctors, engineers, scientists, teachers, lawyers and journalists, to name a few.

> ***HBCUs are the top producers of Black doctors, engineers, scientists, teachers, lawyers and journalists, to name a few.***

So, against this backdrop, it seems that the bomb threats that targeted more than 20 HBCU campuses were designed to intimidate these institutions, to frighten the communities we serve and to disrupt the transformational education taking place on our campuses.

It appears the people behind these threats want to send a message to our campuses: that many people in America still don't like that we have historically educated, and continue to educate, freethinkers — individuals who, after coming through our doors, get an education that cannot be compromised, undermined, or hijacked. And, HBCU graduates go on to provide the type of leadership that enables us to live up to the ideals of our Constitution.

Our students are taught factual history and are expected to understand exactly how our nation came into existence. Evidence-based, empirical learning serves as our guidepost. We do not subscribe to notions rooted in nonsense, misinformation, half-truths, and lies.

> ***Let me be clear, if these bomb threats to our campuses were designed to silence us, they will fail. We shall not be moved!***

If you come to Morgan, you will get, much as I did as an undergraduate at Tuskegee University, the real deal. You will be challenged to think deeply about the issues of the past, why and how they happened, and what we, as a society, must continue to do to prevent much of what happened in the past from recurring.

So, let me be clear, if these bomb threats to our campuses were designed to silence us, they will fail. We shall not be moved!

Maya Angelou reminded the nation in her powerful poem "And Still I Rise" that, "You may write me down in history with your bitter, twisted lies. You may trod me in the very dirt, but still, like dust, I'll rise."

HBCUs will always be the truth tellers — the innovators — and, as we come through this bitterly polarized era of American history, our campuses are fully prepared to be the single group of institutions that can ultimately keep our democracy from an untimely and unwarranted demise. We will not let anything cloud our focus or deter us from living up to the Morgan State motto: "Growing the Future and Leading the World."

David Wilson is president of Morgan State University, in Baltimore, Maryland. His email address is david.wilson@morgan.edu.

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Ms. JACKSON LEE. Dr. Wilson, thank you for that powerful testimony. Your time is expired, but your message continues to reverberate. Thank you so very much for your testimony today.

It is my privilege to now yield 5 minutes to Rabbi Cytron-Walker. Rabbi, you're recognized for 5 minutes, and welcome.

TESTIMONY OF RABBI CHARLIE CYTRON-WALKER

Rabbi CYTRON-WALKER. Chair Jackson Lee, Vice-Chair Bush, Ranking Member Biggs, I want to thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you this morning. I'm honored to have Chair Nadler join us this morning, and I am pleased to see Representative Demings, who was so gracious when I testified for the first time ever just last week before her Subcommittee.

I believe and often teach that Judaism is filled with contradictions because life is filled with contradictions, and today I am filled with mixed and even contradictory emotions. On the one hand, I am truly horrified that in our society today religious leaders must devote themselves to security training. How to harden our facilities is both a necessary conversation and an anathema to religious ideals of hospitality and loving the stranger.

At the same time, I'm filled with gratitude. I'm grateful to be here. This feeling hasn't gone away. I'm grateful to be anywhere. I'm grateful to be anywhere because a terrorist chose a Jewish synagogue, because he thought the Jews control the world. He thought that he could take Jews hostage, call up an influential rabbi, and she would snap her fingers and give him what he wanted. He truly believed the Jews control the media, the Jews control the government, the Jews control everything.

Tragically, this is just one aspect of anti-Semitism that has been so harmful to the Jewish people throughout history. Over the centuries, entire Jewish communities have been destroyed because people believe that Jews drank the blood of non-Jewish children. Entire Jewish communities have been destroyed because people believe that Jews wanted to torture communion wafers. Entire Jewish communities have been destroyed because people believe that Jews were responsible for all the bad things in life, that we are the root of all evil.

As absurd as it sounds, every single outrageous lie about the Jewish people has been shared in various forms by people from all walks of life in recent years. It's sad, it is ridiculous, and it is maddening that I was taken a hostage because of it. Far too many Jews have died because of it. This anti-Semitism isn't distant history. This is a month ago. This is now. This is years of increased harassment and attacks against my people.

The potential of an anti-Semitic incident is what led me to attend around half a dozen security related seminars over the past 6 years. It's a part of why we developed a security action plan and strengthened our relationship with local law enforcement. It motivated me to apply for and receive a grant from the Nonprofit Security Grant Program, for which we have such appreciation.

The chances that something could have happened were so small. Even so, we knew it was a possibility and we wanted to be as prepared as possible. Thankfully, we had taken so many constructive

steps, and yet I don't know if anyone could have ever been fully prepared.

On the morning of January 15, when the gunman arrived, it was me and one volunteer in the building. I was running late. I was finishing my preparations, and in the midst of trying to do a million different things, I had a stranger come to the door. I have, of course, thought about that moment to great deal. I welcomed a terrorist into my congregation. I live with that responsibility.

It's important for you to understand that this was not a matter of me opening the door just because I value hospitality. I do value hospitality. The Torah scroll that we read from each week was gifted to our congregation thanks to hospitality. I strive to live that value every day. Like so many congregations, CBI strives to be a house of prayer for all people, and at the same time, I also value security.

In a small congregation I was rabbi and tech support and gatekeeper. When our Member asked if I knew the person at the door, I was distracted, but I still did a visual inspection and after a brief word, he appeared to be who he said he was, a guy who spent a night outside in sub 40-degree weather. After talking with him more, his story added up.

Of course, I was wrong. I was so wrong. I share this because despite all the plans and funding and courses, I still opened the door. Because of all the plans and funding and courses and literally dozens of small things that just happened to go right, to go our way, we were able to escape.

No one, no one should fear gathering or pray—no one should fear gathering to pray or celebrate or mourn or connect in their spiritual home. No one should experience such hatred and violence. No one should experience anything remotely like what I had to.

In 1947, back in 1947, perhaps the leading rabbi of that time, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise told the Senate Labor Committee that equality of opportunity for Jews can be truly secured only in a genuinely democratic society. He continued: Accordingly, we seek to fight every manifestation of racism, to promote the civil and political equality of all groups and persons in America, and to support measures designed to safeguard civil liberties to build a better America.

We regard ethnic discrimination directed against any group as a single and indivisible problem as one of the most urgent problems of a democratic society. Nothing more gravely threatens American democracy today than the fact of its incompleteness. Democracy to be secure must be complete, and incomplete democracy is an insecure democracy.

Members of the Committee, I would add that the converse is equally true. An insecure democracy is an incomplete democracy, and too many communities in our democracy today feel insecure. Tragically, we live in a world where houses of worship need protection, where too many of all backgrounds are victims of hate crimes. I believe that both Democrats and Republicans want to change that reality.

Changing our reality all at once is too much to ask. That's why Rabbi Tarfon taught that we aren't obligated to complete the work, but we can't neglect it. I'm not here today asking you to complete

the work, but we need your help. Please hear the diverse group of witnesses who have come before you today. We are all struggling. We all need practical and intelligent solutions to help all of us feel safe and secure.

It is truly an honor for me to speak with you today. I'm so grateful for the opportunity.

[The statement of Rabbi Cytron-Walker follows:]

Testimony of

Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker
Congregation Beth Israel,
Colleyville, Texas

On

The Rise in Violence Against Minority Institutions

Before the

Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, And Homeland Security

of the

Committee on the Judiciary

U.S. House of Representatives

February 17, 2022

Via Video Conference

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Introduction

Chair Jackson Lee, Vice Chair Bush, Ranking Member Biggs, I want to thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you this morning. I am honored to have Chairman Nadler join us this morning. And I am pleased to see Representative Demings, who was so gracious when I testified, for the first time ever, just last week before her subcommittee.

I believe, and often teach, that Judaism is filled with contradictions because life is filled with contradictions. And today I am filled with mixed and even contradictory emotions.

On the one hand, I am devastated about what brings me before you today. It's horrific that my congregants and I were held hostage in our sacred home. It feels so wrong to have those words come out of my mouth. We spent over ten hours with a terrorist pointing a gun at us in our sanctuary. We were concerned for ourselves and for one another. We were terrified.

I am truly horrified that in our society today religious leaders must devote themselves to security training. How to "harden" our facilities is both a necessary conversation and anathema to religious ideals of hospitality and loving the stranger.

And yet I am also grateful. I am grateful to be here. To be honest, I'm grateful to be anywhere.

The Reality of Antisemitism

I am grateful to be anywhere because a terrorist chose a Jewish synagogue, because he thought that Jews control the world. He thought that he could take Jews hostage, call up an influential rabbi and she would snap her fingers and give him what he wanted. He truly believed that Jews control the media, that Jews control the government, that Jews control everything.

Tragically, this is just one aspect of Antisemitism that has been so harmful to the Jewish people throughout history. Over the centuries entire Jewish communities have been destroyed because people believed that Jews drank the blood of non-Jewish children. Entire Jewish communities have been destroyed because people believed that Jews wanted to torture communion wafers. Entire Jewish communities have been destroyed because people believed that Jews were responsible for all the bad things in life – that we are the root of all evil.

And as absurd as it sounds, every single outrageous lie about the Jewish people – has been shared in various forms by people from all walks of life in recent years.

It's sad, ridiculous, and maddening that I was taken hostage because of it! Far too many Jews have died because of it. This isn't distant history. This is a month ago. This is now. This is after years of increased harassment and attacks against my people.

As I think about my survival, I must ask myself what went right?

What Went Right in Colleyville?

Six years ago, I attended the Faith Based Security Summit that was hosted by the FBI, Homeland Security, and our region's US Attorney's Office because of Antisemitism. It was my first education related to active shooters and the first time I was introduced to the concept of a security committee. Since then, I have participated in about a half dozen different security workshops offered by the FBI, the ADL, Colleyville Police, and the Secure Communities Network (SCN). Those sessions helped me to stay alert, look for an opportunity, and gave me the courage to act.

I am grateful that just a few months after the Security Summit, Mike Finfer, our current congregational President, formed our first Security Subcommittee. The subcommittee was responsible for numerous physical security enhancements, educational sessions, and the development of our Security Action Plan. They built a strong relationship between the Colleyville PD and Congregation Beth Israel. The police officers who were at CBI that day knew our building and they knew us. Their work made a dramatic difference.

I am so grateful that Colleyville Mayor, Richard Newton, formed a Ministerial Alliance that I started attending in 2017. Through those meetings I was able to develop a strong relationship with city leadership, the Fire Chief, and the Police Chief. I never would have guessed how important the relationship with Police Chief Miller and having his cell phone and email at my fingertips would be.

I am grateful for the financial support of our members, Tarrant County's Jewish Federation, and the Nonprofit Security Grant Program that made our security plans possible. That included

upgrading our security cameras, which was critical to law enforcement. Matthew DeSarno, special agent in charge of the FBI's Dallas Field Office has said that the video coverage "gave the decision makers, the negotiators and others general situational awareness."[1]

The chances that something could have happened were so small. Even so, we knew it was a possibility and we wanted to be as prepared as possible. But even that is an illusion. No one is ever prepared.

My Experience: Balancing Hospitality and Security

On the morning of January 15th, when the gunman arrived, it was me and one volunteer in the building. I was running a bit late. I was finishing my preparations for the Torah reading and loading the PowerPoint slides with the prayers onto the computer. I needed to turn on projectors and check the sound and start Zoom and Facebook Live. I was rabbi and tech support; not an uncommon situation. And in the midst of trying to do a million different things, I had a stranger come to the door.

I have, of course, thought about that moment a great deal. I welcomed a terrorist into my congregation. Four of us could have died and I would have been responsible. I live with that responsibility. And it's important for you to understand that this was not a matter of me opening the door just because I value hospitality.

I do value hospitality. I have welcomed in people who were Jewish or who were interested in learning about Judaism – all races, all gender identities, all income levels… people with accents and piercings and tattoos. The Torah scroll that we read from each week was gifted to our congregation thanks to hospitality. I strive to live that value every day. Like so many congregations – synagogues, churches and mosques -- Congregation Beth Israel strives to be "a house of prayer for all people."[2]

At the same time, I also value security. When our member asked if I knew the person at the door, I was distracted, but I still did a visual inspection and after a brief word, he appeared to be who he said he was – a guy who spent a night outside in sub 40-degree weather. But that was just the first analysis. Yes, I served him tea. I also spoke with him throughout the process to learn his story. Who was he? How did he get to our congregation? Such conversation is welcoming and gave me an opportunity to see if he was acting nervous or if his story added up. Security and hospitality can go hand in hand. I was running late, but I spent time to see if there were any red flags and I didn't see any. Of course, I was wrong.

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[1] Nicole Sganga, "Calls for Boosted Security Funding Intensity Among Faith Leaders After Texas Synagogue Hostage Standoff," CBS News, January 22, 2022. Available at https://www.cbsnews.com/news/calls-boosted-security-funding-intensify-among-faith-leaders-after-texas-synagogue-hostage-standoff/

[2] Isaiah 56:7

I share this because despite all the plans and funding and courses – I still opened the door. But because of all the plans and funding and courses and literally dozens of small things that just happened to go our way, we were able to escape.

The Landscape

As horrible as what happened to us was, I know that what happened at Tree of Life in Pittsburgh and Chabad of Poway a few years ago was so much worse. Reform, Conservative, or Orthodox – those who hate Jews do not distinguish among us.

This is a moment filled with anxiety and deep concern for American Jews. As my colleague Rabbi Angela Buchdahl preached the Shabbat after our ordeal, "if you are a Jew in America today and you are not feeling unsettled, you are not paying attention."[3] It is worth noting that Rabbi Buchdahl is not the Rabbi of a small congregation in Texas; she spoke these words from the *bimah* (lectern) of a very large and prominent synagogue in Midtown Manhattan. I hope you remember that as you think about how your Jewish friends, neighbors, and constituents are feeling. They are unsettled. Many are scared.

And we're not alone.

There have been terrible moments of harassment and violence and bloodshed at churches and mosques, and basically every religion has experienced challenging moments or tragedy. The murder of six worshippers at the Sikh Temple in Oak Creek (WI) in 2012 was devasting. The murder of nine worshippers, all Black, at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston (SC) in 2015 was terrifying for all of us, especially for so many in the Black community. It was another blow, shattering the perception of safety in religious spaces.

No one should fear gathering to pray or celebrate or mourn or connect in their spiritual home.

In preparing to be with you this morning, I came across a remarkable statement offered to the Senate Labor Committee in 1947 by perhaps the leading rabbi of that time, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise. Rabbi Wise told that Committee that "equality of opportunity for Jews can be truly secured only in a genuinely democratic society."[4] He continued,

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[3] Rabbi Angela Buchdahl, "Captives of Hope," sermon preached at Central Synagogue, New York, NY, January 21, 2022. Available at https://youtu.be/Q8MlhbMp9CM (Video) or, in an adopted written version at "'You're Running out of Time': Rabbi Details Calls with Texas Terrorist," The Forward, January 21, 2022, available at https://forward.com/opinion/481211/angela-buchdahl-texas-synagogue-hostage-colleyville-beth-israel-faisal/?mc_cid=f98290a683&mc_eid=18e469e147

[4] Hearings Before A Subcommittee Of The Committee On Labor And Public Welfare United States Senate Eightieth Congress First Session On S. 984 A Bill To Prohibit Discrimination In Employment Because Of Race, Religion, Color National Origin Or Ancestry June 11 , 12, 13 , 18, 19 , 20, July 16, 17 , And 18, 1947. Page 162.

> Accordingly, we seek to fight every manifestation of racism, to promote the civil and political equality of all groups and persons in America, and to support measures designed to safeguard civil liberties and to build a better America. We regard ethnic discrimination…directed against…any…group, as a single and indivisible problem and as one of the most urgent problems of democratic society. Nothing more gravely threatens American democracy today than the fact of its incompleteness. Democracy to be secure must be complete. An incomplete democracy is an insecure democracy. [5]

Members of the Committee, I would add that the converse is equally true: an insecure democracy is an incomplete democracy. And too many communities in our democracy today feel insecure.

Conclusion

Tragically, we live in a world where those houses of worship need protection. Where too many are victims of hate crimes. And I believe that both Democrats and Republicans want to change that reality. It's not naiveté – it's intentional societal disobedience. I refuse to accept that any of you are satisfied with the status quo. We all need to work together to solve our problems.

Changing our reality all at once is a bit too much to ask. That's why Rabbi Tarfon taught[6] לֹא עָלֶיךָ הַמְּלָאכָה לִגְמֹר, וְלֹא אַתָּה בֶן חוֹרִין לִבָּטֵל מִמֶּנָּה that we aren't obligated to complete the work, but we can't neglect it.

I'm not here today asking you to complete the work. But we do need your help. Please hear the diverse group of witnesses who come before you today. We are all unsettled and we need practical and intelligent solutions to help all of us feel safe and secure.

It is an honor for me to speak with you today. Thank you for the opportunity.

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[5] Ibid

[6] *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of Our Ancestors), 2:16

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Rabbi, again we embrace you, we mourn with you, and we hear your call to action. Thank you for your testimony today, equally powerful.

It's my pleasure now to recognize Dr. Pennie for 5 minutes. Dr. Pennie, welcome.

STATEMENT OF DR. DEMETRICK PENNIE

Mr. PENNIE. Thank you, Chair Jackson Lee, Chair Nadler, and Ranking Member Biggs, and other distinguished Members of the Committee for allowing me to speak.

On behalf of the National Fallen Officer Foundation, I am honored to appear before this Committee to speak on a topic that's so near and dear to my heart, protecting our police and our communities. As a law enforcement advocate, I speak on behalf of the hundreds of police families across this Nation that have lost loved ones in the line of duty when I say enough is enough.

According to FBI statistics in 2021, 73 police officers were shot and killed in the line of duty, the highest number of police officers murdered in 20 years. The FBI also noted that the rise of anti-police sentiment has led to a rash of attacks on police. Last year alone, there were 86 premeditated ambush-styled attacks on police officers, in which 26 of those officers died.

These tragedies can no longer be ignored or tolerated in our civilized society. So, why is this happening? Well, one reason why they're happening is because of widespread online radicalization, the indoctrination of individuals online using negative content to incite violence and create division.

So, because of this, not only have we had America's citizens travel abroad to join extremist groups like ISIS, some have even been radicalized here at home and have taken up arms against our police and the American people. On July 7th, 2016, the world watched in horror as a lone gunman ambushed police officers in downtown Dallas, Texas, during a Black Lives Matter rally.

During that attack, 12 police officers were shot, and five of them were killed. The investigation found that the shooter was radicalized online and was obsessed with police-involved shootings in the Black community.

In 2017, I filed a Federal lawsuit against Facebook, Google, and Twitter for failing to manage their platforms, and allowing domestic extremist groups to recruit, radicalize, and incite violence against our police. That case is known as *Pennie* v. *Twitter*.

Although the companies admitted to knowing that their platforms were being used for nefarious activities, the courts were reluctant to move against the immunity protections offered under section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act, and nothing was ever done. Five years later, the problem has worsened, and our police officers have seemingly been caught in the middle of corporate profitability and government limitations.

In fact, we continue to see these platforms being used in the same manner facilitating attacks on our law enforcement and our government itself. During the George Floyd riots of 2020, social media was being used not only to facilitate the rise, but also to help radical groups organize and fundraise off that narrative.

The riots led to more than $2 billion in property damage, several hundred police officers being injured, and 19 citizens being killed, among them were 77-year-old St. Louis police captain, David Dorn, whose murder was broadcast live on Facebook. It was reported that more than 17,000 people were arrested during the George Floyd riots, but to this date, only very few prosecutions have been reported.

In fact, the tide was seemingly turning in the opposite direction as progressive D.A.'s across this country are now prosecuting police officers for responding to those same riots. Unfortunately, today, there appears to be more advocacy in the court system for the criminals than there are for the victims.

Last year, 27 of our Nation's largest cities have saw a drastic increase in homicides. I'm from one of those cities, Houston, Texas. Since 2019, Houston has seen a 73 percent increase in homicides. In fact, over the last year, judges in Houston-Harris County have released 113 defendants charged with capital murder back onto our streets, and those same offenders have contributed to more than 150 murders while out on bond.

It's no secret that America has become unsafe on the heels of social justice movements, bail reform initiatives, and intentional efforts to defund our police across the country. Their policies have not reduced crime. To the contrary, they've augmented crime, especially in our Nation's inner-city communities.

The solution is simple to solve the crime problem. We have to keep our violent criminals behind bars, punish bad behavior, and hold social media companies accountable.

[The statement of Mr. Pennie follows:]



Dr. Tre Pennie

President

The National Fallen Officer Foundation

Testimony before

House Committee On The Judiciary

Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security

February 17, 2022

On behalf of The National Fallen Officer Foundation (www.nationalfof.org), I am honored to appear before this committee to speak on a topic that's near and dear to heart – protecting our police and our communities.

As a law enforcement advocate, I speak on behalf of the hundreds of "police families" across this nation that have lost a family member in the line-of-duty – when I say "Enough is Enough"!

According to FBI crime statistics, in 2021, 73 police officers were shot and killed in the line of duty. That was the highest number of police officers murdered in 20 years. Additionally, the FBI notes that anti-police sentiment has led to a rash of attacks against police. Last year alone, there were 86 premeditated "ambush-style" attacks on police officers in which 26 of those officers died. **People Are People Too!**

These are tragedies that can no longer be ignored nor tolerated in our civilized society.

So… Why is this happening? Many families have asked…

Well, one reason why is because of *online radicalization* – the widespread "indoctrination" of individuals using negative content to incite violence and division.

Not only have American citizens traveled abroad to join extremist groups like ISIS, some have even been radicalized here at home and have "taken up arms" against our police and the American people.

On July 7, 2016, the world watched in horror as a lone-gunman ambushed police officers in downtown Dallas, Texas during a Black Lives Matter protest. During the attack, 12 police officers were shot and 5 of them were killed. Four of which were personal friends. During the investigation it was found that the shooter was radicalized online and was obsessed with police-involved shootings in the Black community.

In 2017, based on formal research and a keen understanding the existing problems with social media, I filed a federal lawsuit against Facebook, Google and Twitter for failing to manage their platforms and allowing extremist groups to recruit, radicalize and fundraise on their sites.

Although the companies admitted to knowing that their platforms were being used for nefarious means, the Court was reluctant to move against the immunity protection provided by Section 230 of the 1996 Communication Decency Act, so nothing was ever done to rectify this problem.

Advancing five years, the problem has worsened and our police officers have been caught in the middle of corporate profitability and government limitations. In fact, even today, we have seen those platforms being used in the same manner, facilitating attacks against our nation's law enforcement and the government itself.

For example, during the George Floyd riots in 2020, social media was being used not only to facilitated the riots, but also to help radical groups fundraise off the agenda. The riots led to more than 2 billion dollars in property damage, several hundred police officers being injured and 19 U.S. citizens being killed. Among them was a 77-year-old retire police officer, David Dorn, whose murder was broadcasted live on Facebook.

During the riots it was reported that more than 17,000 people were arrested, but to this date there have been very few prosecutions. If fact, the tide has turned the opposite direction and progressive DAs across the country are now prosecuting police officers who responded to the George Floyd riots!

It's simply time for our legislator to do the right thing! Unfortunately, there appears to be more advocates in the court system for criminals than there are for the victims.

Last year, of our country's 40 most populated cities, 2/3 of them saw a dramatic increase in homicides. This pains me deeply because I'm from one of those cities: Houston, Texas.

Since 2019, Houston has seen a 73% increase in homicides. The judges in Houston-Harris County have released 113 defendants charged with Capital Murder back onto the streets and those same offenders have contributed to more than 150 new murders while out on bond.

More specifically, recently, a 17-year-old murder suspect in Houston was released on bond after shooting his girlfriend 22-times and killing her. This is the reason why I have openly advocated for a "no-bond" system for violent offenders.

However, it's no secret that America has become unsafe on the heels of social justice movements, bail reform initiatives and intentional efforts to defund the police across the country. These initiatives have not suppressed crime. In fact, it has made it worse, especially for people living in the inner-city communities.

The solution to our nation's crime crisis is simple… Keep the violent criminals behind bars, punish bad behavior, and hold corporations accountable. If we remain consistent in upholding the rule of law, we will make America safe for everybody.

Thank you.

I look forward to responding to your questions and assisting members of the Committee in the coming weeks help resolve these issues.

Demetrick "Tre" Pennie

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Witness time has expired. The Witness time has expired.

Thank you very much.

Mr. PENNIE. Thank you.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. —for your testimony.

Mr. Kaleka, you're recognized now for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF PARDEEP SINGH KALEKA

Mr. KALEKA. Thank you so much, Chair Nadler, Chair Jackson Lee, Ranking Member Biggs, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Pardeep Singh Kaleka. I'm a former police officer, educator, and trauma clinician. I currently serve as the Executive Director of the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee. Today, however, I come before you as a member of the Sikh-American Community, whose life was forever changed by the 2012 assault on the Gurudwara, our Sikh house of worship, in Oak Creek, Wisconsin.

On Sunday, August 5th, 2012, my family was on our way to the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin when my daughter confessed that she had forgotten her notebook for Sunday school. I admit that I was a little bit irritated, but we returned to our house, found that notebook, and headed back out again.

When we arrived at the Gurudwara, the parking lot was filled with police vehicles. My immediate concern was for my mother and father who were always the first to arrive and prepare for services. While in the parking lot, I received a call from someone inside the building who told me that my father had been shot. That conversation was interrupted by a call from my mother who whispered that she was hiding with others inside the building.

My concern turned into urgency to find out if our loved ones were safe or not. Eventually, it was confirmed that my father, Satwant Singh Kaleka, was among six worshippers who was killed at that attack, along with Paramjit Kaur Saini, Sita Singh, Ranjit Singh, Prakash Singh, and Suveg Singh Khattra. A seventh individual, Baba Punjab Singh, passed away in 2020 due to complications from the injuries he sustained that day. If my daughter had not forgotten her notebook, we could have been also killed.

Rather than turning inward in anguish and anger, we chose to believe that this country, its ideals, and its promise are worth fighting for. For example, not long after we began a campaign with the Sikh Coalition to ensure that anti-Sikh sentiment would be tracked and reported to the FBI.

Once the Bureau began cataloging anti-Sikh hate crimes, their reports have shown what every Sikh-American already knows, that we are among the top five most frequently targeted faith communities in America.

When we learned that the shooter, Wade Michael Page, had extensive ties to a White supremacist movement, I befriended Arno Michaelis, a former White supremacist and the founder of the Milwaukee chapter of the hate organization that Wade Page belonged to.

Over the past 10 years, Arno and I have traveled to countless cities, consulted with local, State, and Federal law enforcement agencies, and spoke to thousands of people on how to prevent hate in

their own communities. I also work as a de-radicalization clinician with Parents4Peace and as a consultant with Not in Our Town.

These organizations are on the front lines providing counseling and treatment plans to engage entire communities and help individuals turn away from hate.

Despite these best efforts, hate continues to threaten too many minority communities in our country. A Black church was attacked in South Carolina, synagogues were assaulted in Pennsylvania, California, and Texas. Masjids have been targeted for vandalism, arson, and violence across the country. Individuals from these communities and still others are increasingly targeted in hate crimes year after year after year.

All of this fear and hate and danger comes from a toxic mix of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and White supremacy. As we meet this challenge, I urge you to ensure that the policies that you implement to protect marginalized communities cannot be turned against us.

Post-9/11 surveillance and profiling erode a trust within law enforcement and law enforcement that harmed Black and Brown families, all while White supremacist extremism went largely unchecked. We must shift our framework to counter extremism from one fixated on security and law enforcement to one rooted in public health and community engagement.

We must further invest in our communities and empower the advocates who are leading at the local level. We have to de-radicalize those who are entrenched in hate and invest in early-stage interventions that work to cure the pain that often precedes acts of violence in our society.

Our way to do this is by ensuring that what is taught in our schools is both accurate and represents a rich tapestry that makes up America. Another way is to hold social media platforms accountable for violent hate speech. There are also bills that Congress could pass today. The Justice For Victims of Hate Crimes Act would instantly improve how we charge hate crimes. We can then further improve our data tracking around these crimes. Passing the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act would more effectively combat White supremacist extremism. Finally, we can do better to facilitate access to Federal resources like the nonprofit security grant to protect sacred places like our Gurudwara in Oak Creek.

We can do all these things and more, but only if we are willing to work together in the pursuit of prevention and safety through a whole-of-society approach. As a father who is fighting to make the world a better place for my children, that is my wish. That is why, above anything else, I am here.

Thank you so much.

[The statement of Mr. Kaleka follows:]

Testimony of Pardeep Singh Kaleka

before the

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security

Committee on the Judiciary

on

"The Rise in Violence Against Minority Institutions"

February 17, 2022

Chairwoman Bass, Ranking Member Biggs, and distinguished members of the subcommittee: Thank you for welcoming me to testify today.

My name is Pardeep Singh Kaleka. I am a former police officer, educator, and trauma clinician; I currently serve as the Executive Director of the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee. Today, however, I come before you as a member of the Sikh American community whose life was forever changed by the 2012 assault on the Gurudwara, our Sikh house of worship, in Oak Creek, Wisconsin.

On Sunday, August 5th, 2012, my family was on our way to the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin when my daughter confessed that she had forgotten her notebook for Sunday school. I'll admit that I was a little bit irritated, but we returned to our house, found the notebook in question, and headed out again.

When we arrived at the Gurudwara, the parking lot was filled with police vehicles. My immediate concern was for my mother and father, who were always among the first to arrive and prepare for services. I received a call from someone inside the building who told me that my father had been shot; that conversation was interrupted by a call from my mother, who whispered that she was hiding with others inside the building. My concern turned into urgency to find out if our loved ones were safe.

Eventually, it was confirmed that my father, Satwant Singh Kaleka, was among six worshippers who were killed in the attack, along with Paramjit Kaur Saini, Sita Singh, Ranjit Singh, Prakash Singh, and Suveg Singh Khattra. A seventh individual, Baba Punjab Singh, passed away in 2020 due to complications from the injuries he sustained that day. If my daughter had not forgotten her notebook, we could have also been killed.

Rather than turning inward in anguish and anger, we chose to believe that this country, its ideals, and its promise are worth fighting for. For example, not long after, we began a campaign

with the Sikh Coalition to ensure that anti-Sikh sentiment would be tracked and reported to the FBI; once the Bureau began cataloging anti-Sikh hate crimes, their reports have shown what every Sikh in America already knew: that we are among the top five most frequently targeted faith communities.

When we learned that the shooter, Wade Michael Page, had extensive ties to the white supremacist movement, I befriended Arno Michaelis, a former white supremacist and the founder of the Milwaukee chapter of the hate organization that Page belonged to. Over the past 10 years, Arno and I have traveled to countless cities; consulted with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies; and spoken to thousands of people on how to prevent hate in their own communities. I also now work as a de-radicalization clinician with Parents4Peace and as a consultant with Not In Our Town. These organizations are on the front lines, providing counseling and treatment plans to engage entire communities and help individuals turn away from hate.

Despite these best efforts, hate continues to threaten too many minority communities in our country. A Black church was attacked in South Carolina. Synagogues were assaulted in Pennsylvania, California, and Texas. Masjids have been targeted for vandalism, arson, and violence across the country. And individuals--from these communities and still others--are increasingly targeted in hate crimes year after year. All of this comes from of a toxic mix of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semetism, Islamophobia, and white supremacy.

As we meet this challenge, I urge you to ensure that the policies you implement to protect marginalized communities cannot be turned against us. Post-9/11 surveillance and profiling eroded trust in law enforcement and harmed Black and brown families--all while white supremacist extremism went largely unchecked. We must shift our framework to counter extremism from one fixated on security and law enforcement to one rooted in public health and community engagement.

We must further invest in our communities and empower the advocates who are leading at the local level. We have to de-radicalize those who are entrenched in hate, and invest in early stage interventions that work to cure the pain that often precedes acts of violence in our society. One way to do this is by ensuring that what is taught in our schools is both accurate and represents the rich tapestry that makes up America; another way is to hold social media platforms accountable for violent hate speech.

There are also bills that Congress could pass today. The Justice for Victims of Hate Crimes Act would instantly improve how we charge hate crimes; we can then further improve our data tracking around these crimes with additional legislation. Passing the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act would more effectively combat white supremacist extremism. And finally, we can better facilitate access to federal resources, like the Non-Profit Security Grant, to protect sacred places--like our own gurdwara in Oak Creek.

We can do all of these things and more, but only if we are willing to work together in pursuit of prevention and safety through a whole-of-society approach. As a father who is fighting to make a better world for my children, that is my wish--and that is why, above all else, I am here today.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you for your testimony and your important message. It is important that we hear it.

Mr. Tatum, you're now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF BRANDON TATUM

Mr. TATUM. I just want to, first, say thank you Jerry Nadler, Sheila Jackson Lee, Ranking Member Biggs for having me. This is a true honor and a testimony in our country that we've come a long way, and that a person of color like myself have access to speak, and I think it speaks volumes at how far we've come, and I think that it's time in our country that we don't turn back to the things that many want to retain in our history. We should keep continue to move forward.

First, things that I want to say is that it's very important for us to be able to define acts of terrorism and be able to investigate them thoroughly. We have to understand that there's a lot of hoaxes that have been perpetuated over the last several years, and I want us to, in addition to, focusing on the hate crimes, and I think that every single person that is here understands that it is a problem in our country and that we need to address it vigorously. We also need to identify the influx of people who are coming out and creating situations and lying about hate crime and violence in certain situations to gain traction in their particular movement.

There has been a tremendous increase—like I said, it's written in my statement, and we have seen it happen all too often on college campuses. Unfortunately, many of them are perpetuated by minorities in our communities. Young ladies who have made statements that there were writings and racial slurs perpetuated on campus, some nooses and other things that are associated with hate crimes, come to find out that they were all perpetuated by the person who reported it. So, in addition to our research, and our efforts to combat terrorism in institutions, we also need to look at and help verify whether these things are true or not.

I want to talk about another issue that will speak to the very grounds of people in our country who have been demoralized. I think that it's the lack of retaining God in our consciousness. I really would love to see people who are in leadership in our government continue to retain God, and not throw God away and Act as if God wasn't the help and the foundation of this country.

The reason that we are where we are today in our country is because the Judeo-Christian values that we have retained. I think that people have been demoralized in their apt to commit these crimes and be hateful towards one another because the absence of God.

I'll add as well, when it comes to law enforcement, many people who are on this Zoom call right now have been perpetuating hatred towards law enforcement officers and has led to the police officers being dejected. They are not engaging. They are not being proactive, and many of these efforts, or many of these lack of efforts on behalf of police officers who are scared to do their job, fearful of terrorist activity against them, and also fearful a judgment—prejudgment and being called a racist and working in a racial institution, these officers are not able, or they are not proactively polic-

ing, which will deter a lot of these actors from going into synagogues, from acting out in violence.

The ones who are standing in the gap for us to protect our citizens are the police officers. When you diminish them, they are no longer going to be there. They're retiring, they're quitting, and we cannot get enough officers in the field to combat this. I want everybody on here to understand that, that our law enforcement officers are incredibly important if we are going to fight against this influx of terrorism and terrorist behavior. The last thing that I will say is that we do need to also include the institution of the family.

Many of these minority communities are falling apart and we see a lot of degradation because of the institution of the family that's under attack. So, in addition to the college and universities and other Black businesses, I also think we should focus on the Black family in inner-city minority families, because the stronger the family becomes, the better prepared they are, the better people are put out into society, and the better equipped they are in not becoming victims in the society that we live in.

I want to first end this by saying thank you. I really appreciate the opportunity to have my voice being heard, and I'm here to answer any questions subsequent to my testimony. Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Tatum follows:]

Brandon Tatum

Former Tucson Police Officer

February 17th, 2022

" The Rise in Violent Crimes Against Minority Institutions"

101

Written Testimony

The Title, Rise in Violence Against Minority Institutions, is incredibly vague, and I believe the term is vague intentionally. So that the uninformed amongst us can be manipulated by the evil ones who fetishize over the perceived victimization of minorities for personal and professional gain. It is a sport to some, to create a false reality that minorities are under attack in America by the preverbal "White Man", so that they can become the savior of the mess they've concocted in the first place. This type of behavior yields popularity, influence, and for some unlimited votes.

Hearings like this, in my opinion, are not created to find solutions. They are created to push a particular agenda and perceptions that are conducive for those in power. If the words, Racism, white supremacy, white privilege, systemic racism, and Covid are brought up in this hearing as primary causes of the Rise in Violence Against Minority institutions, absent the attack on police, defunding the police, Hoaxes, counterproductive progressive policies, and degenerate aspects of "Minority" culture, then we all should realize this is headed nowhere. The issues we are discussing today with be the same ones 100 years from now.

The term "Minority" and the term "Institutions" are both subjective. Minorities can also consist of Whites, who represent the majority in this country, but are minorities in particular communities and institutions. For example, white students attending HBCUs are minorities. Are Whites in this situation included in the term minorities? What about Whites who own businesses in majority black and Hispanic communities? Are their institutions considered minority institutions? Of course not. The question is, why not? Institutions are also very dynamic in their varying definitions as well. The nuclear family is an institution, just like any other brick and mortar institution presented in this hearing. Will Families count as institutions? Probably not. Why? The family is under violent attack. Families are tremendously affected by the rise in crime across our inner cities. For example, when a man murders another man, that is a violent attack on the family. One man does life in prison while the other ceases to exist. Both men are a part of an attack that we have seen play out all too often in minority communities. The act of this type of murderous violence is due to many factors that I will address in this statement, that many in this committee refuse to acknowledge and in some cases are culpable in.

There are reasons and solutions to the varying causes of, "The Rise in Violence Against Minority Institutions. One reason is the rise in Hoax culture within minority communities and activism. The second consist of the Effects of failed progressive policies, i.e. Anti-police rhetoric/Defunding the police, and bail reform/no cash bail. The solutions are very simple. We need to have honest conversations and place blame where it is most reasonably applicable. Then we can begin to seek change.

Are the "Threats' ' against HBCUs racist and coming from non-minorities?. Racist and Hate crime Hoax perpetrated by minorities are on the rise, which skew the reality of actual violence against minority institutions. According to a study done by Wilfred Reilly a political science professor at Kentucky State University, "This Phenomenon of fake hate crimes did not appear to be small-scale or regionally based". Mr. Reilly's test sample of approximately 346 hate crimes

found that less than one third of them were genuine. Mr. Reilly also found over 400 fabricated hate crimes reported to police between 2012 and 2017. His conclusion was that faked or fabricated hate crimes occur a lot more than people believe. Although Mr. Reilly's study was of all hate crime accusations, not those limited to minorities alone. We do know that most hate crimes are reported by minorities, and there is no evidence to suggest in Mr. Reilly's finding that minorities are somehow reporting less than typical false hate crimes. There are innumerable examples of fake racial hate crimes. For instance, a Black student at the University at Buffalo who claimed there were signs put up that read, "Black only" and "White Only" on the bathrooms, later admitted he was the one who actually posted them. A black student from Wisconsin – Parkside reportes death threats and a noose hanging from a door, who also later confessed he made it all up. I have dozens of these scenarios that could be added to the testimony.

Defunding the police and anti-police rhetoric has destroyed policing in communities that need them the most. Crime rates have skyrocketed in many inner cities across the country. Many want to blame it on the pandemic, but crime is primarily associated with the opportunities to commit those crimes. Police have been cut, demoralized and in many cases have withdrawn from proactively patrolling inner city communities, which has caused criminals to become emboldened.

Based on my training and experience as a Law enforcement officer, I have discovered that crime and violence are actions of opportunity more so than necessity. Necessity will cause someone in desperate need of money or employment to vigorously search for employment or create value as an entrepreneur. If the opportunity presents itself to take the easy way out, by stealing from others, or to take the life of another in the commission of theft, a desperate person will pursue it. If, there are opportunities to collaborate with others to do smash and grabs to make extra money, instead of working long hours, one might take that opportunity. Necessity doesn't always breed crime, opportunities do. This conclusion is present year around in many poor inner cities around America, like the one I grew up in.

It is important to note that not every person in the poor minority community commits crimes. Why not? They are all minorities, right? They are all living in the same city, with the same amounts of violence and opportunities or lack thereof. The answer that I have discovered is that as more opportunities to commit crimes rise with no punitive actions against it, the more people of that community will take advantage of it. The least amount of opportunities there are to commit crimes, the least amount of people are going to choose that route. Unfortunately, the effect of this behavior happens disproportionally in the inner-city communities and against minority businesses.

Bail reform has also negatively affected crime and law enforcement officers' ability to deal with it. Individuals who are perpetuating horrific acts of violence which affect minority institutions are let out on the streets to do it all over again. For example the looters, arsonists and violent criminals we've seen thrive in the BLM riots, are not being held accountable in any effective

way. They are out, sometimes within the same day, and return to commit crimes. This can also be applied to the proliferation of smash and grab. Until we start holding people accountable, we will continually see an increase in the attack on black businesses, families, and institutions.

The way we move forward is to take an honest look at the culture in these communities, and have genuine introspective conversations that will truly hold them accountable for the ways their actions are negatively affecting their own communities. We also need to have a reckoning with the way we treat law enforcement, the way we handle the prosecution of crimes, and hoaxes.

This is not about white privilege, systemic racism or the pandemic.

Brandon Tatum Short Bio

Brandon Tatum, a former Tucson Police Officer, co-founder of BLEXIT, and author of Beaten Black and Blue: Being a Black Cop in an America Under Siege, has become one of the most prolific speakers and exciting personalities on social media after making a Facebook Video that got over 70 million views.

Brandon was also an All-American high school football player out of Fort Worth, Texas and was featured in the US-Army All-American Game. Brandon accepted a full athletic scholarship from the University of Arizona in 2005. Brandon played at Arizona for 5 years and entered the NFL Draft in 2010. God had other plans for Brandon, and he joined the Tucson Police Department a year later.

Brandon served 6 years with the Tucson Police Department. During his tenure, Brandon became a SWAT operator, field training officer, general instructor, and a Public Information Officer.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you.
Ms. Huang, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF MARGARET HUANG

Ms. HUANG. Good morning, Chair Jackson Lee, Ranking Member Gibbs, Chair Nadler, and all the Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Margaret Huang, and I'm President and CEO of the Southern Poverty Law Center and the SPLC action fund.

The recent bomb threats against almost two dozen historically Black colleges and universities, or HBCUs, over the last 2 weeks have been deeply impactful, threatening a collective sense of security and safety.

These hateful threats, apparently timed to coincide with the beginning of Black History Month, are reminiscent of this country's long history of White supremacist attacks on Black leaders and Black churches, attacks with the explicit goal of terrorizing Black communities to assert control.

Of the 107 HBCUs in the United States, 44 are located in the five States of the Deep South where the Southern Poverty Law Center has significant presence and a commitment to social justice. These States are Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi.

These threats impact both our community and our staff. We have staff members who are proud HBCU alum, and many others who have children and family members who are students, faculty, or graduates of HBCUs.

It's been almost 60 years since the Ku Klux Klan members bombed the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, killing four schoolgirls, yet we are still grappling with hateful acts targeting racial and religious minorities. At a time when many States are passing laws restricting teaching about racism, it is clear that more needs to be done to teach our young people the unvarnished truth about American history, both the good and the bad.

To help the Subcommittee understand the context for the racist attacks on the HBCUs, my written testimony describes how the current extremist threat is being mainstreamed, how to prevent hate crimes, and address online radicalization, the importance of evidence-based violence prevention initiatives, and the need to ensure that our students have digital literacy skills taught in an inclusive, educational environment.

When our educational and religious communities are targeted for violence and vandalism, it is imperative that the needs of survivors are prioritized. Our instinct is to increase physical security for our houses of worship and community institutions, higher walls, more cameras, more bullet-proof glass, and even armed guards, but these steps must be coupled with a commitment to fund, research, and prevention initiatives to address hate and the long-term contributions to extremism.

Passage of the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act would be a key advance in this effort. Press reports indicate that the FBI has focused its investigation on six radicalized tech savvy youth suspects. One of the young offenders reportedly claimed a connection

with the Atomwaffen Division, a terroristic, Neo-Nazi organization that we have been tracking over the past 5 years.

The possible connection to extremist groups underscores the needs for parents, educators, and communities to be attuned to signs of radicalization, and to help inoculate young people against being drawn into an extreme and hateful path. We're pleased that the DOJ, DHS, and the FBI have launched criminal investigations into this case, but more must be done.

My testimony includes several policy recommendations for Congress and the Administration.

First, words matter. It's impossible to overstate the importance of elected officials and community and business leaders using their public platforms to condemn these threats to HBCUs and other communal institutions.

Second, oversight matters. We appreciate the attention of this Committee, Congress, and the Biden Administration that you have devoted to addressing White supremacy and extremism in all forms. This must continue.

Finally, investments matter. We urge you to make investments in countering disinformation, developing prevention strategies, and offering antibias education. Disinformation and conspiracy theories are galvanizing attacks on our democracy and government institutions. Teachers must be able to teach the full truth, including about the hard history of slavery, racism, and White supremacy in the United States.

These investments can help secure a future in which all can gather, worship, and live free of terrorists and extremist threats in a Nation as good as its highest ideals. We look forward to working with you as you continue your focus to ensure our treasured HBCUs are safe spaces for all.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The statement of Ms. Huang follows:]

Testimony of Margaret Huang

President and Chief Executive Officer
Southern Poverty Law Center and SPLC Action Fund

Before the
House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism,
and Homeland Security
"The Rise in Violence Against Minority Institutions"

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SPLC | ACTION

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Chairwoman Jackson Lee, Ranking member Biggs, and members of the Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security Subcommittee, I am Margaret Huang, President and CEO of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and the SPLC Action Fund.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today on "The Rise in Violence Against Minority Institutions." The recent spate of bomb threats against historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) is alarming and deeply unsettling. Of the 107 HBCUs in the United States, 44 are located in the five states where the SPLC has a significant presence – Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi. These threats impact both our community and our staff. We have staff members who are proud alumni of HBCUs – including on our senior leadership team – and many others who have children who are HBCU graduates or current students. We condemn the targeted violence and threats aimed at these storied institutions and will do everything we can to support the HBCU community.

Established in 1971, the SPLC has been tireless in identifying and rooting out extremist groups to create a fair, inclusive, and unified nation. We are a nonprofit advocacy organization serving as a catalyst for racial justice throughout the South. We work in partnership with communities of color to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements through transformative policies and initiatives, and advance human rights of all people. We have deep expertise in monitoring the activities of domestic hate groups and other extremists – including the Ku Klux Klan, the neo-Nazi movement, racist skinheads, antigovernment militias, and others. We currently track hundreds of extremist groups operating across the country and publish investigative reports, share key intelligence, and offer expert analysis to the media and public.

The SPLC employs a three-pronged strategy: litigation, policy advocacy, and public education. We work within the judicial system to compel systemic reforms on behalf of victims of bigotry and discrimination. Through "Learning for Justice," our organization provides free resources to caregivers and educators to help advance human rights and inclusive democracy.

Separately, the SPLC Action Fund advocates for the implementation of policies and laws to eliminate the structural racism and inequalities that fuel oppression of people of color, immigrants, young people, women, low-income people, and the LGBTQ+ community. The Action Fund is dedicated to fighting for racial justice alongside impacted communities in pursuit of equity and opportunity for all.

Historical Context for Recent Threats

Educational institutions, houses of worship, and other community institutions have historically been regarded as safe spaces for all people – sanctuaries for communities to gather, share, learn, fellowship, and build a support network. This is particularly true for communities of color. Colleges and religious institutions have long played a key leadership and organizing role throughout the civil rights movement. The bomb threats against almost two dozen HBCUs over the last two weeks have been deeply impactful, shaking a sense of security and safety. The threats apparently timed to coincide with the beginning of Black History Month are reminiscent of this country's long history of white supremacist attacks on Black churches – attacks with the explicit goal of terrorizing Black communities to assert control.

It has been almost sixty years since Ku Klux Klan members bombed the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, on September 15, 1963, killing four schoolgirls. At a time when states are passing laws

restricting teaching about racism, it is clear that much more needs to be done to teach our young people the unvarnished truth about American history – both good and bad – so that we can learn lessons from the past to shape a better world for generations today and those to come. To help the subcommittee understand the context for these attacks on HBCUs, our testimony will describe the nature and magnitude of the current extremist threat, suggest effective techniques to prevent hate crimes and address online radicalization, highlight evidence-based violence prevention initiatives, and underscore the necessity for digital literacy and inclusive education.

HBCUs have been essential for the education and elevation of Black leaders and intellectuals for over 150 years. As Raymond C. Pierce, President and CEO of the Southern Education Foundation, said in his statement[1] condemning the bomb threats:

> HBCUs have been and continue to be central to Black scholarship and to the inclusion of Black voices in the American dialogue. The thoughts and theories of Black scholars, enhanced and sharpened by the freedom they enjoy on historically Black campuses, bring unique and needed perspectives to important national conversations....
>
> HBCUs are an indispensable and undeniable component of any strategy to address the systemic inequities that persist in all areas in our nation – from income and employment to criminal justice to housing to healthcare and education.

If the perpetrators' threats were designed to send a message – that even *learning* while Black is not safe – they clearly underestimated the strength of these very special centers of scholarship, whose very existence is rooted in resilience.

Press reports indicate that the FBI has focused its investigation on six radicalized, "tech-savvy" youthful suspects[2] whose timing appears to have been set to disrupt Black History Month. One of the young offenders reportedly claimed a connection with the Atomwaffen Division (AWD)[2] – a terroristic, neo-Nazi organization we have been tracking over the past five years.

If true, the criminal acts committed by these persons of interest are deeply disturbing – and underscore the need for parents, educators, and communities to be attuned to signs of radicalization and help inoculate young people against being drawn into an extreme and hateful path. We are pleased that the Justice Department, the Department of Homeland Security, and the FBI have launched criminal investigations into this case.

But more must be done.

As institutions grapple with how to restore a sense of safety to their campuses and to prevent further education disruptions, we must work alongside them to address the underlying causes of the rise in extremism and violent behavior in the country. We must acknowledge that extremism and the harms it provokes cannot be solved by law enforcement alone. And we must do more to support victims, survivors, and their communities – addressing the harms caused by extremists. Congress and the administration must support programs and initiatives designed to prevent hate, bias-motived criminal activity, and extremism.

Assessing and Contextualizing the Current Threat of Extremist Violence

The young person implicated in the HBCU bomb threat who claims association with AWD represents a disturbing trend of the radicalization of young people. AWD believes that its fascist political vision cannot be achieved through the existing political system. Instead, it argues that only acts of violence aimed at the state, Jews, people of color, leftists, and antiracists can accelerate the collapse of "the system" and build a fascist state in its place. Because of these beliefs, this part of the white power movement refers to themselves as "accelerationists." They embrace violence not just for violence's sake, but as part of a political revolution.

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[1] Statement of Raymond C. Pierce, President and CEO, Southern Education Foundation, on Bomb Threats Targeting Historically Black Colleges and Universities, https://www.southerneducation.org/in-the-news/statement-hbcu-bomb-threats/, February 3, 2022

[2] https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/atomwaffen-division

Atomwaffen is one of several accelerationist white power groups, along with hundreds of individuals who populated the neo-fascist Iron March forum, collectively making up what they called the "global fascist fraternity."[3]

Atomwaffen's roots, though, go back further in time to groups like The Order, a neo-Nazi terrorist organization active in the early 1980s. From 2017 through 2018, men associated with Atomwaffen were charged with killing five people in three different incidents. One of those was Devon Arthurs, an Atomwaffen member accused of killing two other members of the group in their shared apartment in Tampa in May 2017. Less than a year later, member Samuel Woodward allegedly stabbed to death Blaze Bernstein, a former classmate of Woodward's who was Jewish and gay. Other men linked to the group have been convicted of other crimes, including possession of an unregistered destructive device[4], possession of bomb-making components[5], gun charges[6], and federal conspiracy and hate crimes charges. The latter charges stem from a campaign carried out by four Atomwaffen members to harass and intimidate journalists and Jewish activists. The members printed and delivered posters to the victims' homes, which included the message "Our Patience Has Its Limits…You have been visited by your local Nazis."[7]

Due to the arrests of four members connected to the intimidation campaign — as well as repeated infiltration by researchers of the far right, antifascists, and journalists — Atomwaffen collapsed in early 2020. Since that time, some extremists have claimed affiliation with Atomwaffen, but it exists as more of a meme, a symbol, than an actual, officially organized group. In other words, people claiming an affiliation with Atomwaffen are expressing an affinity for the group's violent ideology, as well as a connection to the broader white power accelerationist community.

Mainstreaming Extremism

Radicalization cannot be disentangled from the larger cultural and political landscape in which it takes place. Indeed, focusing solely on organized extremist groups like Atomwaffen, or characterizing extremist movements as a paranoid fringe, obscures the great extent to which extremist thought originates in the political mainstream. Mainstream political parties and actors play an extremely important role in normalizing and spreading hateful ideas and actions. A study in *PS: Political Science & Politics,* for example, found a correlation between Trump's 2016 campaign rallies and hate incidents. The authors found that "Trump's rhetoric and rallies increased the perceived threat facing white Americans, heightening their white identity, all while justifying violence and extralegal methods to address their grievances and thereby increasing reported bias incidents," and that "counties that hosted a Trump rally experienced an increase in hate-motivated events."[8]

Dangerous and false conspiracy theories ideas like the "great replacement" theory now circulate widely both in extremist spaces and the political mainstream. This myth asserts that nefarious actors — Democrats, leftists, "multiculturalists," and Jews — are systematically attempting to replace white people in the United States and broader Western world with immigrants from predominantly non-white countries in order to dilute white political power. This rhetoric lays the groundwork for violence or the threat of violence like we witnessed against HBCUs in the last few weeks. Since 2015, extremists inspired by the great replacement theory have committed terror attacks in Charleston, South Carolina; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Christchurch, New Zealand; Poway, California; and El Paso, Texas. Despite its clearly violent implications, politicians and pundits now

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[3] Cassie Miller, "Social Media and System Collapse: How Extremists Built an International Neo-Nazi Network." *Antisemitism on Social Media,* ed. by Monika Hübscher and Sabine von Mering (Routledge, 2022), 93-113.
[4] Department of Justice, "Neo-Nazi Leader Sentenced to Five Years in Federal Prison for Explosives Charges," https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/neo-nazi-leader-sentenced-five-years-federal-prison-explosives-charges, January 9, 2018.
[5] Department of Justice, "Las Vegas Man Pleads Guilty To Possession of Bomb-Making Components," https://www.justice.gov/usao-nv/pr/las-vegas-man-pleads-guilty-possession-bomb-making-components, February 10, 2020.
[6] Department of Justice, "Former Atomwaffen Division Member Sentenced to Prison," https://www.justice.gov/usao-edva/pr/former-atomwaffen-division-member-sentenced-prison, February 28, 2020.
[7] Gene Johnson, *ABC News*, "Neo-Nazi Gets Seven Years for Threats to Reporters, Activists," https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/neo-nazi-years-threats-reporters-activists-82205275, January 11, 2022
[8] Ayal Feinberg, Regina Branton, and Valerie Martinez-Ebers, "The Trump Effect: How 2016 Campaign Rallies Explain Spikes in Hate," *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 2022, 1-9. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/ps-political-science-and-politics/article/abs/trump-effect-how-2016-campaign-rallies-explain-spikes-in-hate/5665F542B16FC275D2761CE5ACB90A70

repeat the myth regularly. Tucker Carlson, whose Fox News show is the highest-rated cable news program in the country, said on-air in September, "In political terms, this policy is called the great replacement, the replacement of legacy Americans with more obedient people from faraway countries."[9]

The danger of racist violence is especially high in the United States because of the country's growing polarization.[10] When people come to believe they face an existential threat, extreme measures like violence can appear more justifiable, and even necessary. In the wake of increased scrutiny by the public, media, and law enforcement and government officials, many extremist groups have purposely found ways to insert themselves into current social issues and shifted their focus to local politics. And trends suggest that intimidation, threats, and political violence are on the rise. U.S. Capitol Police Chief Tom Manger reported that members of Congress received 9,600 threats in 2021 — up from 8,600 the year before.[11] As distrust of elected officials, public health workers, and education officials erodes, threats against them have risen.[12] These threats are a clear warning that democracy in the United States is under attack, and violence and intimidation are increasingly seen as legitimate political tools.

The Nature and Magnitude of the Current Hate Crime Threat

Criminal acts motivated by bias are very personal crimes, with unique emotional and psychological impacts on the victim – and the victim's community. Because hate violence is intentionally, specifically targeted at individuals because of their personal and often immutable characteristics, these crimes wound and may effectively intimidate other members of the victim's community, leaving them feeling terrorized, isolated, vulnerable, and unprotected by the law. By making the victim's community fearful, angry, and suspicious of other groups – and of the power structure that is supposed to protect them – these incidents can damage the fabric of our society and fragment communities.

It is impossible to address our nation's hate crime problem without measuring it accurately. Under the Hate Crime Statistics Act of 1990 (HCSA), the FBI is required to compile hate crime data from the approximately 18,000 federal, state, university, city, and tribal law enforcement authorities and publish an annual report. The FBI HCSA report[13] that came out on August 30 reports on 2020 hate crimes.

The HCSA report provides data on the full range of hate crimes – race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender, and gender identity – aggregated by states, cities, counties, and colleges and universities. Unfortunately, reporting is voluntary for state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies and many do not provide their information.[14] For the third year in a row, participation in the FBI data collection program declined in 2020.[15] Though clearly incomplete due to under reporting, the 2020 FBI HCSA report provides the most comprehensive national snapshot available of hate violence in America. According to the FBI report, there was a 13% increase in hate crime incidents in 2020, the highest numbers reported since 2001. Of the incidents reported (8,263), race-based hate crimes ranked highest, making up 63% of the total hate crimes, the highest number of race-based hate crimes since 2004, and a 32% increase over 2019. Fifty-five percent of the race-based crimes were directed at Black people, a 49% increase over 2019. This is particularly disturbing given the recent bomb threats against HBCUs. Religion-based crimes ranked second but experienced an 18% decline

[9] Aaron Blake, *Washington Post*, "How Republicans Learned to Stop Worrying and Embrace 'Replacement Theory' – By Name," https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/09/27/how-republicans-learned-stop-worrying-embrace-replacement-theory-by-name/, September 27, 2021.
[10] Levi Boxell, Matthew Gentzkow, and Jesse M. Shapiro, "Cross-Country Trends in Affective Polarization," National Bureau of Economic Research, https://www.brown.edu/news/2020-01-21/polarization
[11] Kristin Wilson, *CNN*, "US Capitol Police Chief Says Department Fielded 9,600 Threats Against Members of Congress in 2021," https://www.npr.org/2021/02/11/966498544/a-scary-survey-finding-4-in-10-republicans-say-political-violence-may-be-necessa, January 5, 2022.
[12] Zack Beauchamp, *Vox*, "'We Are Going to Make You Beg for Mercy: America's Public Servants Face a Wave of Threats," https://www.vox.com/22774745/death-threats-election-workers-public-health-school, November 18, 2021.
[13] Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2020 Hate Crime Statistics Act Report, https://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/fbi-releases-2020-hate-crime-statistics
[14] See, for example, the ADL chart listing almost 70 cities in the United States with populations over 100,000 that either did not report any data to the FBI in 2020, or affirmatively reported zero (0) hate crimes. https://www.adl.org/media/16764/download
[15] Department of Justice, 2020 FBI Hate Crime Statistics, https://www.justice.gov/crs/highlights/2020-hate-crimes-statistics

from 2019. Crimes directed against Jews and Jewish institutions were the most numerous among religion-based hate crimes – about 55% -- but declined by 28% when compared to incidents reported in 2019.[16]

These numbers do not speak for themselves. The impact of these crimes on communities can never be reduced to mere numbers. Behind each and every one of the 8,263 reported criminal incidents in 2020 is a victim of violence, intimidation, or vandalism – targeted for no other reason than their race, religion, national origin, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

Improved reporting requires law enforcement agency capability and willingness to accurately report the data and trust from the community that reporting to the police will matter, that it will make a difference. If marginalized or targeted community members – including immigrants, people with disabilities, LGBTQ community members, Muslims, Arabs, Middle Easterners, South Asians, and people with limited language proficiency – cannot report, or do not feel safe reporting, law enforcement cannot effectively address these crimes, thereby jeopardizing the safety of all.

Enactment of the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act,[17] which included the provisions of the Khalid Jabara and Heather Heyer National Opposition to Hate, Assault, and Threats to Equality Act (NO HATE Act) as Section 5, is an important step forward. The new law authorizes incentive grants to spark improved local and state hate crime training, prevention, best practices, and data collection initiatives and make grants available for state hate crime reporting hotlines to direct individuals to local law enforcement and support services.

Comprehensive hate crime data collection and enforcement of current laws are both essential. But the law is a blunt instrument to confront hate and extremism – it does not address the disparate root causes of hate, nor does it adequately mitigate future harms to historically targeted and marginalized communities. Simply put, we cannot legislate, regulate, tabulate, or prosecute racism, hatred, or extremism out of existence.[18]

Approaches to hate crimes and violent extremism should be de-securitized, focusing on investment in communities, education and prevention initiatives, and social and economic support rather than law enforcement agencies alone.[19] Education, far upstream of exposure to radicalizing extremist content, has also proven to be an important component of challenging and mitigating extremist harm.[20]

Supporting Victims and Focusing on Prevention

There is a long history of threats and violence directed against Black Americans and their institutions. Though it has been almost 60 years since Ku Klux Klan members bombed the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, on September 15, 1963, killing four Black schoolgirls, the impact and harm of that horrific crime still resonates deeply today.[21] And over the past decade our nation has witnessed far too many other racist and antisemitic attacks on houses of worship and community institutions.

- On August 5, 2012, six people – including witness Pardeep Kaleka's father – were killed and three others wounded when a white supremacist gunman entered the Oak Creek Sikh Gurdwara and opened fire.
- On June 17, 2015, a white supremacist joined a prayer group meeting at the Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Charleston, South Carolina, and opened fire, murdering nine worshipers and injuring one other in the historic Black church.
- On October 27, 2018, an avowed white supremacist entered Pittsburgh's Tree of Life Synagogue and murdered 11 Shabbat worshippers and injured two others from the three congregations that were

[16] Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2020 Hate Crime Statistics Act Report, https://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/fbi-releases-2020-hate-crime-statistics
[17] Public Law 117-13, May 20, 2021 https://www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ13/PLAW-117publ13.pdf
[18] SPLC, Hate Crimes, Explained, https://www.splcenter.org/hate-crimes-explained, October 27, 2021.
[19] Harsha Panduranga, Brennan Center for Justice, Community Investment, Not Criminalization, https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/2021_06_DHS_Targeted_Prevention.pdf, June 17, 2021
[20] *Polarization and Extremism Research Innovation Lab and the Southern Poverty Law Center*, Parents & Caregivers Guide to Online Radicalization, Assessments & Impact, https://www.splcenter.org/peril-assessments-impact, July 2021
[21] National Park Service, "16th Street Baptist Church Bombing (1963)," https://www.nps.gov/articles/16thstreetbaptist.htm.

meeting there for Shabbat morning services -- the deadliest antisemitic incident in American history. Four law enforcement officials were also wounded responding to the shooting.

- On January 15 of this year, an individual seeking the release of an al-Qaeda operative held four Shabbat worshippers hostage at Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker's Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas.

When our religious communities and houses of worship are targeted for violence and vandalism, and when attacks similar to the bomb threats recently perpetrated against HBCU college students, staff, and family communities occur, it is imperative that the needs of victims-survivors are addressed first. It is understandable that one instinct is to increase physical security for our houses of worship and community institutions – higher walls, more cameras, more bulletproof glass, and even armed guards. But this cannot be our only response. Broad community cohesion and support is essential. Houses of worship and HBCUs are different from airports – and they cannot become armed fortresses, isolated and segregated from the broader community.[22] The challenge is to find a balance between the imperative that our institutions continue to be open and welcoming and efforts to ensure that they remain safe spaces for worship, learning, and community building.

There is considerable support in Congress for significantly increased funding for FEMA's Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NPSG), which is currently funded at $180 million. This program has helped fund bulletproof doors, shatterproof glass, secure entry systems, panic buttons, and security guards for many at-risk faith communities and essential public institutions. As Congress and the administration assess the proper budget for NPSG programs to deter and detect attacks, we urge you to complement this support with a parallel commitment to fund research and prevention initiatives to address what the administration labeled as "long-term contributors to domestic terrorism" in its May 2021 National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism.[23] Like other recent intelligence community reports,[24] assessments[25] and congressional testimony,[26] the review concluded the two most lethal elements of today's domestic terrorism threat are (1) racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists who advocate for the superiority of the white race and (2) anti-government or anti-authority violent extremists, such as militia violent extremists.

One of the four pillars promoted in the administration's holistic, government-wide National Strategy approach to addressing violent extremism is a commitment to confront long-term contributors to domestic terrorism:

> Individuals subscribing to violent ideologies such as violent white supremacy, which are grounded in racial, ethnic, and religious hatred and the dehumanizing of portions of the American community, as well as violent anti–government ideologies, are responsible for a substantial portion of today's domestic terrorism. Tackling the long–term contributors to this challenge demands addressing the sources of that mobilization to violence – with leadership from relevant domestic–facing agencies, coordinated by the White House's Domestic Policy Council and in close partnership with civil society.
>
> That means tackling racism in America. It means protecting Americans from gun violence and mass murders. It means ensuring that we provide early intervention and appropriate care for those who pose a danger to themselves or others. It means ensuring that Americans receive the type of civics education that promotes tolerance and respect for all and investing in policies and programs that foster

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[22] Juliette Kayyem, "A Synagogue Shouldn't Be a Fortress," *The Atlantic*, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/01/colleyville-standoff-synagogues-risk-defenses/621280/, January 17, 2022

[23] The White House, National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism, https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/National-Strategy-for-Countering-Domestic-Terrorism.pdf, May 2021.

[24] Office of the Director of National Intelligence, "Domestic Violent Extremism Poses Heightened Threat in 2021," https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/UnclassSummaryofDVEAssessment-17MAR21.pdf, March 1, 2021.

[25] FBI and Department of Homeland Security, "Strategic Intelligence Assessment and Data on Domestic Terrorism," https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/20743448/strategic-intelligence-assessment-and-data-on-domestic-terrorism-may-2021.pdf, May 2021.

[26] Testimony of Christopher A. Wray, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, "Threats to the Homeland: Evaluating the Landscape 20 Years After 9/11," https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Testimony-Wray-2021-09-21-REVISED.pdf, September 21, 2021, and Testimony of Alejandro N. Mayorkas Secretary U.S. Department of Homeland Security Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, "Threats to the Homeland: Evaluating the Landscape 20 Years After 9/11," https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Testimony-Mayorkas-2021-09-21.pdf, September 21, 2021.

> civic engagement and inspire a shared commitment to American democracy, all the while acknowledging when racism and bigotry have meant that the country fell short of living up to its founding principles. It means setting a tone from the highest ranks of government that every American deserves the life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness that our Declaration of Independence recognizes as unalienable rights. And it means ensuring that there is simply no governmental tolerance – and instead denunciation and rejection – of violence as an acceptable mode of seeking political or social change.[27]

The investigation of the bomb threats against the HBCUs is ongoing – and we appreciate the priority that federal agencies have attached to reassuring the targets of these threats and finding and punishing the perpetrators. The FBI has stated that these threats are being investigated "as racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism and hate crimes."[28] Reports that the investigation's focus is on several "tech savvy" juveniles should prompt us to evaluate the threat of online radicalization for our youth – and examine best practices and evidence-based prevention initiatives that should be promoted.

Online Radicalization Myths: False Narratives Can Lead to Bad Policymaking

Social media has created a vastly larger audience for extremist propaganda. It has also accelerated the radicalization process: People who become radicalized adopt these views at a younger age than in the past because social media makes it easy to encounter extremist material and network with the likeminded.[26] Mainstream social media platforms deserve blame for amplifying extremist voices. SPLC reporting revealed that Twitter, for example, does not enforce its own rules to stop users from spreading hateful content "with any discernable consistency."[27] When tech companies do make an effort to remove hateful or dangerous content from their platforms, it is often only after they have received public pressure to do so. Facebook, for example, took down the original "Stop the Steal" page on its site in November 2020, but similar groups were allowed to proliferate in its place. Only after January 6 did the company pledge to ban all "Stop the Steal" misinformation[28] — but, even then, some groups simply changed their names to maintain their place on the platform.[29]

Given the growing role of digital and social media in society generally, active online involvement among extremists is a growing realm of research and concern. Especially in the aftermath of a targeted hate crime or terrorist incident, many sources routinely cite the internet as the "primary cause" of radicalization – especially among right-wing extremists. But these claims reinforce a sense that we know more than we actually do about the process of online radicalization. There can be no doubt, however, about the offline harms that online communities of radicalized individuals can inflict, like what HBCUs and members of the Black and African American communities are, again, being forced to endure.

Too often our discussions of online radicalization begin and end with a discussion of how much extremism exists online and the many and diverse social media platforms that extremists currently utilize. It is particularly troubling to consider the growing prevalence of online extremism as individuals – especially children and adolescents – have been spending substantial amounts of time on social media platforms, alone and with less supervision, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

But prevalence alone does not answer the questions we have about whether individuals are being influenced by this easily accessible material and, if so, in what ways? We know far more about the extent or prevalence of online extremist material – and the availability of networking – than we know about how social media and gaming platforms facilitate the radicalization process. The paramount challenge, then, is to prevent harms related to radicalization from ever impacting our communities by fostering inclusivity, compassion, and appreciation of difference, or by moving safely to reduce their impacts as quickly as possible.

Too often we re-construct pathways backwards from the tragedies of hate crimes or acts of terror, scanning an individual's or group of individuals' lives for the abhorrent, the clearly anti-social, the alien. And then we assign those findings significance out of context, even beyond their weight. But many factors and influences could be involved: politics and media, personal life circumstances, financial considerations, or personal or family

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[27] Ibid.

[28] FBI Statement on Investigation into Bomb Threats to Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Houses of Worship, https://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/fbi-statement-on-investigation-into-bomb-threats-to-historically-black-colleges-and-universities-and-houses-of-worship, February 2, 2022.

trauma.[29] We should be doing this in reverse, educating each other to recognize signs of contact with extremism as proactively as possible.[30]

In her July 2020 article, *"*We're living in a perfect storm for extremist recruitment. Here's what we can do to stop it,*"* Dr. Cynthia Miller-Idriss of American University noted how the father of the terrorist who attacked the Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston in 2015 told a journalist, "I don't know what happened, I just know that the boy wasn't raised that way." The parents of the juveniles now under investigation in relation to the bomb threats delivered to HBCUs, perhaps, feel similarly. "Parents whose children have perpetrated racist or extremist acts often respond with similar words," Miller-Idriss notes. She continues, "Under ordinary circumstances, youth are already a vulnerable population for radicalization. Adolescents are prone to risk-taking and are in the throes of identity exploration, looking for answers to questions about who they are and who they want to be. They can be attracted to the sense of rebellion extremist groups offer as well as promises of belonging and purpose."[31]

Well-meaning assumptions about "online radicalization" and its causal connections to violence online or offline have too frequently led to the development of resources that lack transparent, testable effective solutions.[32] There is an urgent need to expand prevention initiatives that address extremism and online radicalization proactively and through transparent, evidence-based resources rooted in community engagement and harm reduction.[33] This need exists in tandem with the need for far more funding streams for extremism, terrorism, and radicalization researchers working across disciplines to help us better understand how to ask the right questions toward the safest solutions.

A Parents & Caregivers Guide to Online Youth Radicalization

For almost two years, disruptions to support networks, polarizing narratives, and increased time online caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have provided extremists with an environment conducive to spreading hateful, radicalizing narratives. To help address this problem, the SPLC and American University's Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL)[34] published a guide for parents and caregivers in June 2020. A year later, after collecting focus group feedback and testing the impact of the guide, our partnership published an updated version of the guide, as well as resources for mental health professionals, coaches, mentors, and educators. All of these resources are also available in German, Portuguese, and Spanish.

The guide, *Building Resilience & Confronting Risk*,[35] provides tangible steps to counter the threat of online radicalization, including information on the new risks during the COVID-19 crisis, ways parents and caregivers can identify warning signs that their children have been exposed to extremist propaganda, ways to build

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[29] Windisch, Simi, Blee, DeMichael, *Perspectives on Terrorism*, "Understanding the Micro-Situational Dynamics of White Supremacist Violence in the United States," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12 (December): 23-37. https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/binaries/content/assets/customsites/perspectives-on-terrorism/2018/issue-6/a2-windisch-et-al.pdf, December 2018; See also Todd C. Frankel, *Washington Post*, "A majority of the people arrested for Capitol riot had a history of financial trouble," https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/02/10/capitol-insurrectionists-jenna-ryan-financial-problems/, February 10, 2021; See also Koomen and van der Pligt; See also Peter Roy Harmsen, "Lone Terrorists Not That Lonely: Aarhus BSS Researcher," https://bss.au.dk/en/about-aarhus-bss/news/show/artikel/lone-terrorists-not-that-lonely-aarhus-bss-researcher-1, February 16 2016; See also Lasse Lindekilde, Stefan Malthaner and Frances O'Connor, *Dynamics of Asymmetrical Conflict*, "Peripheral and embedded: relational patterns of lone-actor terrorist radicalization," https://pure.au.dk/portal/en/persons/lasse-lindekilde(c3a91343-f2ea-4695-8dc2-47bccf1d0887)/publications/peripheral-and-embedded-relational-patterns-of-loneactor-terrorist-radicalization(d7df55ac-af4f-4fd6-90fc-a1eb3e5dc661).html, January 2, 2019

[30] See SPLC/PERIL resources, https://www.splcenter.org/peril, June 2021

[31] Dr. Cynthia Miller-Idriss, CNN, "We're living in a perfect storm for extremist recruitment. Here's what we can do to stop it," https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/19/opinions/online-radicalization-risk-pandemic-miller-idriss-united-shades/index.html, July 19, 2020; See also Dr. Cynthia Miller-Idriss, *Hate in the Homeland*," Princeton University Press, pgs. 22-27, 2020

[32] Kieran Hardy, *Journal for Deradicalization*, "Comparing Theories of Radicalisation with Countering Violent Extremism Policy," https://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/150
, pgs. 76-110, Summer 2018

[33] See SPLC/PERIL resources, https://www.splcenter.org/peril, June 2021; See also Dr. Cynthia Miller-Idriss and Susan Corke, *USA Today*, "How parents can learn to recognize online radicalization and prevent tragedy – in 7 minutes," https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2021/05/08/online-radicalization-parents-can-learn-to-prevent-tragedy-column/4958478001/, May 8, 2021

[34] https://www.american.edu/centers/university-excellence/peril.cfm

[35] *Polarization and Extremism Research Innovation Lab and the Southern Poverty Law Center*, Parents & Caregivers Guide to Online Youth Radicalization, https://www.splcenter.org/peril, July 2021

resilience to those narratives, and proactive approaches that can help young people be less vulnerable to extremist rhetoric when they do encounter it.

Identifying Warning Signs and Inoculating Against Hate and Extremism

It is necessary to emphasize that there is no singular path to radicalization. Rather, myriad factors unique to the individual contribute to their susceptibility to radical or hateful belief systems. Thus, there is no way to predict who will and will not radicalize to commit extremist violence.

However, as our guide points out, there are several warning signs that parents and caregivers can be aware of to confront burgeoning extremist views. For example, young people advocating the use of violence to maintain race-based hierarchies under the guise of oppressive campaigns against white people should spur parents and caregivers to action. Similarly, expressions of misogyny or the need to police or control women and girls' behaviors and bodies must prompt responses from adults and advocates for young people.[36]

Certainly, the omnipresent and instantaneous nature of media online can sometimes override values taught daily in our homes, even when reinforced in our houses of worship, our schools, and elsewhere. As PERIL and SPLC warn, "It can be all too easy for people to become radicalized without even leaving home. The proliferation of extremist spaces and content online has created new and powerful avenues for radicalization, especially for young people who are often the targets of radical-right propaganda."[37]
While being equipped with the knowledge to recognize and interrupt an emerging embrace of extremist beliefs is necessary for those who work with and care for young people, it is much better to inoculate young people against this kind of radicalization before it takes root. Preparing all young people with the tools and knowledge to be empowered participants in an inclusive community is the foundation of true violence prevention.

With that aim, the guide prompts parents and caregivers to stay engaged with young people's online activity, consumption of news, and social media usage. It provides the information and resources adults need to help young people understand how propaganda and misinformation can be used to manipulate people. These resources also help sow the seeds of inclusive and empathetic identity formation in the context of our diverse, multicultural democracy.

To measure the effectiveness of the guide, the PERIL team conducted an impact study with 755 participants. Results "demonstrated that the *Parents and Caregivers Guide* confers real knowledge to those who take the time to read it. A mere seven minutes of reading the guide resulted in subjects coming away with valuable information and increased confidence in their ability to talk with young people about online radicalization."[38]

Online radicalization is complicated because humans and our societies and cultures are complicated. If adults are to protect youth from the predation of extremist communities online, we must give them robust resources and tools that we continually test and improve over time. Diverse, sustaining funding streams must emerge to support more efforts for developing community-oriented solutions for protecting youth and others from extremism in ways that highlight assistance for victims-survivors and downgrade law enforcement and carceral systems to handle the breadth of such complicated social problems.[39]

As Dr. Miller-Idriss and Susan Corke, Director of SPLC's Intelligence Project, wrote in an opinion piece last May, "Helping all parents and caregivers recognize youth vulnerabilities to persuasive extremist rhetoric – particularly online – is key to preventing further tragedies. Parents can't solve the problem of rising domestic violent extremism alone. It will take far more than individual or community preparedness and resilience to address the root causes that can lead young people down extremist pathways. We need strategies to address the producers of extremist propaganda, reduce the spread of conspiracy theories and disinformation, and

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[36] Lydia Bates, "Patriarchal Violence: Misogyny from the Far Right to the Mainstream," Southern Poverty Law Center, https://www.splcenter.org/news/2021/02/01/patriarchal-violence-misogyny-far-right-mainstream February 1, 2021
[37] See SPLC/PERIL resources, https://www.splcenter.org/peril, June 2021
[38] *Polarization and Extremism Research Innovation Lab and the Southern Poverty Law Center*, Parents & Caregivers Guide to Online Radicalization, https://www.splcenter.org/peril, July 2021.
[39] Dr. Cynthia Miller-Idriss and Daniel Köhler, *Foreign Affairs*, "A Plan to Beat Back the Far Right: Violent Extremism in America Demands a Social Response," https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-02-03/plan-beat-back-far-right, February 3, 2021

tackle rising adult radicalization into a range of conspiracy, anti-government, white supremacist and male supremacist extremist movements."[40]

Teaching Truth and Promoting Inclusive Education

The free educational resources available from the SPLC's Learning for Justice[41] project help K-12 school communities advocate for safe, just, and equitable environments. These efforts include providing frameworks[42] and other resources for teachers to teach hard history,[43] drawing connections between the past and present,[44] ensuring students are digitally literate and championing an inclusive education.[45]

As we engage with educators across many platforms such as webinars, workshops, social media, surveys, podcasts,[46] and blogs, Learning for Justice continues to emphasize teaching an honest and complete history of the United States, from the enslavement of Africans and Indigenous peoples to the Civil War and civil rights movements. Teachers in classrooms across the country are committed to this work and they deserve our support.

Grounding our history in facts and emphasizing the stories of historically marginalized groups helps students think more critically about themselves and their place in the world. They can leverage that knowledge to make different choices in the future – choices that could yield a positive impact on their communities and the trajectories of their lives. Reckoning with our nation's history, while sometimes uncomfortable, yields an exchange of ideas and solutions, improves empathy, and enables us to move toward a more inclusive democracy.

We know that schools can mimic what is happening in broader communities. For example, in our 2019 Hate at Schools report,[47] teachers told us that K-12 classrooms have become just as polarized as the world around them. Teachers are witnessing this polarization because progress has never been linear. There are twists and turns on the way toward a truly just society. As history reminds us, there is inevitable backlash against any semblance of inclusivity or justice for people who have been historically marginalized. It is such marginalization that led to the creation of historically Black colleges and universities. We have the power to intervene to prevent the extremism that reportedly drove several juveniles to terrorize HBCUs across the country with threats of violence.

Let us not forget why HBCUs exist: African Americans needed to carve out a space to ensure they could learn, embrace their cultures, resist white supremacy, and prepare for a prosperous future in an environment safe from physical violence and humiliation.[48] HBCUs are therefore more than just schools of higher learning. The fact that these communities are facing the same threats that were prevalent nearly 185 years ago when the first HBCU was founded is indicative of the hard work still ahead to disrupt the pervasiveness of white supremacy.

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[40] Susan Corke and Dr. Cynthia Miller-Idriss, *USA Today*, "How parents can learn to recognize online radicalization and prevent tragedy – in 7 minutes," https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2021/05/08/online-radicalization-parents-can-learn-to-prevent-tragedy-column/4958478001/, May 8, 2021

[41] https://www.learningforjustice.org/

[42] Learning for Justice Frameworks, https://www.learningforjustice.org/frameworks

[43] Hasan Kwame Jeffries, "The Courage to Teach Hard History," https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/the-courage-to-teach-hard-history, February 1, 2018.

[44] Bret Turner, "From MLK to #BlackLivesMatter: A Throughline for Young Students," https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/from-mlk-to-blacklivesmatter-a-throughline-for-young-students, January 9, 2018.

[45] Crystal L. Keels and Anya Malley, *Learning for Justice*, "Humanity, Healing and Doing the Work," https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/fall-2021/humanity-healing-and-doing-the-work, Issue 1, Fall 2021.

[46] Learning for Justice podcasts, https://www.learningforjustice.org/podcasts

[47] Maureen Costello and Coshandra Dillard, "Hate at Schools," https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/TT-2019-Hate-at-School-Report.pdf, 2019

[48] Teaching Hard History podcast, "Building Black Institutions: Autonomy, Labor and HBCUs," Episode 8, Season 4, https://www.learningforjustice.org/podcasts/teaching-hard-history/jim-crow-era/building-black-institutions-autonomy-labor-and-hbcus

As disinformation, radicalization, and acts of violence and terror have proliferated online, we must also invest at the K-12 level in students' digital literacy.[49] This includes teaching students how to seek out reliable sources and interrogate information. Ultimately, to achieve a safe, just, and equitable society, it is imperative that we embrace an inclusive education – one in which all students of various identities and abilities are valued, can learn without violence, and can realize their full potential to become active participants in our diverse democracy.

As leaders and students at HBCUs have noted, now is the time to grapple with our history.[50] In the recently released Third Edition of SPLC's *Whose Heritage?* report, we detail how the Confederacy fought the United States over the right to enslave African Americans during the Civil War.[51] Today, there are more than 2,000 Confederate memorials in the United States and its territories, glorifying the white supremacist values of the Confederacy. While the vast majority of these symbols are located in the South, Confederate memorials can be found across the Union states, including Civil War border states, states that were not yet admitted to the Union, and even Puerto Rico. They are ubiquitous, and worse, many of them are legally protected. Six states have preservation laws, making it nearly impossible for communities in those states to reject the Confederacy or heal the still-open wounds of the Civil War.[52]

SPLC believes that all Confederate memorials should be removed from public space, but we are especially concerned that more than 200 primary and secondary schools still honor Confederates.[53] No student – and especially no Black student – should be forced to attend a school named after a Confederate. Schools do more than teach students skills. They nurture the next generation of citizens and convey our national values. When students attend schools named after Confederates, they learn that these men are considered to be worthy of veneration and honor.

The legacy of the Confederacy is also with us on college campuses – not only in the heinous threats made against HBCUs, but also in the 14 Confederate memorials that can still be found on college campuses today.[54] Washington and Lee University, Nicholls State University, and Gordon State College are but a few of the institutions of higher education that honor Confederate figures.[55] The celebration of the Confederacy is especially offensive when it is adjacent to HBCUs like Morehouse and Spelman, where Lee Street borders the Atlanta campuses. While the origins of Lee Street's name remain unclear, the city is filled with Confederate symbols. Atlanta is home to Stone Mountain, the nation's largest Confederate monument.[56] Furthermore, it wasn't until 2018 that the city changed the name of Confederate Avenue.[57] This larger context impacts students of color who attend those schools. They are forced to confront the racialized terror promoted by the Confederacy and its supporters, just as the threats made against HBCUs were intended to intimidate Black communities.

Though SPLC is inspired by the activists who have removed more than 300 memorials since the Charleston Church Massacre in 2015, we know this is not enough. Renaming and removing Confederate memorials on or

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[49] Cory Collins, *Learning for Justice*, "Reimagining Digital Literacy Education to Save Ourselves," https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/fall-2021/reimagining-digital-literacy-education-to-save-ourselves, Issue 1, Fall 2021.
[50] Esther Schrader, SPLC, "HBCU students and leaders 'lean into history' amid bomb threats," https://www.splcenter.org/news/2022/02/09/hbcu-presidents-students-react-bomb-threats, February 9, 2022.
[51] Southern Poverty Law Center, "Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy: Third Edition," https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/whose-heritage-report-third-edition.pdf, 2022.
[52] Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.
[53] To see the entire Whose Heritage? dataset, see https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1W4H2qa2THM1ni53QYZftGob_k_Bf9HreFAtCERfiCIU/edit?pli=1#gid=1205021846.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Julia Arenstam, *Daily Advertiser*, "Nicholls State University Takes Aim at Confederate Ties, But Not University Name," https://www.theadvertiser.com/story/news/local/louisiana/2020/06/22/nicholls-state-university-strips-some-confederate-ties-but-not-name/3235669001/, June 22, 2020; Lilah Burke, *Inside Higher Ed*, "Retaining Its Name," https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/06/07/washington-and-lee-maintain-name-face-opposition, June 7, 2021; Gordon State College, "Gordon State College History," https://www.gordonstate.edu/about/gordon-state-college-history/index.html.
[56] Emil Moffatt, *NPR*, "Confederate Imagery On Stone Mountain Is Changing, But Not Fast Enough For Some," June 21, 2021.
[57] Rosalind Bentley, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, https://www.ajc.com/news/local/just-atlanta-confederate-streets-get-new-names/uStM5kDReX0Y5CmemAygrM/, October 3, 2018.

adjacent to colleges and universities cannot stop the violent threats against HBCUs. Nor will it end structural racial inequality. But it will signal that we wholeheartedly reject symbols of hate in our institutions of higher education, and demand that America do better.

Conclusion

We cannot allow white supremacy, racism, and bigotry to prevent our treasured and trusted HBCUs from maintaining safe spaces where students can embrace their shared experiences and cultures. We hope these hearings will spark congressional and federal agency action to authorize and fund long-term investments in anti-bias education, prevention strategies, and civic engagement initiatives that can help secure a future in which we can gather, worship, and live our communal lives safe from terrorist and extremist threats in a nation as good as its highest ideals.

Relatedly, we offer the following policies recommendations that outline ways Congress and the administration can act now to address hate and extremism in the U.S.

Policy Recommendations

Speak out against hate, political violence, and extremism

Words matter, especially from our leaders. It is impossible to overstate the importance of elected officials, business leaders, and military commanders using their public platforms to condemn hate crimes, threats to HBCUs, and vandalism and violence against houses of worship and other minority institutions.

Improve government response to domestic extremism

The Biden administration and Congress should continue to closely track and assess the nature and magnitude of the problem of domestic extremism and should fund resilience and digital literacy initiatives and government and academic research on best evidenced-based prevention programs.

Enforce current laws

Every state prohibits private militias, and many states have laws prohibiting political violence, restricting firearms in the state capitol/government buildings and near polling places, and banning paramilitary training in furtherance of, or in preparation for, a civil disorder. Federal and state authorities should take action to raise awareness about these laws – and enforce them.

Promote online safety and hold tech and social media companies accountable

It is frighteningly simple for racists and extremists to disseminate propaganda, recruit followers, generate profits, and spread intimidation on the major social media platforms. Tech companies must create – and enforce – Terms of Service and policies to ensure that social media platforms, payment service providers, and other internet-based services do not enable the funding or amplifying of white supremacist ideas or otherwise provide a safe haven for extremists.[58]

Teach truth and fund prevention initiatives to steer individuals away from hate and extremism

Disinformation and conspiracy theories are galvanizing attacks on democracy and government institutions. Many groups sharing conspiracy theories offer their potential supporters simple answers to complex questions. We must confront the insidious nature of this disinformation and conspiratorial thinking, which can lead to ideologically motivated violence.

[58] See, for example, the sample policies promoted by the Change the Terms coalition https://www.changetheterms.org/

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let me thank you so very much and all the Witnesses for their testimony. We will now proceed under the 5-minute rule with questions, and I begin by recognizing myself for 5 minutes.

Again, just a brief moment of Chair's privilege to indicate the cruciality and importance of this hearing and the Witnesses who have come here today to speak to the dangers that they have experienced should be the highlight of this hearing.

As indicated, hearings regarding other issues are pending, and we will address those issues. Also, we'll make note that the Members that I know on this Committee are not the cause of violence against law enforcement officers, and I would take issue with any statements to that effect.

Let me begin by saying to you, Dr. Wilson, and my time is short, but I do want to frame the danger of bomb threats to the psychic and the operation of a historically Black college where there has been generational trauma. If you can concisely give us that for the record, I want to make sure people understand that.

Dr. Wilson, if you would, please.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Madam Chair. Indeed, the psychological impact that the continuation of these threats is having on our young minds cannot be understated. Our students are here at Morgan and across the HBCU world are on the campuses when they first saw the murder of Trayvon Martin and they were 8 or 9 years old. Then following that, they saw a series of other individuals whose lives were cut down who also were in their age group, and who looked like them. Then, all of a sudden, you had the pandemic, and then George Floyd, and they were shutted out of these spaces for a year and a half, and we have the largest enrollment here in Morgan ever, because the students wanted to come to campuses where they could exhale, where they could actually reacquaint themselves with the kind of emotional well-being that the campus actually provides, and then all these bomb threats.

You wouldn't believe just how taxed our counseling center and resources have been just to minister to the incredible needs of these students. It's off the chart. I don't mean to, in any way, move beyond and describe this, Madam Chair, in any way, but it actually is.

We are seeing so many students who are almost coming to the brink, because they can't bear it anymore. As president, I have to say to them, this is not who we are. This is not our country. This is not our Nation. I have to really try and keep that together.

Our faculty—I'm speaking in terms of Morgan—but it's the same whether it's [inaudible] or Howard or Morehouse or Spelman or North Carolina A&T.

So, I hope the Committee will not take lightly the incredible psychological and emotional damage that these threats are perpetrating on our young lives.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Dr. Wilson, thank you.

Dr. Jones, bomb threats can result in bombs and violence. Is that not true?

Mr. JONES. That is true, yes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. So, the idea of a more stronger Federal presence should be taken seriously, and bomb threats should not be

taken lightly based upon your collective data and statistics about racism and anti-Semitism and other anti, Dr. Jones?

Mr. JONES. Yes. Bomb threats, particularly when they involve an actual plot to conduct an attack or to threaten to conduct an attack, is a serious effort, and one that we would consider an Act of terrorism. That's the intent to terrorize a population and should be taken extremely serious for the reasons we just heard. That's the psychological impact.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you. The Nation should not stand ideally by when there is racism, anti-Semitism, bias against LGBTQ, gender bias, anti-Muslim, and anti-Sikh.

Mr. Kaleka, my sympathies for the loss of your father, the injury of your fellow members of the Sikh community. I was very much aware of that as a member of the Homeland Security Committee and in Congress at that time. Tell me the terrorizing impact that comes from the hatred that was obviously generated against the Sikh community?

Mr. KALEKA. Thank you so much, Congresswoman. Yeah, it took all of us and 10 years to try to heal from that, and I think that's the effect of communal trauma. We used to understand trauma and trauma-related disorders as being individual or something that you needed to go through by yourself.

We're very much understanding it now to be communal, and these types of attacks, whether it's on law enforcement, whether it's on the Jewish community, this does have a type of communal traumatic effect, and it causes on everyone within those communities to heal from within and help the communities from outside to help those communities heal.

So, we were blessed to be surrounded by great communities, great interfaith partners who helped us heal. So, we're still in the midst of that, and we're still concerned about our fellow Jewish brothers and sisters, our Muslim brothers and sisters, our law enforcement community, everyone. I think the heart of this goes to we need to prevent targeted violence against all these communities.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let me just quickly go, Rabbi, and my fellow Texan, I welcome you again. I think the point that I want to really focus on with you as my last question, I really want to focus on that anti-Semitism and racism and all the isms can result into actual, physical violence. We're holding this hearing not for edification, but for the understanding that threats can result in physical violence.

You lived it. You started in your testimony by saying you're grateful to be anywhere. Can you associate the attacks on the Jewish community and anti-Semitism, the rise of that, to actual violence and loss of life?

Rabbi CYTRON-WALKER. Well, thank God, we, in our situation, I said at our healing service afterwards that we didn't have to say Kaddish, we didn't have to say the prayer for mourning. It was unbelievably—we're so fortunate on so many levels.

Our words matter. We have seen this time and again, and its words, whether they are anti-Semitic. It doesn't matter the group that is targeted. We're in a situation that's—the more people get exposure to that negativity; the more people can pass it on.

Everybody's not going to go and do a violent act, but if you have a larger pool of people, then you have a larger group of people that are going to take the next step towards extremism, and the next step towards extremism, and you're going to have a larger pool of people willing to actually do something horrible.

When it comes to that idea that our words matter and that all of us bear responsibility, each and every one of us, from across the political spectrum, from every group, we need to be able to tone down the rhetoric. We need to be able to support one another. We're not enemies here. We're one Nation that are all trying to come together and solve our problems, and we've got big problems to solve, but so our words do matter because violence is not what any of us want to experience, but it absolutely can happen.

Again, yeah. Thank you. I appreciate the question.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you. I thank you very much for your answers.

Mr. Biggs, I recognize you now for 5 minutes.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to make sure that everyone understands here. I don't think there's anybody on this Committee testifying as a Witness or here as a Member of Congress that is minimizing the threats to the HBCUs. I mean, there's no one here that isn't taking that seriously.

I think we're talking about also, however, a broad context of all issues that we must take very seriously, and, so, I hope no one thinks that.

I appreciate, Dr. Jones, and one of the things he talked about, because he said there's a broad range of racial, religious, and misogynistic attacks that take place. I can't help but remember my own—my own faith, my own denomination driven from five States and finally from New York to Ohio to Missouri to Illinois, and ultimately to the safety of the Rocky Mountain interwest—Intermountain West.

I was just pondering this as we're preparing for this hearing. So, that persecution of my own people—now that's a long time ago. Then I look at the last three months, four months, and actually 10 years ago in my own community in Phoenix, one of our churches burned, vandalized. Then, I don't know what the motivations were for any of these next attacks I'll mention, but we need to be cognizant that this is happening and I think that's what this hearing does.

So, in December of 2021, in Alabama at an LDS church, a shooting takes place by—on members of the church, a shooting in July of 2018, vandalism in Connecticut, shooting up a church in Connecticut in 2021, end of 2021. I believe it was December. Syracuse, Utah, 2021, vandalism of that church.

This is happening against all groups that associate with one another, faith-based groups, religious groups, whatever it is.

So, I think it's important for us to realize that and not rationalize any of this away. I think it's important to get that, but I want to ask Dr. Pennie and Mr. Tatum, in the summer of 2020, we saw a lot of rioting in the streets, resulting destruction, looting of small businesses in urban communities, in urban communities.

What communities are most affected negatively by that type of activity? Let's go with you, Dr. Pennie, first, and then Mr. Tatum.

Mr. PENNIE. Yes, sir. Thank you so much. Look, this is what we need to make sure we clarify. When these policies are being passed to defund the police and narrative that are destructive to any society as a whole, you have to understand that our majority/minority communities are suffering the most, and we saw the same idea in the early 90s. I grew up in the 18th congressional district, which is the Chair's district, and I witnessed my own cousin get killed in front of me at the age of 16.

Those negative ideas create this same level of violence that we continue to perpetuate now during this time. Twenty-something years later, there's no reason for us to continue to create this kind of divide, but the reality is as you have certain congressional leaders, certain leaders in our society that want to press this idea of defunding the police and segregating the police from their communities, all they're doing is making the people that live in these communities more and more victims. That's all they're doing is victimizing us over and over again.

I'd like to say, just please consider that this is a reality for people that are actually in the inner-city. I'm in these communities every day. I don't just sit up here and talk. I'm in there every day, and I want to encourage you to come out there and meet with some of them, because this is real life, and these people are living it.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you. Mr. Tatum.

Mr. TATUM. I share the same sentiment being former law enforcement officer, and I've seen the rhetoric affect law enforcement across the country, and law enforcement officers aren't just White. So, there's minorities that work in law enforcement that feel the brunt of rhetoric, and I agree with the rabbi when he said that words matter.

We have to stop being divisive. We can walk and chew gum at the same time. I believe that we can empower our law enforcement officers, we can fund them, we can support them, we can judge them fairly, and we will see a difference in the way police officers are patrolling our communities and they're keeping them safe.

I'm thankful to God that our law enforcement officers are there when these instances of hate happen, so they can bring these individuals to justice and protect to see them be able to negotiate an individual out of murdering multiple people who he had hostage and taking him into custody without harm is impressive. I think that we want to see law enforcement officers participate in these certain situations. Also, I would argue that terrorism can happen within.

There is interracial terrorism that we see in our country today, a lot of what Black violence are, what Black people see when they experience violence are within their own community.

I grew up in Black communities and, to be honest, I was more afraid of other people who were Black who hated me, who wanted to kill me, who was involved in gang violence than I was of a White supremacist or someone of that nature.

So, we do have to expand what we're saying, not diminish, but expand what we're saying to protect young Black people who are experiencing these same level of hate within their own community and also extend the olive branch to support law enforcement so

that law enforcement officers are equipped to help and we can all be better for it.

Mr. BIGGS. Madam Chair, I see my time is expired. I would ask the Chair to—I have 12 articles that I know you aren't going to want me to read the titles of all 12, but I'd like to submit them into the record, and I will have my staff provide those to you right after the Committee hearing.

[The information follows:]

MR. BIGGS FOR THE RECORD

The Washington Post

Investigations

Years of turmoil and complaints led the Southern Poverty Law Center to fire its founder Morris Dees

By Neena Satija , Wesley Lowery and Beth Reinhard
April 5 at 5:22 PM

Last summer, Maureen Costello, a senior leader at the Southern Poverty Law Center, decided that she had had enough. Several interactions over the years with the organization's co-founder, Morris Dees, had left her uncomfortable, she said.

To people outside the organization, Dees had built a reputation over more than a half-century as a leader in the fight for equality — from suing the segregated YMCA in Montgomery, Ala., to providing legal help to defendants on death row across the Deep South to pursuing the Ku Klux Klan and White Aryan Resistance.

But inside the organization, Costello and others said, his reputation was more complicated.

Costello said in an interview with The Washington Post that she had already taken her complaints about Dees to members of the board and to the president of the storied civil rights organization. Other senior leaders had done the same, she said, to no avail. On July 30, she turned again to the president, Richard Cohen.

ADVERTISING

"Why is he still here?" Costello said she asked Cohen, an exchange she documented that day in an email to a colleague. "People see him as racist and sexist."

"Or an anachronism," Cohen responded, according to Costello. "That would be kinder."

Dees, 82, was fired last month for unspecified misconduct, igniting a rush of speculation about what had come between him and the organization he built into a legal and fundraising behemoth. The nonprofit said that Dees had acted in ways that did not reflect "the mission of the organization."

Internal documents reviewed by The Post, along with interviews with current and former employees, suggest that the celebrated civil rights organization had been bitterly at odds with its founder for several years. Those battles have centered on his refusal to retire, his behavior toward women and his comments regarding race, according to the documents, the employees and Dees himself.

Within days of his ouster, on March 13, the center's longtime legal director abruptly resigned, and Cohen announced that he, too, would step down. Cohen wrote in an email to the organization's employees that "whatever problems exist at the SPLC happened on my watch, so I take responsibility for them."

In a series of emails and an interview with The Post, Dees, who is white, strenuously denied any racist or sexist behavior and said he was not fired for misconduct.

Dees said that SPLC leaders have been pushing him to retire since 2016, when he was hospitalized with serious injuries after a fall. After several board members confronted Dees last year with complaints about his behavior, and he refused to retire, his pay was cut by $100,000 and he was placed on emeritus status, he said. The nonprofit's most recent tax filings show that Dees made about $375,000 in 2017, more than Cohen.

Dees accused the board and Cohen of falsely suggesting he was guilty of misconduct and scapegoating him for what he called their own mismanagement of the center.

"I built the Southern Poverty Law Center out of nothing," Dees said in an interview last week in Montgomery, where he lives and the SPLC is based. "This stuff that they're after me about is just total crap."

Dees acknowledged a number of previously unreported instances — separate from those involving Costello — in which his conduct with employees had been called into question. For example, he said, the organization's counsel called him early this year to ask if he had hugged a woman at one of the center's legal retreats.

The nonprofit declined to comment on his descriptions of these incidents or on his other allegations but in a statement this week said that "many of the assertions Morris Dees has put forward are false."

Cohen said in a statement that he fired Dees after a recent investigation into misconduct. He did not respond to questions about the conversation Costello said they had about Dees last summer.

"Morris was well aware that his conduct was under investigation and that he had been disciplined in the past for workplace misconduct," said Cohen, who declined to detail the allegations against Dees. "I fired Morris for the good of the Center because of his misconduct."

Dees's firing marked a stunning fall for a man long regarded as a civil rights icon. He got his start selling mail-order cookbooks, tractor cushions and other items. He later harnessed his expertise in direct-mail marketing to raise millions of dollars for several presidential candidates and eventually for the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The civil rights organization Dees co-founded in 1971 now boasts a six-story building in Montgomery and satellite offices across the country. Its endowment topped $470 million last year, and contributions more than doubled to $132 million in the year after Donald Trump's election.

Yet as the center's prominence reached new heights amid national concern about the resurgence of hate groups, its leadership was grappling with how to manage Dees, documents and interviews show.

In late 2017, the organization investigated a complaint from a female employee about Dees's behavior after a fundraising event in Atlanta. Dees said that at a social gathering, he approached the woman, put his hand on her shoulder and asked her about a visible tattoo on

her arm. He said that, after she asked if he had any tattoos, he pointed to the front of his clothed right thigh, where he said he had one. The Post was unable to reach the woman or others who attended the event to learn their accounts.

After the investigation, Dees said he was asked by a human resources official to stay out of the Atlanta office for six months. "No one has ever suggested that you harassed someone," Cohen wrote Dees in a December 2017 email. "But the reality is that you made a young woman feel uncomfortable, and she complained to a supervisor."

Dees said three board members came to his home in May 2018 to discuss other concerns. They worried that his clashes with a senior executive over fundraising strategy might have contributed to her decision to resign, he said. They chided him over his interactions with the human resources official who investigated the Atlanta incident. And they brought up two allegations of racially insensitive comments.

The first of those complaints concerned remarks Dees had allegedly made about black voter turnout. According to Dees, a senior employee complained that he had said low black voter turnout in Montgomery ensured no black candidate would be elected mayor. He said he could not recall making the remarks ascribed to him.

The board members who went to Dees's house did not respond to messages seeking comment.

The other complaint that the board members brought up, Dees said, stemmed from a lunch in 2015 with Don Terry, a journalist who at the time was a senior writer for the nonprofit. According to Dees, the men were discussing a recent car accident, and he remarked that he had heard black teenagers in Montgomery are more likely to run red lights.

Dees emailed Terry later about a study he'd found online showing that black drivers were not more likely to violate traffic laws.

"I stand corrected," Dees wrote.

"Thank you for being open-minded about my challenge," Terry, who is black, wrote back.

Terry declined to comment on the exchange.

According to Dees, the meeting at his home, which has not been previously reported, ended with him agreeing to the pay cut and the move to emeritus status.

But some senior leaders still wanted Dees gone, Costello said. Costello, 64, who leads the organization's efforts to combat bias in education, provided emails showing other directors echoing her concerns about Dees and supporting her decision to confront Cohen. One of those people declined to comment, and the other did not respond to messages.

"There was not a member of senior leadership who wasn't bringing it up with Richard and talking to board members privately," Costello said. Several other people who were then directors declined to comment or did not return calls.

By the following year, Cohen was prepared to force Dees out.

On March 11, Cohen told Dees that if he would not resign, he'd be fired. In a text message two days later, Cohen again offered him the chance to "convert the termination into an unconditional voluntary resignation" by agreeing to retire. Dees had less than two hours to decide, the message said.

Dees did not accept the offer. Cohen announced his termination the next day.

Hours later, more than a dozen staff members signed an email to senior executives that applauded Dees's firing and demanded accountability from "those individuals in leadership and on the Board of Directors who, for years, were aware of and covered up or ignored" allegations of misconduct by Dees.

Among more than two dozen people who have worked or socialized with Dees, some described him in interviews as a generous and thoughtful leader, but others said he acted at times in ways that seemed antithetical to the center's mission.

At least a dozen people said that they witnessed Dees acting inappropriately with women, including subordinates, or making racially insensitive comments.

"Morris made overtures to women who worked for him," said Deb Ellis, one of the first female lawyers hired by the center who worked there from 1984 to 1986. She recalled that one morning she came into work to find a Victoria's Secret catalogue on her desk, with a note from Dees on top saying, "maybe your boyfriend would like to order something for you."

Dees denied Ellis's account and said he has never made advances toward women who worked for him.

Ellis said she warned other women in the office at the time that Dees might approach them. Women who worked there more recently said they, too, exchanged similar warnings.

Costello detailed her own discomfort around Dees in a March 11 memo to a human resources official, which she provided to The Post. Although Costello did not know it then, Cohen had threatened that morning to fire Dees if he wouldn't resign.

She wrote that at a group dinner she attended in Washington several years ago, Dees turned his attention to a younger female employee and "engaged in an inappropriately sexualized banter" and, as he spoke of his fondness for oysters, "licked his lips in a suggestive way." She also said that once, about four years ago, when she was wearing a sundress, Dees placed his hand on her exposed upper back and let it linger there, after which she tried to avoid him.

The incident she detailed most thoroughly involved a group dinner at Dees's home. He asked where her husband was and, hearing he was away, encouraged her to drink heavily and offered to drive her home, Costello wrote. A few minutes later, she said, Dees brought a board member, Elden Rosenthal, into the conversation. "Sure, we can take her home, especially if her husband isn't there," Rosenthal said as both he and Dees laughed, according to Costello.

Costello said that she complained the next day to Rosenthal, and that he dismissed the incident as a "joke." She said she talked to Cohen about it and later to Bryan Fair, the chairman of the center's board. Rosenthal, Fair, and Cohen did not respond to requests for comment.

Dees denied all of Costello's allegations and said he would never act suggestively with a woman employee. Dees said his wife had expressed concern at the dinner that Costello was too drunk to drive. Dees said she grew angry when he suggested that one of the SPLC security guards drive her home.

Costello denied Dees's account.

Several former staff members and others who socialized with Dees recalled times when he had made remarks about race that they considered offensive. Almost none were willing to be quoted by name, citing Dees's influence in the small Southern city or, in some cases, nondisclosure agreements they had been required to sign.

Jessamine Starr, the daughter of Dees's ex-wife Susan Starr, said she once heard Dees use the phrase "colored people time" when referring to people who were late. She added that given the era and the place he grew up in, "that would be a normal thing to say."

Dees denied ever using the term "colored people time" or making any racially insensitive remarks. "Anybody saying I'm a racist is almost a joking matter," he said.

Some former employees and longtime friends disagreed with the portrayal of Dees, a recipient in 2016 of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Nonviolent Peace Prize, as insensitive.

"As much as I was around Morris, I never saw him act inappropriately," said Danny Welch, who was working as a police officer when Dees hired him in 1975 as one of the lead investigators for the SPLC's "Klan Watch" project. Welch worked under Dees for a decade.

Montgomery lawyer J. Doyle Fuller, who said he has known Dees for 60 years, said that "to say or imply that Morris Dees has a racist bone in his body is laughable." Fuller added that Dees "spent most of his adult life putting the Southern Poverty Law Center together. That entitles him to a little deference."

News of Dees's firing comes in the wake of a string of other controversies that the center has dealt with in recent years. The nonprofit apologized in 2015 after calling Ben Carson an extremist. Three years later, it apologized for including the former British politician Maajid Nawaz, a Muslim and a known critic of Islamic extremism, in a publication called "A Journalist's Manual: Field Guide to Anti-Muslim Extremists," and agreed to a $3.4 million settlement with Nawaz's foundation. The organization has also been dogged by questions, including from former employees, about whether it has been focused on fundraising at the expense of work that would further its mission.

Dees's termination also brought to light significant turmoil among staff, much of it described in internal emails reviewed by The Post. On March 8, the nonprofit's associate legal director, Meredith Horton, a black woman, resigned, writing that the SPLC must to do more "to ensure . . . values we are committed to pursuing externally are also being practiced internally." She did not respond to messages seeking comment.

On March 14, more than 20 staff members signed an email to the legal department and senior leadership team expressing "widespread alarm and concern" at Horton's departure. "We are deeply concerned about the working conditions," the email continued, adding that "allegations of mistreatment, sexual harassment, gender discrimination, and racism threaten the moral authority of this organization and our integrity along with it."

Minutes later, Cohen announced that Dees had been fired. In the days to come, Rhonda Brownstein, the center's longtime legal director, abruptly resigned, and Cohen announced that he, too, would step down once an interim president was named.

Brownstein declined an interview request, and efforts to reach Horton were unsuccessful.

Dees said he had not been active in management or day-to-day operations for more than 15 years and works in the office only two days a week. He said the staff turmoil is evidence that Cohen is responsible for the problems at the SPLC, not him.

Some employees saw a 2007 episode as an indication the organization sometimes operated in ways that were in tension with its purported values. Two former employees said in interviews that they quit that year over the way the nonprofit's leaders handled an unusual personnel matter.

The employees said that the immigrant wife of a paralegal they worked with approached them to say that her husband was sexually abusing her and had taken away her travel documents. One of the employees, an attorney who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said she sheltered the woman in her apartment and helped her flee to California. Court records provided by the woman show that she later obtained a temporary restraining order against her husband.

But the employee said that Brownstein, the legal director, chastised her for her actions. According to the attorney, Brownstein asked, "Why would I get involved in my co-workers' marital matters?"

Angeline Echeverria, a paralegal in the same department, said she complained to supervisors, including Brownstein, and pointed out that the Immigrant Justice Project was itself suing companies for taking travel documents away from immigrant employees, a practice associated with human trafficking.

"It felt to me very hypocritical that we were suing employers for exhibiting the type of behavior that this co-worker was exhibiting toward his wife," Echeverria said in an interview.

Brownstein denied the account in a statement, saying she was aware only of "marital difficulties" between an employee and his wife. "Had I been aware of these serious allegations, I would have taken action immediately," she said.

The man could not be reached for comment, and his family members did not return phone messages. He no longer works at the SPLC.

The nonprofit has promised that change is underway. It has hired Tina Tchen, Michelle Obama's former chief of staff, to review its "workplace culture and its past practices and policies." And on Tuesday, board member Karen Baynes-Dunning, a black woman and former juvenile court judge, was named interim president to succeed Cohen.

The shake-up put to rest what had long been a point of contention between Cohen and Dees.

"As I've told you many times, I do not think you (or I) can be the face of the Center as we move into the next 50 years," Cohen told Dees in a March 6 email, adding that working with Dees was "an increasingly thankless job."

"You say you plan to leave in a few years," Dees wrote back. "Doesn't mean I have to leave with you."

Dees was on his way out a week later, with Cohen not far behind.

Julie Tate contributed to this report.

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The Opinion Pages | OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

Why Is the Southern Poverty Law Center Targeting Liberals?

By AYAAN HIRSI ALI AUG. 24, 2017

Since the violence in Charlottesville 10 days ago, when white supremacists left one young woman dead and 19 others injured, the Southern Poverty Law Center has hit the jackpot. The Alabama-based nonprofit is set to receive millions of dollars in donations from some of the nation's deepest of pockets. Apple pledged $1 million. JP Morgan Chase & Co.: half a million. George and Amal Clooney even got in on the action, promising to donate another $1 million.

Like every other decent American, I was outraged that the president of the United States equivocated in condemning neo-Nazi activity in this country. Nazism — not to mention white supremacy and racial bigotry — has no place in a civilized society.

But is donating money to the S.P.L.C. the best way to combat this poison? I think not. If Tim Cook and Jamie Dimon had done their due diligence, they would know that the S.P.L.C. is an organization that has lost its way, smearing people who are fighting for liberty and turning a blind eye to an ideology and political movement that has much in common with Nazism.

I am a black woman, a feminist and a former Muslim who has consistently opposed political violence. The price for expressing my beliefs has been high: I must travel with armed security at all times. My friend and collaborator Theo van Gogh was murdered in broad daylight.

Yet the S.P.L.C. has the audacity to label me an "extremist," including my name in a "Field Guide to Anti-Muslim Extremists" that it published on its website last October.

In that guide, the S.P.L.C. claims that I am a "propagandist far outside the political mainstream" and warns journalists to avoid my "damaging misinformation." These groundless smears are deeply offensive, as I have dedicated much of my adult life to calling out the true extremists: organizations such as Al Qaeda and ISIS. Yet you will look in vain for the S.P.L.C.'s "Field Guide to Muslim Extremists." No such list exists.

That's a shame, because Islamic extremism — a movement that aims to impose a caliphate and Sharia law by violent means — is as toxic as white supremacy. In the past two decades, it has certainly been responsible for many more deaths.

Like neo-Nazis, Islamic extremists despise liberalism. They deny the equality of the sexes, justify wife-beating and, in some cases, even the enslavement of female unbelievers. The Islamic State and groups like it regularly murder gay people in the most heinous ways. Islamic extremists are also virulently anti-Semitic, like the Nazis before them. And like today's American Nazis, they brandish swastikas, chant slurs and peddle conspiracy theories.

The terrible consequences of Islamic extremism are on display on a weekly basis around the world. In the days after Charlottesville, five men in Barcelona used a van and knives to kill 14 and injure scores of innocent people. Another Islamic extremist went on a stabbing rampage in Finland. In wealthy societies like the United States, most plots to kill in the name of Islamist supremacy are foiled. But poorer societies in the developing world lack the means to do that, which is why the majority of victims of the extremists are in countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan and Syria.

It is not surprising that, when I point out such facts, I am viciously attacked and threatened by those who are dedicated to Islamic extremism. But it has always struck me as odd that so many supposed liberals in the West take their side rather than mine, as happened three years ago, when Brandeis University rescinded their offer to me of an honorary degree. I would have expected a civil-rights organization supposedly committed to justice to speak out against those who would oppress

women, gays and people of other faiths. But the S.P.L.C. has nothing to say about Islamic extremists; only about their opponents.

Another voice the S.P.L.C. has tried to silence is that of Maajid Nawaz, who was included in the same field guide as me. (He is suing the organization for defamation.) Mr. Nawaz has written extensively about his past as an Islamic extremist in England and Egypt, just as I've written about my time in the Muslim Brotherhood as a teenager. For the past decade, he has run Quilliam, an organization dedicated to countering Islamic extremism in Britain and elsewhere, notably in Pakistan.

I met Mr. Nawaz in 2010 at a debate in New York City, where the subject was the nature of Islam. Our passionate disagreement was on full display: Mr. Nawaz is a secular Muslim, whereas I am not a believer any longer. Yet we both agreed the path to a successful reformation of Islam lies in more debate, more scrutiny and more critical thinking. It is exactly these activities that our opponents, now including the S.P.L.C., describe as extremism.

Cui bono? That question is nearly always the right one to ask of organizations like the S.P.L.C. Who really benefits from their activities? Repeatedly, and for more than a decade, journalists at publications ranging from Harper's to Politico to The Nation to The Weekly Standard have pointed out that the center's founders seem more interested in profiting off the anxieties and white guilt of Northern liberals than in upholding the civil rights of poor Southerners, or anyone else. There's a less cynical explanation, though, which is that liberals are deeply and increasingly uncomfortable with calling out Islamic extremism for fear of being smeared as "Islamophobic," or worse.

Regardless, the S.P.L.C.'s decision to target those who speak up for the civil rights of Muslims is a travesty.

Muslims today cannot freely debate the role of their religion in most Muslim-majority countries, where the charges of heresy or apostasy can mean a death sentence or a lynch mob. Here in the West, too, free discussion of Islam is getting harder not least because Islamic organizations like the Council on American-Islamic Relations pounce on any criticism of Islam, branding it "hate speech," the modern

word for heresy. Unwittingly or not, the S.P.L.C. is abetting Islamic extremists by branding critical thinkers like Mr. Nawaz and me "extremists."

Taking a stand against the neo-Nazi display we saw in Charlottesville is an impulse that should be cheered — and Apple, JP Morgan and the Hollywood A-list can and should do more to counter political violence and intolerance in all its forms. But they need to find more trustworthy and deserving partners to work with than the S.P.L.C.

Correction: August 24, 2017

An earlier version of this article misstated the name of an organization. It is the Council on American-Islamic Relations, not the Council of American Islamic Relations.

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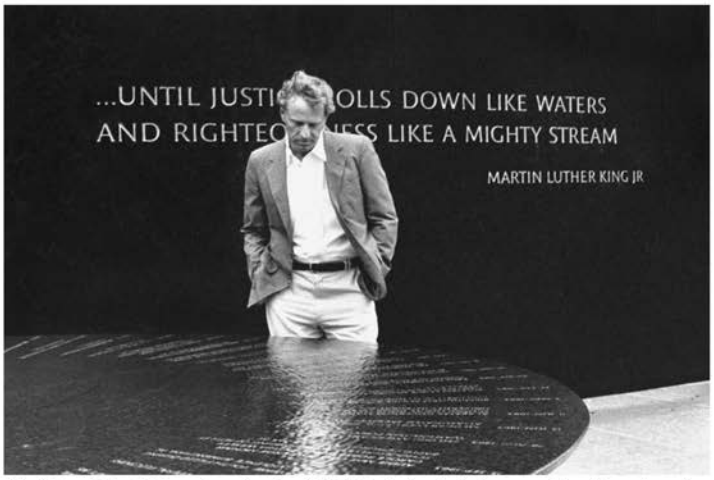
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THE NEW YORKER

THE RECKONING OF MORRIS DEES AND THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

By Bob Moser 11:05 A.M.



The firing of Morris Dees, the co-founder of the S.P.L.C., has flushed up uncomfortable questions that have surrounded the organization for years.

Photograph by Acey Harper / The LIFE Images Collection / Getty

In the days since the stunning dismissal of Morris Dees, the co-founder of the

Southern Poverty Law Center, on March 14th, I've been thinking about the jokes my S.P.L.C. colleagues and I used to tell to keep ourselves sane. Walking to lunch past the Center's Maya Lin–designed memorial to civil-rights martyrs, we'd cast a glance to the inscription from Martin Luther King, Jr., etched into the black marble—"Until justice rolls down like waters"—and intone, in our deepest voices, "Until justice rolls down like dollars." The Law Center had a way of turning idealists into cynics; like most liberals, our view of the S.P.L.C. before we arrived had been shaped by its oft-cited listings of U.S. hate groups, its reputation for winning cases against the Ku Klux Klan and Aryan Nations, and its stream of direct-mail pleas for money to keep the good work going. The mailers, in particular, painted a vivid picture of a scrappy band of intrepid attorneys and hate-group monitors, working under constant threat of death to fight hatred and injustice in the deepest heart of Dixie. When the S.P.L.C. hired me as a writer, in 2001, I figured I knew what to expect: long hours working with humble resources and a highly diverse bunch of super-dedicated colleagues. I felt self-righteous about the work before I'd even begun it.

The first surprise was the office itself. On a hill in downtown Montgomery, down the street from both Jefferson Davis's Confederate White House and the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, where M.L.K. preached and organized, the Center had recently built a massive modernist glass-and-steel structure that the social critic James Howard Kunstler would later liken to a "Darth Vader building," that made social justice "look despotic." It was a cold place inside, too. The entrance was through an underground bunker, past multiple layers of human and electronic security. Cameras were everywhere in the open-plan office, which made me feel like a Pentagon staffer, both secure and insecure at once. But nothing was more uncomfortable than the racial dynamic that quickly became apparent: a fair number of what was then about two hundred employees were African-American, but almost all of them were administrative and support staff—"the help," one of my black colleagues said pointedly. The "professional staff"—the lawyers, researchers, educators, public-relations officers, and fund-raisers—were almost exclusively white. Just two staffers, including myself, were

openly gay.

During my first few weeks, a friendly new co-worker couldn't help laughing at my bewilderment. "Well, honey, welcome to the Poverty Palace," she said. "I can guaran-damn-tee that you will never step foot in a more contradictory place as long as you live."

"Everything feels so out of whack," I said. "Where are the lawyers? Where's the diversity? What in God's name is going on here?"

"And you call yourself a journalist!" she said, laughing again. "Clearly you didn't do your research."

In the decade or so before I'd arrived, the Center's reputation as a beacon of justice had taken some hits from reporters who'd peered behind the façade. In 1995, the Montgomery *Advertiser* had been a Pulitzer finalist for a series that documented, among other things, staffers' allegations of racial discrimination within the organization. In *Harper's*, Ken Silverstein had revealed that the Center had accumulated an endowment topping a hundred and twenty million dollars while paying lavish salaries to its highest-ranking staffers and spending far less than most nonprofit groups on the work that it claimed to do. The great Southern journalist John Egerton, writing for *The Progressive*, had painted a damning portrait of Dees, the Center's longtime mastermind, as a "super-salesman and master fundraiser" who viewed civil-rights work mainly as a marketing tool for bilking gullible Northern liberals. "We just run our business like a business," Dees told Egerton. "Whether you're selling cakes or causes, it's all the same."

Co-workers stealthily passed along these articles to me—it was a rite of passage for new staffers, a cautionary heads-up about what we'd stepped into with our noble intentions. Incoming female staffers were additionally warned by their new colleagues about Dees's reputation for hitting on young women. And the unchecked power of the lavishly compensated white men at the top of the

organization—Dees and the Center's president, Richard Cohen—made staffers pessimistic that any of these issues would ever be addressed. "I expected there'd be a lot of creative bickering, a sort of democratic free-for-all," my friend Brian, a journalist who came aboard a year after me, said one day. "But everybody is so deferential to Morris and Richard. It's like a fucking monarchy around here." The work could be meaningful and gratifying. But it was hard, for many of us, not to feel like we'd become pawns in what was, in many respects, a highly profitable scam.

For the many former staffers who've come and gone through the Center's revolving doors—I left in 2004—the queasy feelings came rushing back last week, when the news broke that Dees, now eighty-two, had been fired. The official statement sent to donors by Cohen, who took control of the S.P.L.C. in 2003, didn't specify why Dees had been dismissed, but it contained some broad hints. "We're committed to ensuring that our workplace embodies the values we espouse—truth, justice, equity, and inclusion," Cohen wrote. "When one of our own fails to meet those standards, no matter his or her role in the organization, we take it seriously and must take appropriate action." Dees's profile was immediately erased from the S.P.L.C.'s Web site—amazing, considering that he had remained, to the end, the main face and voice of the Center, his signature on most of the direct-mail appeals that didn't come from celebrity supporters, such as the author Toni Morrison.

VIDEO FROM THE NEW YORKER

Dreaming Gave Us Wings

While right-wingers tweeted gleefully about the demise of a figure they'd long vilified—"Hate group founder has been fired by his hate group," the alt-right provocateur Mike Cernovich chirped—S.P.L.C. alums immediately reconnected with one another, buzzing about what might have happened and puzzling over the timing, sixteen years after Dees handed the reins to Cohen and went into semi-retirement. "I guess there's nothing like a funeral to bring families back together," another former writer at the Center said, speculating about what might have prompted the move. "It could be racial, sexual, financial—that place was a virtual buffet of injustices," she said. Why would they fire him now?

One day later, the Los Angeles *Times* and the Alabama Political Reporter reported that Dees's ouster had come amid a staff revolt over the mistreatment of nonwhite and female staffers, which was sparked by the resignation of the senior attorney Meredith Horton, the highest-ranking African-American woman at the Center. A number of staffers subsequently signed onto two letters of protest to the Center's leadership, alleging that multiple reports of sexual harassment by Dees through the years had been ignored or covered up, and sometimes resulted in retaliation against the women making the claims. (Dees denied the allegations, telling a reporter, "I don't know who you're talking to or talking about, but that is not right.")

The staffers wrote that Dees's firing was welcome, but insufficient: their larger concern, they emphasized, was a widespread pattern of racial and gender discrimination by the Center's current leadership, stretching back many years. (The S.P.L.C. has since appointed Tina Tchen, a former chief of staff for Michelle Obama, to conduct a review of its workplace environment.) If Cohen and other senior leaders thought that they could shunt the blame, the riled-up staffers seem determined to prove them wrong. One of my former female colleagues told me that she didn't want to go into details of her harassment for this story, because she believes the focus should be on the S.P.L.C.'s current leadership. "I just gotta hope your piece helps keep the momentum for change going," she said. Stephen Bright, a Yale professor and longtime S.P.L.C. critic, told me, "These chickens took a very long flight before they came home to roost." The question, for current and former staffers alike, is how many chickens will come to justice before this long-overdue reckoning is complete.

The controversy erupted at a moment when the S.P.L.C. had never been more prominent, or more profitable. Donald Trump's Presidency opened up a gusher of donations; after raising fifty million dollars in 2016, the Center took in a hundred and thirty-two million dollars in 2017, much of it coming after the violent spectacle that unfolded at the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, that August. George and Amal Clooney's justice foundation donated a million, as did Apple, which also added a donation button for the S.P.L.C. to its iTunes store. J. P. Morgan chipped in five hundred thousand dollars. The new money pushed the Center's endowment past four hundred and fifty million dollars, which is more than the total assets of the American Civil Liberties Union, and it now employs an all-time high of around three hundred and fifty staffers. But none of that has slackened its constant drive for more money. "If you're outraged about the path President Trump is taking, I urge you to join us in the fight against the mainstreaming of hate," a direct-mail appeal signed by Dees last year read. "Please join our fight today with a gift of $25, $35, or $100 to help us. Working together, we can push back against these bigots."

In 1971, when the Center opened, Dees was already a colorful and controversial figure in Alabama. While studying law at the University of Alabama, in the late nineteen-fifties, "Dees sold holly wreaths and birthday cakes, published a student telephone directory, dabbled in real estate," Egerton wrote. He also worked for George Wallace's first, unsuccessful bid for governor, in 1958. Upon graduating in 1960, Dees teamed up with another ambitious student, Millard Fuller, who'd go on to found Habitat for Humanity. They opened a direct-mail business in Montgomery, selling doormats, tractor seat cushions, and cookbooks. "Morris and I, from the first day of our partnership, shared the overriding purpose of making a pile of money," Fuller would later recall. "We were not particular about how we did it." While running their business, the two also practiced law. In 1961, they defended one of the men charged with beating up Freedom Riders at a bus terminal in Montgomery. According to Fuller, "Our fee was paid by the Klan and the White Citizens' Council."

In the late sixties, Dees sold the direct-mail operation to the Times Mirror Company, of Los Angeles, for a reported six-to-seven million dollars. But he soon sniffed out a new avenue for his marketing genius. In 1969, he successfully sued to integrate the local Y.M.C.A., after two black children were turned away from summer camp. Two years later, when he co-founded the Law Center with another Montgomery attorney, Joe Levin, Jr., he volunteered to raise money for George McGovern's Presidential campaign, and, with McGovern's blessing, used its donor list of seven hundred thousand people to help launch the S.P.L.C.'s direct-mail operations. The Center won some big cases early on, including a lawsuit that forced the Alabama legislature to divide into single-member districts, insuring the election of the state's first African-American lawmakers since Reconstruction. In 1975, the S.P.L.C. started a defense fund for Joan Little, a black prisoner in North Carolina who'd stabbed to death a jailer who attempted to rape her; the case became a national sensation and drew attention to the intrepid little operation in Montgomery. Dees, of course, had already positioned the Law Center to capitalize on the positive press.

A decade or so later, the Center began to abandon poverty law—representing death-row defendants and others who lacked the means to hire proper representation—to focus on taking down the Ku Klux Klan. This was a seemingly odd mission, given that the Klan, which had millions of members in the nineteen-twenties, was mostly a spent force by the mid-eighties, with only an estimated ten thousand members scattered around the country. But "Dees saw the Klan as a perfect target," Egerton wrote. For millions of Americans, the K.K.K. still personified violent white supremacy in America, and Dees "perceived chinks in the Klan's armor: poverty and poor education in its ranks, competitive squabbling among the leaders, scattered and disunited factions, undisciplined behavior, limited funds, few if any good lawyers." Along with legal challenges to what was left of the Klan, the Center launched Klanwatch, which monitored the group's activities. Klanwatch was the seed for what became the broader-based Intelligence Project, which tracks extremists and produces the S.P.L.C.'s annual hate-group list.

The only thing easier than beating the Klan in court—"like shooting fish in a barrel," one of Dees's associates told Egerton—was raising money off Klan-fighting from liberals up north, who still had fresh visions of the violent confrontations of the sixties in their heads. The S.P.L.C. got a huge publicity boost in July, 1983, when three Klansmen firebombed its headquarters. A melted clock from the burned-down building, stuck at 3:47 A.M., is featured in the main lobby of the Montgomery office today. In 1987, the Center won a landmark seven-million-dollar damage judgment against the Klan; a decade later, in 1998, it scored a thirty-eight-million-dollar judgment against Klansmen who burned down a black church in South Carolina. With those victories, Dees claimed the right to boast into perpetuity that the S.P.L.C. had effectively "shut down" the K.K.K.

By the time I touched down in Montgomery, the Center had increased its staff and branched out considerably—adding an educational component called Teaching Tolerance and expanding its legal and intelligence operations to target

a broad range of right-wing groups and injustices—but the basic formula perfected in the eighties remained the same. The annual hate-group list, which in 2018 included a thousand and twenty organizations, both small and large, remains a valuable resource for journalists and a masterstroke of Dees's marketing talents; every year, when the Center publishes it, mainstream outlets write about the "rising tide of hate" discovered by the S.P.L.C.'s researchers, and reporters frequently refer to the list when they write about the groups. As critics have long pointed out, however, the hate-group designations also drive attention to the extremists. Many groups, including the religious-right Family Research Council and the Alliance Defending Freedom, raise considerable money by decrying the S.P.L.C.'s "attacks."

In recent years, the Center has broadened its legal work, returning to some poverty law; around ninety attorneys now work in five Southern states, challenging, among other things, penal juvenile-justice systems and Draconian anti-immigration laws. But the Center continues to take in far more than it spends. And it still tends to emphasize splashy cases that are sure to draw national attention. The most notable, when I was there, was a lawsuit to remove a Ten Commandments monument that was brazenly placed in the main lobby of the Alabama Supreme Court building, just across the street from S.P.L.C. headquarters, by Roy Moore, who was then the state's chief justice. Dees—whose direct-mail genius was rivalled only by his ability to sway jurors—argued the case and won. Like the S.P.L.C.'s well-publicized 2017 lawsuit against Andrew Anglin, the neo-Nazi publisher of the Daily Stormer, it was a vintage example of the Center's central strategy: taking on cases guaranteed to make headlines and inflame the far right while demonstrating to potential donors that the Center has not only all the right enemies but also the grit and know-how to take them down.

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These days, whenever I tell people in New York or Washington, D.C., that I used to work at the Southern Poverty Law Center, their eyes tend to light up. "Oh, wow, what was *that* like?" they'll ask. Sometimes, depending on my mood, I'll regale them with stories about the reporting I did there—exposing anti-immigration extremists on the Arizona-Mexico border, tracking down a wave of anti-transgender hate crimes, writing a comprehensive history of the religious right's war on gays. But then, considering whether to explain what an unsettling experience it could be, I'll add, "It's complicated, though," and try to change the subject.

For those of us who've worked in the Poverty Palace, putting it all into perspective isn't easy, even to ourselves. We were working with a group of dedicated and talented people, fighting all kinds of good fights, making life miserable for the bad guys. And yet, all the time, dark shadows hung over everything: the racial and gender disparities, the whispers about sexual harassment, the abuses that stemmed from the top-down management, and the guilt you couldn't help feeling about the legions of donors who believed that their money was being used, faithfully and well, to do the Lord's work in the heart of Dixie. We were part of the con, and we knew it.

Outside of work, we spent a lot of time drinking and dishing in Montgomery bars and restaurants about the oppressive security regime, the hyperbolic fund-raising appeals, and the fact that, though the Center claimed to be effective in

fighting extremism, "hate" always continued to be on the rise, more dangerous than ever, with each year's report on hate groups. "The S.P.L.C.—making hate pay," we'd say.

It wasn't funny then. At this moment, it seems even grimmer. The firing of Dees has flushed up all the uncomfortable questions again. Were we complicit, by taking our paychecks and staying silent, in ripping off donors on behalf of an organization that never lived up to the values it espoused? Did we enable racial discrimination and sexual harassment by failing to speak out? "Of course we did," a former colleague told me, as we parsed the news over the phone. "It's shameful, but when you're there you kind of end up accepting things. I never even considered speaking out when things happened to *me*! It doesn't feel good to recognize that. I was so into the work, and so motivated by it, I kind of shrugged off what was going on." A couple of days later, she texted me: "I'm having SPLC nightmares." Aren't we all, I thought.

Bob Moser is the author of "Blue Dixie: Awakening the South's Democratic Majority." *Read more »*

Video

Unearthing Black History at the Freedom Lots
Restoring a section of Green-Wood Cemetery, a team of students and historians discover a window onto black life in nineteenth century New York.

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CITY JOURNAL

EYE ON THE NEWS

A Demagogic Bully

The Southern Poverty Law Center demonizes respectable political opponents as "hate groups"—and keeps its coffers bulging.

Mark Pulliam
July 27, 2017

H.L. Mencken described the secret of successful demagoguery as "keep[ing] the populace alarmed (and hence clamorous to be led to safety) by an endless series of hobgoblins, most of them imaginary." Mencken was referring to "practical politics," but his insight is equally applicable to public relations and fundraising campaigns trafficking in extravagant claims. For the past 40 years, a self-styled watchdog group, the Southern Poverty Law Center, has excelled in promoting such unwarranted alarm, with a politicized series of hobgoblins, in the process amassing a fortune from its credulous donors.

According to the SPLC, America is rife with dangerous "hate groups": the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis, racist skinheads, anti-government militia groups, radical-right terrorists, and many more. "We're currently tracking more than 1,600 extremist groups operating across the country," the SPLC's website claims. Readers of SPLC's press releases, reports, and—importantly—direct-mail solicitations would be justified in imagining an America teeming with smoldering churches and synagogues, cross burnings, storm troopers bearing swastikas, and even lynchings.

Reality is different. In fact, racial tolerance is at an all-time high, diversity is universally promoted as a civic virtue, and "hate crimes," as defined and reported by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, have declined over the past decade to fewer than 6,000 incidents a year, a modest number in a country with 326 million people. The principal threats of radical extremism in the United States today are jihadist attacks (radical Islam), militant anti-police rioters (such as Black Lives Matter), and masked Antifa (so-

called "anti-fascist") mobs shutting down free speech on college campuses and violently protesting the election of President Donald J. Trump, while the greatest perpetrators of violence in America are criminal street gangs—including the deadly MS-13—that have turned some of our inner cities into war zones.

The virulently anti-Trump "Resistance" movement has fueled partisan acrimony with poisonous rhetoric, to the extent of condoning—and in some cases even encouraging—physical attacks against political opponents. Yet the SPLC largely ignores such groups, focusing instead on the moribund KKK (many of whose estimated 2,000 members are thought to be FBI informants) and similar relics from the Jim Crow era. The SPLC myopically focuses on white racism directed at minority groups, especially African-Americans. A former SPLC lawyer, Gloria Browne, charged that SPLC programs were calculated to cash in on "black pain and white guilt." Racism undoubtedly exists, but it is neither pervasive nor exclusively practiced by whites.

Ironically, the SPLC not only overlooks most of the real hate groups in operation today, along with overtly race-based organizations, such as the pro-Latino National Council of La Raza and MEChA, but also labels moderates with whom it disagrees "extremists" if they deviate from its rigid political agenda, which embraces open borders, LGBT rights, and other left-wing totems. The SPLC has branded Somali-born reformer Ayaan Hirsi Ali an "anti-Muslin extremist" for her opposition to female genital mutilation and other oppressive Islamic practices, and designated the respected Family Research Council as a "hate group" for its opposition to same-sex marriage. Likewise, the organization deems mainstream immigration-reform advocates such as the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) and Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) as hate groups. British Muslim activist Maajid Nawaz—regarded by most observers as a human rights leader—is suing the SPLC for listing him as an extremist.

Critics of the SPLC accuse the lavishly funded organization of peddling fear and smearing political opponents—mostly conservatives—as bigots. Its "Hatewatch" list is avowedly ideological, acknowledging that it "monitors and exposes the activities of the American radical right." Few left-wing organizations—and no Islamist groups—are branded in this way by the SPLC. Nevertheless, the SPLC, founded in 1971, has burrowed itself into the civil rights movement, the organized bar, the cloistered culture of large law firms, the education system, and even law enforcement as a champion for "the exploited, the powerless and the forgotten." Its executives are richly compensated, some in excess of $400,000 annually. Operating from palatial six-story quarters in Montgomery, Alabama (sometimes called the "Poverty Palace"), it enjoys a $300 million

endowment, including more than $23 million in cash. It fundraises ceaselessly. It's no coincidence that SPLC co-founder Morris S. Dees Jr. has been inducted into the Direct Marketing Association's Hall of Fame.

Despite numerous exposés over the years in publications spanning the political spectrum—including *Harper's*, *The Progressive*, *The Weekly Standard*, *Reason*, the *Baltimore Sun*, and even the SPLC's hometown newspaper, the *Montgomery Advertiser*—the liberal establishment continues to treat the group as credible, largely because its preoccupation with right-wing bigotry aligns with the stereotypical view of liberals who dominate newspapers like the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*. In our polarized culture, the epithet "hate group" is the ultimate slander of political opponents. The SPLC's spurious imprimatur gives mere calumny gravitas, allowing liberal journalists to wield its highly charged judgments as a weapon, citing it as if it were a dispassionate authority. Many liberal (or merely lazy) journalists discredit conservative organizations by noting that they are "listed by the SPLC as a hate group," treating its often dubious designations as gospel truth.

One would expect an organization that holds itself out as an expert on hate groups to have a consistent definition of that term, but in Humpty-Dumpty fashion, it turns out that a "hate group" is whatever the SPLC decides it is. The SPLC claims that "917 Hate Groups are currently operating in the U.S.," but offers only vague guidelines for what qualifies: "groups hav[ing] beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for their immutable characteristics." Despite its insinuations that hate groups are inherently violent, the SPLC casts a much broader net: "Hate group activities *can include* criminal acts, marches, rallies, speeches, meetings, leafletting or publishing" (emphasis added). Indeed, some of the SPLC's hate "groups" are merely websites or publications—even record labels and religious sects.

This fluid and subjective definition allows the SPLC to lump together—along with the KKK, neo-Nazis, and racist skinheads—such varied groups as religious-liberty advocates Alliance Defending Freedom and Liberty Counsel; pro-family groups such as the World Congress of Families; Frank Gaffney's Center for Security Policy; the David Horowitz Freedom Center and, separately, its Jihad Watch program; Pamela Geller's Refugee Resettlement Watch; and many immigration-reform groups, including CIS and FAIR. Without irony, SPLC president Richard Cohen has defended designating the Family Research Council as a hate group "because it traffics in incendiary name-calling." To the SPLC's credit, it also classifies the Nation of Islam, the New Black

Panther Party, and a few other black separatist groups as hate groups, though these organizations are seldom mentioned in its stream of emails and bulletins.

In addition to hate groups, SPLC tracks a broader category of "extremist groups," with an equally amorphous definition; apparently all hate groups qualify as extremist, but not vice versa. The SPLC considers as "extremist" eminent political scientist Charles Murray, evangelical historian David Barton (of WallBuilders), author Peter Brimelow, the Social Contract Press, Joseph Farah's WorldNetDaily, and many other proponents of traditional marriage, border security, and immigration restrictions—views held by millions of Americans. This is not to suggest that all groups and persons labeled by the SPLC as "extremist" are necessarily laudable, but reasoned discourse requires that disagreement be expressed through facts and argument, not pejorative name-calling, innuendo, and guilt by association. The SPLC deliberately blurs the distinction between true hate groups, peaceful activists, and reputable organizations with which it disagrees.

The SPLC frequently rails against public figures as "enablers" not technically designated as hate groups or extremists, such as Texas governor Greg Abbott, former congressman and presidential candidate Ron Paul, radio talk show host Glenn Beck, Fox News commentator Judge Andrew Napolitano, and Kentucky senator Rand Paul. Rush Limbaugh, the Breitbart News Network, the Boy Scouts of America, and Focus on the Family (founded by psychologist, broadcaster, and best-selling author James Dobson) have also earned the SPLC's wrath. The term "extremist" connotes an outlier: marginal, on the fringe, out of the mainstream. Yet the SPLC uses the term—and "enabler"—to denigrate elected officials, public figures, and organizations with considerable popular support, solely because of their views on specific issues. As a definitional matter, how "extremist" can these positions be if they command widespread (and even majority) support?

What many of the individuals and groups condemned by the SPLC have in common is a conservative orientation. Favoring traditional marriage becomes the moral equivalent of cross-burning; opposing illegal immigration or amnesty for illegal immigrants equates to advocating genocide; resisting the spread of radical Islam invokes Timothy McVeigh; and anti-tax Tea Party groups are now indistinguishable from armed militias or Holocaust deniers. Thus, dissent is de-legitimatized, and political foes are demonized. All those who oppose the Left are, by definition, "fascists," "white nationalists," "Islamophobes," "hate groups," or "extremists." SPLC senior fellow Mark Potok, a 20-year veteran of the organization and editor of its "hate list"—a quarterly publication—

has admitted that "our aim in life is to destroy these groups, to completely destroy them."

SPLC co-founder Dees, an Alabama native, has an unconventional background for a self-styled civil rights icon. The son of a cotton farmer, his childhood nickname was Bubba. As a young man, Dees supported politicians such as future Alabama governor George C. Wallace (whom Dees calls "my onetime hero") and even served as state campaign manager for segregationist attorney general candidate MacDonald Gallion.

Dees graduated from the University of Alabama law school in 1960. The next year, he defended a Klan member, Claude Henley, accused of attacking Freedom Riders. The case was heard in federal court before Judge Frank M. Johnson, the famed civil rights pioneer. Dees says that he managed to get his client off, for a fee of $5,000 (paid by the Klan and the White Citizens' Council), though a *Life* photo showed Henley beating up a television reporter during the incident in question. In his vainglorious 1991 memoir, *A Season for Justice* (reissued in 2001 as *A Lawyer's Journey*), Dees described the Henley case as a personal epiphany regarding civil rights, though a decade passed before he helped found the SPLC. Dees' primary contribution to civil rights was suing to force the Birmingham YMCA—a private organization—to desegregate in 1969.

During the 1960s, Dees veered left, got involved with the American Civil Liberties Union, and helped finance the presidential campaigns of George McGovern, Jimmy Carter, and Ted Kennedy. Though he has long promoted himself as a successful trial lawyer, Dees made his fortune in publishing.

Dees's original business partner, Millard Fuller, recalls that "Morris and I . . . shared the overriding purpose of making a pile of money. We were not particular about *how* we did it; we just wanted to be independently rich." Their path to prosperity was marketing cookbooks and similar fare. Dees then used his direct-mail expertise to help raise money for McGovern's presidential campaign. When the South Dakota senator was defeated, Dees brought to the SPLC a donor list containing the names of nearly 700,000 McGovern supporters, providing the basis for the organization's lucrative direct-mail program.

In its early years, SPLC focused on issues relevant to "Southern poverty," primarily performing pro bono legal services, such as death-penalty appeals and suing to desegregate the all-white Alabama State Troopers. By the 1980s, the SPLC's focus had

shifted to fighting easily sensationalized bogeymen such as the KKK and neo-Nazi groups, despite those groups' dwindling membership and scant political influence.

In 1984, Dees brought a highly publicized lawsuit against the United Klans of America (UKA) in Mobile, Alabama on behalf of Beulah Mae Donald, whose son had been murdered in 1981 by two UKA thugs. In 1987, years after the perpetrators were convicted and sentenced, Dees obtained a much-hyped $7 million judgment against the UKA, downplaying the fact that the actual recovery against the impecunious group amounted only to about $50,000. The UKA case proved a fundraising goldmine, though: the SPLC raked in $9 million from direct-mail solicitations.

The die was cast; henceforth, the SPLC would pursue essentially meaningless but headline-grabbing cases, exploiting its uncollectible verdicts through sensational fundraising appeals that generated massive donations. One disgruntled former SPLC attorney complained that "[Dees] was on the Klan kick because it was such an easy target—easy to beat in court, easy to raise big money on." The SPLC's legal staff was appalled by the cynical change of direction. Journalist Ken Silverstein reported in *Harper's* that "in 1986, the Center's entire legal staff quit in protest of Dees's refusal to address issues—such as homelessness, voter registration, and affirmative action—that they considered far more pertinent to poor minorities, if far less marketable to affluent benefactors, than fighting the KKK."

In a replay of the civil case against the UKA, the SPLC would go on to bring high-profile lawsuits against other Klan groups and similar fringe organizations, such as the White Aryan Resistance (WAR) in Portland, Oregon, and the Aryan Nations in Idaho, typically in cases alleging that associates of the organizations who committed violent acts were operating directly as representatives of the racist groups. These grandstanding lawsuits were mismatches, and the cash-strapped associations—lacking resources to defend themselves—were routinely routed by the SPLC's well-funded legal team. In his memoir, Dees gloats that, when the SPLC sued WAR, its president, Tom Metzger—a TV repairman—chose to represent himself at trial, with predictable results. The SPLC won a $12.5 million jury verdict against WAR, and against Metzger personally. Dees boasts that "We took away Metzger's house. . . . Back home we call that cleaning somebody's plow."

The 80-year-old Dees, who still serves as the SPLC's "chief trial counsel," presents himself as a courtroom champion for the downtrodden, in the image of his personal hero, Clarence Darrow. Revealingly, Dees opens and closes *A Season for Justice* with

quotations from Darrow, and claims that reading Darrow's autobiography in 1968 changed his life forever: "I was reading my own thoughts and feelings," he recalls. Darrow, however, fought formidable opponents and never crowed about dispossessing outmatched adversaries who couldn't even afford an attorney.

Supporting the SPLC satisfies a deeply held yearning of the legal profession, which is broadly left of center politically, to believe in its own virtue and importance. It's not surprising, then, that legal groups have been drawn to Dees' carefully cultivated mythology. Even Dees's critics concede, as Charlotte Allen puts it, that he is "an indisputable genius at self-promotion." Among the many awards Dees has received are the Martin Luther King, Jr. Nonviolent Peace Prize from the King Center for Nonviolent Social Change in 2016, the ABA Medal from the American Bar Association in 2012 (the organization's highest honor), and the Roger Baldwin Award from the ACLU in 1990.

In 2006, the prestigious international law firm Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom created the annual Morris Dees Justice Award at Dees's alma mater, the University of Alabama law school, to honor lawyers devoted to public service. Atlanta-based civil rights lawyer Stephen B. Bright, president of the Southern Center for Human Rights and longtime lecturer at Yale Law School, declined to accept the award in 2007 because he saw Dees as a "con man and fraud." The award was discontinued in 2010, but it is still featured prominently on the law school's website, along with a list of past recipients. Such awards, along with a hagiographic TV movie, Line of Fire: The Morris Dees Story (1991), and—most importantly—adulatory coverage by the liberal press corps, give SPLC an undeserved aura of authority, which the organization exploits to promote its leftist agenda.

The SPLC's investment portfolio (which it justifies as a contingency "for the day when nonprofits like SPLC can no longer afford to solicit support through the mail because of rising postage and printing costs") has steadily grown to over $300 million, and includes offshore accounts in the Cayman Islands. As Charlotte Allen drolly noted in *The Weekly Standard*, "SPLC is probably the richest poverty organization in the history of the world." In the philanthropic world, nonprofit organizations such as SPLC are expected to use donors' funds to provide services consistent with their charitable mission. Hoarding of cash is discouraged.

Accordingly, the nonprofit rating group CharityWatch (formerly known as the American Institute of Philanthropy) gives SPLC an "F" rating, its lowest grade, downgrading the group for having seven years' worth of available assets in reserve. (By

contrast, the ACLU Foundation earned an "A" rating.) In CharityWatch's view, it's reasonable for a nonprofit to have up to three years of operating expenses in reserve, but accumulating a financial cushion for longer than that indicates that a group places a higher priority on fundraising than on charitable programming. The near-namesake of Dees's former business partner, noted anti-death-penalty lawyer Millard Farmer, described Dees as the nonprofit equivalent of a televangelist, exploiting faithful believers with incessant fundraising appeals: "He's the Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker of the civil rights movement."

Another monitor of nonprofits, Philanthropy Roundtable, is also critical of the SPLC, calling it "a notoriously partisan attack group," "tendentious," "irresponsible," and "a cash-collecting machine." In a recent report, Philanthropy Roundtable concluded:

> [t]hough it styles itself as a public-interest law firm, the Southern Poverty Law Center does shockingly little litigation, and only small amounts of that on behalf of any aggrieved individuals. Its two largest expenses are propaganda operations: creating its annual lists of "haters" and "extremists," and running a big effort that pushes "tolerance education" through more than 400,000 public-school teachers. And the single biggest effort undertaken by the SPLC? Fundraising. On the organization's 2015 IRS 990 form it declared $10 million of direct fundraising expenses, far more than it has ever spent on legal services.

The favorable press that the SPLC garners tends to obscure its glaring blunders, of which there have been many. Any one of these missteps would have been fatal to the credibility of an organization operating in the typical media fishbowl, but reporters enamored with the group's message look the other way.

In an irony for an organization dedicated to fighting hate and extremism, the SPLC has long promoted Bill Ayers, the unrepentant domestic terrorist of the 1970s and founder of the radical Weather Underground, as an "education activist" and exemplar of "tolerance." The SPLC's education project, "Teaching Tolerance," and its companion website, tolerance.org, market Ayers's books and describe him as "a highly respected figure in the field of multicultural education." Failing to mention that Ayers dedicated the Weather Underground's 1974 revolutionary manifesto, *Prairie Fire*, to Robert F. Kennedy's assassin, Sirhan Sirhan, the SPLC lauds Ayers for his "rich vision of teaching that interweaves passion, responsibility and self-reflection."

Conversely, the SPLC has been quick to condemn honorable men and women without justification. For example, in 2014, the SPLC listed Republican presidential candidate Ben Carson, a retired pediatric brain surgeon now serving as HUD secretary, as an "extremist" due to his opposition to same-sex marriage. Following a public furor over the designation, he SPLC had to remove the mild-mannered Carson from the list and publicly apologize. Similarly, the SPLC has defamed Murray—who has two Asian children—as a "white nationalist." Murray addressed the genetic components of human intelligence—a taboo to the Left—in his 1994 best-seller, *The Bell Curve*, coauthored with Richard Herrnstein. A single deviation from liberal orthodoxy is sufficient to negate a distinguished record of scholarship.

Shortly after the SPLC labeled the Family Research Council as a "hate group" in 2012—a designation that even *Washington Post* columnist Dana Milbank condemned as "reckless"—a deranged SPLC follower, Floyd Lee Corkins, made an armed attack on FRC's Washington headquarters. Corkins acknowledged that he was able to locate the building with the help of the "Hate Map" provided on the SPLC's website. Fortunately, no one was killed. Prompted by the FRC shooting, in 2014 the FBI removed SPLC from the "resources" page of its website.

The SPLC's latest campaign is to seek the removal of more than 700 Confederate-themed statues and monuments from public areas and to eliminate all "publicly sponsored symbols" of Confederate leaders. The effort would include renaming at least 1,500 schools, highways, parks, bridges, counties, cities, lakes, dams, roads, military bases, and other public works in 41 states, as well as eliminating official holidays or observances in six states. The justification for expunging markers of consequential historical events? Prior to murdering nine people attending Bible study at the Emanuel A.M.E. church in Charleston, South Carolina, in June 2015, disturbed lone wolf Dylann Roof was photographed holding a Confederate battle flag. In the SPLC's logic, Confederate symbols foster violence because they represent, not American history, but merely a hateful legacy of slavery and white supremacy. (The SPLC is currently willing to leave untouched the thousands of Civil War battlefields, cemeteries, markers, plaques, and similar symbols, because they "merely reflect historical events.") This breathtaking initiative entails the classic elements of the SPLC's finely honed demagoguery: false association of a repugnant killer with the SPLC's target, in this case, Confederate symbols; raising the specter of racism to suppress dissent; and exploiting a divisive issue for fundraising purposes.

The long-simmering controversy over SPLC tactics boiled over in July, when ABC News reported that Attorney General Jeff Sessions had delivered a speech in California to an "anti-LGBT hate group"— the religious-liberty advocacy group Alliance Defending Freedom—based solely on the SPLC's designation. Many conservative publications criticized ABC and other news outlets for repeating the SPLC's slur of a respected nonprofit that has litigated—and won—numerous cases before the Supreme Court. ADF is a legal organization, no different from the American Civil Liberties Union, except that it defends traditional Christian beliefs shared by millions of Americans. The outpouring of commentary regarding Sessions's address to the ADF focused on the SPLC's partisan mission, aggressive tactics, and cozy relationship with likeminded reporters.

The SPLC's authority derives from its presumed occupation of a moral high ground, which is belied by its record of character assassination, questionable fundraising practices, excessive salaries, and poor ratings from philanthropic monitors. "I've long regarded Morris Dees and his Southern Poverty Law Center as collectively one of the greatest frauds in American life," wrote the late progressive journalist Alexander Cockburn in 2007.

Unlike when the SPLC was created in 1971, many organizations today provide legal services to needy people: local legal aid groups, law school clinical programs, and law firm pro bono programs. The SPLC delivers little in the way of legal representation to indigent clients. For decades, the name Southern Poverty Law Center has not accurately described the SPLC's mission.

The SPLC's principal function currently is to provide an aura of respectability to liberal journalists wishing to disparage conservative groups and to provide cover for political battles, such as the removal of Confederate symbols. By unfairly applying the labels "hate," "extremism," and "racism," SPLC seeks to stifle the type of robust public debate necessary for democracy to flourish. Cornell University law professor William Jacobson maintains that the SPLC, "by equating legitimate political opposition with criminal violence, is doing substantial damage to our national fabric."

The cumulative weight of the SPLC's excesses may be turning the tide against it, however. Conservatives have intensified their criticism of the group recently, with Jeryl Bier and former attorney general Edwin Meese in the *Wall Street Journal*, Stella Morabito in *The Federalist*, and David French in *National Review* all calling out the organization's polarizing tactics and fraudulent moral authority. Even left-leaning *Politico* has become

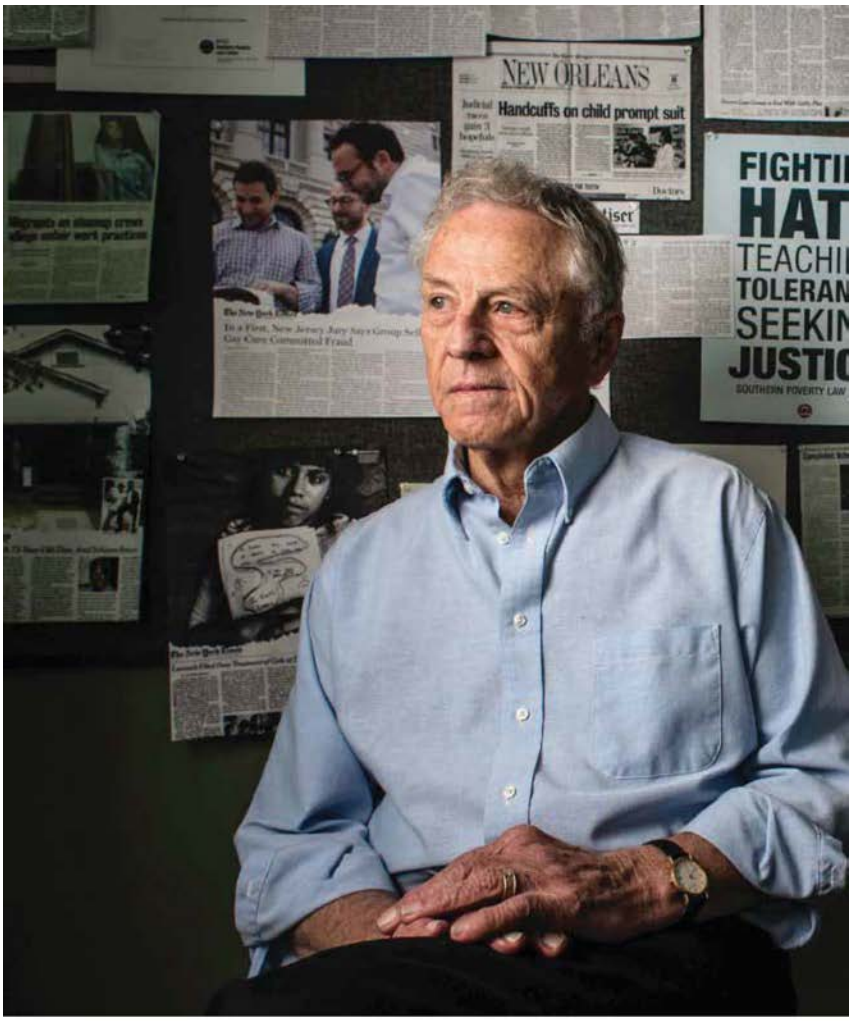
skeptical; Ben Schreckinger's recent article "Has a Civil Rights Stalwart Lost Its Way?" notes longstanding charges "that the SPLC is overplaying its hand, becoming more of a partisan progressive hit operation than a civil rights watchdog."

The SPLC is entitled to advocate its positions, of course, but it does not deserve to be regarded as a dispassionate authority—and certainly should not be cited as such. Yes, there are some repugnant groups in America, of a variety of persuasions. Fortunately, state and local law enforcement agencies, the Department of Homeland Security, and the FBI stand ready to intervene if and when such groups threaten or engage in actual violence. The SPLC's efforts are not needed—though it sure is good at raising money.

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Morris Dees (center); Photo by Amanda Edwards/Getty Images


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Has a Civil Rights Stalwart Lost Its Way?

The Southern Poverty Law Center—led by charismatic, swashbuckling founder Morris Dees—is making the most of the Trump era. But is it overstepping its bounds?

By BEN SCHRECKINGER | Photographs by André Chung

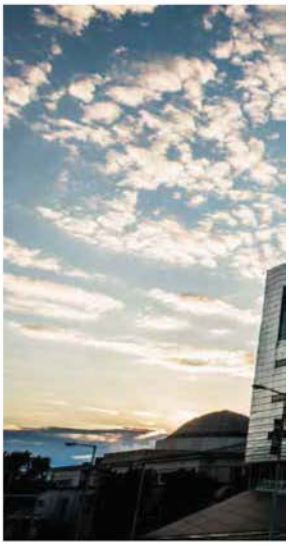
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA—ASK A TAXI TO TAKE you from the airport here to the downtown headquarters of the Southern Poverty Law Center, and your driver will start telling tales of the group's founder, local legend Morris Dees. "He's a hell of a man around here," mine informs me on a Friday morning in late April. "He's the one who got the Klan straightened out. He fought the cause." The driver adds, as an aside, "He made plenty of money doing it." ¶ These are the twin legacies of Montgomery's most famous nonprofit: Since 1971, the SPLC has fought racial discrimination in the South and established itself as the nation's most prominent hate-group watchdog, most notably winning legal fights that put some of the last nails in the coffin of the Ku Klux Klan. It has also built itself into a civil rights behemoth with a glossy headquarters and a nine-figure endowment, inviting charges that it oversells the threats posed by Klansmen and neo-Nazis to keep donations flowing in from wealthy liberals.

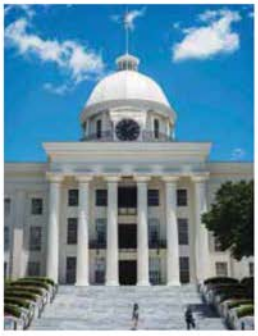
Now the election of Donald Trump has vaulted the SPLC back into the center of the national conversation, giving the group the kind of potent foil it hasn't had since the Klan. Trump swept into the Oval Office by disparaging Mexican immigrants, fanning Islamophobia and activating a resurgent strain of racism rebranded as "alt-right." Suddenly the SPLC, whose biggest fights seemed to be behind it, is all over the news—warning of an increase in hate crimes, publishing sleek reports about anti-Muslim extremists and taking the leaders of the alt-right to court. The group is in the process of adding 50 staffers, expanding legal services for immigrants facing deportation across the South and bringing a legal hammer down on alt-right trolls. Since the election, the SPLC says it has more than doubled its following on Twitter and jumped from 650,000 Facebook followers to more than a million.

The rise of Trump is a moment made for Dees, the SPLC's 80-year-old founder, who is more than a little Trumpian himself. Smooth, publicity-savvy and detail-averse, Dees is a marketing genius whose greatest success may be selling his own persona as a crusader—a skill on display across the street from the SPLC's office, where a black granite memorial to the casualties of the civil rights movement proclaims it was built by the Morris Dees Legacy Fund. Inside the memorial's gift shop, visitors will find on the wall a framed photo of Dees staring off into the distance, looking equal parts pensive and saintly. On a shelf next to SPLC-branded water bottles and mugs, the same image of Dees reappears in another frame; it's also printed on nearby postcards, which are available for purchase.

Touches such as these have led some journalists to nickname Dees, with irony, "the Mother Teresa of Montgomery." And as Dees navigates the era of Trump, there are new questions arising around a charge that has dogged the group for years: that the SPLC is overplaying its hand, becoming more of a partisan progressive hit operation than a civil rights watchdog. Critics say the group abuses its position as an arbiter of hatred by labeling legitimate players "hate groups" and "extremists" to keep the attention of its liberal donors and grind a political ax. Which means that just as the SPLC is about to embark on its biggest fight in decades, taking on rising racism and prejudice across the country, its authority to police the boundaries of American political discourse is facing its greatest challenge yet.

"I do think there is a desperate need for more objective research on hate crimes and domestic extremism—especially now," says J.M. Berger, a researcher on extremism and a fellow with the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism at The Hague. But like many observers, he worries that the SPLC has











A Hub for Civil Rights The SPLC's sleek six-story headquarters stands out in downtown Montgomery, a city rich in history. Not far away are the state capitol, a plaque marking the spot where Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to white passengers and the Baptist church where Martin Luther King Jr. helped launch the Montgomery bus boycott.

gone too far in some of its hate group characterizations. "The problem partly stems from the fact that the organization wears two hats, as both an activist group and a source of information," he says.

In October, the SPLC faced explosive blowback when it included British Muslim activist Maajid Nawaz on a list of "anti-Muslim extremists." The targeting of Nawaz—a former Islamist turned anti-extremism campaigner who is considered a human rights leader by many in the mainstream—even sparked critical coverage in the *Atlantic*, creating the unusual spectacle of a publication founded by abolitionists going after a group founded to fight the KKK. In December, after the SPLC urged Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. Ron Dermer not to attend a dinner hosted by anti-Muslim conspiracy theorist Frank Gaffney, Dermer used his speech at the dinner to condemn the SPLC as "defamers and blacklisters." In February, the group again raised eyebrows by adding to its list of hate groups the hard-line Center for Immigration Studies—an anti-immigration think tank criticized for pushing bogus claims about the dangers of immigrants, but which has also been invited to testify before Congress more than 100 times.

Is tough immigration control really a form of hate, or just part of the political conversation? Does rejecting a religion make you an extremist? At a time when the line between "hate group" and mainstream politics is getting thinner and the need for productive civil discourse is growing more serious, fanning liberal fears, while a great opportunity for the SPLC, might be a problem for the nation.

You might imagine the Southern Poverty Law Center as a handful of scrappy lawyers in a dingy office suite somewhere. In fact, it boasts 250 staffers and offices in four states, and its headquarters is testament to the fact that, in America, even fighting racism can be very good business. The building—a six-story postmodern edifice that could be the outhouse for Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao—is the most architecturally striking structure in downtown Montgomery. Across the street, the group has erected a black granite Civil Rights Memorial designed by Maya Lin—the architect of D.C.'s Vietnam Veterans Memorial—and a museum dedicated to the victims of hate crimes.

Dees founded the SPLC in the early 1970s with his law partner Joseph Levin and the ac-

tivist Julian Bond, a future chairman of the NAACP, to see that the legal gains of the civil rights era were enforced in court. Early victories included forcing the state of Alabama to reapportion its legislature to enfranchise black voters more fairly and reversing the convictions of three young black men who had been sentenced to death for the rape of a white woman they did not commit.

A certain PR savvy was baked in from the beginning. Dees got his start in the direct-mail marketing of consumer goods, a pursuit that earned him a small fortune in the 1960s and a spot in the Direct Marketing Association's hall of fame. When he founded the SPLC, he was also putting his marketing skills to use on behalf of George McGovern's 1972 presidential campaign—in exchange for McGovern's mailing list. (The SPLC has maintained this marketing edge into the 21st century with top-notch search engine optimization: Throw terms related to the recent controversy over its anti-Muslim extremist list into Google, and the first several results reliably come from the SPLC's own website.)

By the end of the 1970s, the organization was pioneering a novel legal strategy, suing Klan affiliates for damages for the hate crimes committed by their members, an approach that bankrupted several of them.

Since then, the SPLC has steadily expanded the scope of its activities. The group makes critically acclaimed documentaries about civil rights and other materials that have been distributed free of charge to more than 100,000 schools nationwide. It has shared information about civil rights with the FBI and Justice Department, and maintains a robust legal shop that, in addition to suing hate groups, takes on cases related to criminal justice reform, LGBT rights, immigration law, the rights of the poor and public education. Over the years, the SPLC has mounted numerous successful legal interventions against former Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore, the Christian fundamentalist jurist, including for instructing state judges to defy the U.S. Supreme Court's 2015 ruling legalizing same-sex marriage and for erecting a monument to the Ten Commandments on state courthouse grounds—just across the street from the SPLC's headquarters.

But today, the group is best known for its "Intelligence Project," which has essentially cornered the market on identifying and tracking hate groups, as well as extremists and "hate incidents." The Intelligence Project's 15 full-time and two part-time staffers (it's in the process of hiring five more) pump out reports that are regularly cited by just about every major mainstream media outlet, including POLITICO, and their researchers have become the go-to experts for quotes on those topics.



SPLC H.Q. Morris Dees and Richard Cohen sit in the organization's open office space.

The SPLC's hate group and extremist labels are effective. Groups slapped with them have lost funding, been targeted by activists and generally been banished from mainstream legitimacy. This makes SPLC the de facto cop in this realm of American politics, with all the friction that kind of policing engenders.

The organization has been criticized for spending more of its money on fundraising and overhead and less on litigation than comparable groups like the American Civil Liberties Union. And it has taken flak for amassing a huge endowment—more than $200 million—that is disproportionately large for its operating costs. SPLC President Richard Cohen defends the endowment as necessary to ensure the group can survive legal battles that might last for years. (As for Dees himself, he made $337,000 in 2015, according to the watchdog group Charity Navigator; Cohen made $333,000 the same year.) In 1994, the local paper, the *Montgomery Advertiser*, ran a series investigating the group's marketing, finances and personnel practices that was a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize. (Dees responded—according to a transcript from a 1999 Nieman Foundation discussion on journalism about nonprofits—by mobilizing prominent liberal politicians for whom he had raised money to lobby the Pulitzer Board not to award the prize to the *Advertiser*.)

Other critics say the SPLC picks its causes with its bottom line in mind. In the 1980s, the group's entire legal staff quit to protest Dees' obsession with the remnants of the KKK—which still captured the imagination of the group's liberal donor base—at the expense of lower-profile but more relevant targets. In its marketing, the SPLC still touts seven-figure judgments it has won against Klan organizations, even though the plaintiffs have been able to recoup only a tiny fraction of that from the groups, which possessed paltry assets. It has also been criticized for marketing that exaggerates the threat posed by the moribund Klan.

The complaints have trailed the SPLC as the group has expanded beyond its crusade against racial discrimination in the South, increasingly taking up the left flank of the culture wars on issues like LGBT rights, church-state division, Islam and immigration. The new approach has prompted accusations of overreach: The SPLC has included Senator Rand Paul and Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson among the neo-Nazis and white supremacists on its extremists lists (Paul for suggesting private businesses shouldn't have to adhere to the Civil Rights Act and criticizing the

Fair Housing Act; Carson for his views opposing same-sex marriage). The group did back down after it put Carson on the 2014 "extremist watch" list—removing his name and issuing an apology that earned a lot of coverage in the conservative media. "This week, as we've come under intense criticism for doing so, we've reviewed our profile and have concluded that it did not meet our standards," the organization's statement said, "so we have taken it down and apologize to Dr. Carson for having posted it."

But the SPLC did not back down after it labeled Tony Perkins' Family Research Council—one of the country's largest and most established Christian conservative advocacy groups—a "hate group" for its positions on homosexuality, and even after an unhinged gay-rights supporter named Floyd Corkins subsequently shot up the FRC's lobby in an attempt to murder its staff, in 2012. Corkins said he had read on the SPLC's website that the FRC was an anti-gay group. The episode prompted fierce condemnation of the SPLC from social conservatives, who view FRC's stances on homosexuality as legitimate and consistent with Christian teachings. But the FRC remains on the SPLC's list of hate groups, along with a blurb explaining, "The FRC often makes false claims about the LGBT community based on discredited research and junk science."

William Jacobson, a law professor at Cornell and critic of the SPLC, says the group has wrapped itself in the mantle of the civil rights struggle to engage in partisan political crusading. "Time and again, I see the SPLC using the reputation it gained decades ago fighting the Klan as a tool to bludgeon mainstream politically conservative opponents," he says. "For groups that do not threaten violence, the use of SPLC 'hate group' or 'extremist' designations frequently are exploited as an excuse to silence speech and speakers," Jacobson adds. "It taints not only the group or person, but others who associate with them."

Ken Silverstein, a liberal journalist and another critic of the group who authored a scathing investigation of its marketing and financial practices for *Harper's* in 2000, attributes the growing scope of the SPLC's censures to a financial imperative to wade into hot-button issues that will rile donors. "The organization has always tried to find ways to milk money out of the public by finding whatever threat they can most credibly promote," he says.

AP/GETTY

THE ATTACKS THAT SEEM TO PREOCcupy Dees are not ethical critiques. On the concrete entrance ramp of SPLC's headquarters, a beefy security guard with the look of a Southern sheriff stands guard, greeting you with an intimidating scowl that breaks into a smile once you confirm yourself as an expected visitor. Lest you suggest that the building's conspicuous, round-the-clock security might be overkill, a display in the lobby featuring a melted clock and scorched legal tomes stands as a reminder of the 1983 incident in which Klansmen entered the SPLC's old headquarters just before dawn, doused the inside of the building in petrol and lit it ablaze.

On this Friday morning, Dees and Cohen look refreshed and relaxed in their Friday casual—Dees in an unbuttoned blue dress shirt over a coffee-stained white undershirt, a pair of glasses tucked into his breast pocket; Cohen in a faded blue collared shirt—as they await the arrival of their board for a weekend of meetings. The board last convened the day before the election, when it cemented plans for a Hillary Clinton administration: continuing to coordinate with the federal government as it did during Barack Obama's administration. "We thought we would have allies in the Justice Department and our job would be to keep hate at bay, out of the mainstream," Cohen says. "Now, hate is in the mainstream."

The shock of the election did not interrupt the steady barrage the SPLC has trained on Trump. During the primaries, the group highlighted his support among white nationalists and issued a report on "The Trump Effect," attributing to him increased racial tension in American schools. It marked the opening chapter of his administration with a report titled "100 Days in Trump's America," saying that his presidency had normalized hate. The group has declared that "Betsy DeVos is simply not qualified to be the next education secretary" and that the nomination for labor secretary of Andy Puzder, who ultimately withdrew, was "deeply troubling." It has demanded, quite simply, "Stephen Bannon must go."

For the SPLC, though, the most worrisome administration appointee has been Attorney General Jeff Sessions, whose Justice Department oversees federal civil rights policy. Dees and Cohen have long been familiar with Sessions, who was Alabama attorney general and a U.S. attorney here before he became a senator. Under fire for his record on civil rights

What Makes a Hate Group? The SPLC has been policing political discourse for decades, churning out reports on "extremists" and "hate groups." But some controversial designations have critics charging that the SPLC is becoming more of a progressive hit operation than a civil rights watchdog.



1. Former Islamist and self described "counter-extremist" **Maajid Nawaz** appeared in the SPLC's 2016 "Field Guide to Anti-Muslim Extremists" for using his platform "to savage Islam."

2. The **Family Research Council**—a conservative Christian nonprofit led by Tony Perkins—has been classified by the SPLC as a hate group since 2010 for spreading "false and denigrating propaganda about LGBT people." In 2012, a gunman who read on the SPLC's website that the FRC was anti-gay shot up the group's lobby.

3. The **Center for Immigration Studies**, a nonprofit led by Mark Krikorian that supports lower immigration, appeared in the SPLC's 2017 "Year in Hate and Extremism" report for producing "fear-mongering misinformation about Latino immigrants."

4. Political scientist **Charles Murray** has been a fixture on the SPLC's roster of "extremists," in part for his writing on race-based intellectual disparities. In March, Middlebury students informed by the SPLC's designation violently prevented Murray from speaking on campus.

5. Somali-born Dutch activist **Ayan Hirsi Ali** was stoking controversy for her vocal criticism of Islam long before she found her way onto the SPLC's 2016 "Field Guide to Anti-Muslim Extremists." But while some say she is a bigot, others laud her as a human rights icon.



REMEMBERING The Civil Rights Memorial center is located in the former SPLC headquarters.



during his confirmation process this year, Sessions cited a case from the early 1980s, when as a U.S. attorney he prosecuted a lynching that formed the basis for a landmark civil case the SPLC won against the Klan.

In 1991, Dees, who has the same baby-blue eyes as Sessions, published an autobiography, *A Season for Justice: The Life and Times of Civil Rights Lawyer Morris Dees*, that was updated and reissued 12 years later as *A Lawyer's Journey*. Dees says that after Sessions read the book, the politician called him to confess, "I got tears in my eyes. That book moved me. The way you lived your life moved me." (Sarah Flores, a spokeswoman for Sessions at the Justice Department, declined to comment on the alleged crying episode.)

But the tender moment has not softened the group's stance on the new AG, who Dees and Cohen say was far from outstanding in combating the Klan, has been an opponent of voting rights, and has come to embrace anti-Muslim extremism and racist immigration policy. "Jeff Sessions is not 'Mad Dog' Mattis; he's simply mad," Cohen says, prompting Dees to interject, "He said that. Don't quote me on that."

"You said he was the worst thing that ever happened to our country!" Cohen exclaims in response. Indeed, minutes earlier, Dees had said, "He is probably the worst mistake that Trump could have made for the United States of America, to make him attorney general."

"He won't quote me on that," Dees says. "Don't quote me on that. I don't want to piss him off."

Cohen, though, is not done trash-talking the Trump administration. In 2005, the SPLC's civil rights documentary *Mighty Times: The Children's March*, about anti-segregation youth activists in Birmingham, was nominated for an Oscar for best short-form documentary. Cohen says he met Trump, who was then reinventing himself as a reality television star, at the *Vanity Fair* party after the awards ceremony, and the two chatted briefly. "He congratulated me for our work, and he said he loved our work," Cohen recalls. "I'm not sure he knew a lot about our work." Trump had his new wife, Melania, in tow, but Cohen says that she did not speak during the interaction.

Cohen says he was reminded of that encounter last summer, when Trump insulted the wife of Khizr Khan—the father of a slain Muslim war hero who denounced Trump at the Democratic National Convention—by suggesting that Ghazala Khan, who stood by silently during her husband's speech, had not been permitted to speak.

"I didn't think, 'Maybe Melania wasn't allowed to say anything,' until he said that," Cohen tells me. (White House spokeswoman Hope Hicks did not respond to requests for comment.)

WHILE IT GOES AFTER THE TRUMP administration, the SPLC is also escalating its offensive against the alt-right leaders who rode Trump's coattails to relevance. In April, it filed suit against Andrew Anglin, founder of the neo-Nazi website the Daily Stormer, for inciting harassment against a Jewish real estate agent named Tan-



ya Gersh in Whitefish, Montana. The real estate agent had called for the mother of white nationalist Richard Spencer, standard-bearer of the alt-right, to sell an office building she owned in the town—drawing accusations of "extortion" from Anglin, who encouraged his followers to target Gersh and her family with a "troll storm."

Gersh says that the campaign of harassment included messages to her 12-year-old son directing him to crawl into an oven and phone calls to her in which anonymous callers fired off guns. She says she now attends trauma therapy twice a week and that her business has all but ground to a halt because of the harassment. SPLC lawyer David Dinielli says Anglin, who did not respond to requests for comment, is currently hiding out to avoid being served with the suit.

The Klan may be out of commission, but Dees says these new tactics of organized American racism are "just as bad as burning up this building. He just burned up an individual in a small town."

Trump supporters, of course, would disagree. Trump campaigned as a rebel against political correctness, and in a sense his election was a backlash against the power amassed by liberal groups like the SPLC—a rejection of the idea that liberal activists should determine what views are considered out of bounds in American politics.

The SPLC fields tips and scours websites, message boards and news reports to compile its directory of 917 mostly ring-wing hate groups. But finding and defining hate groups is not exactly a science, leaving the process open to criticism even under the best of circumstances. Berger says that defining a hate or extremist group is notoriously problematic when using extensive, technical criteria, and that the problem becomes greater in the case of the SPLC, which reserves discretion in how and when it applies those labels. "There's no consensus academic definition of extremism, and the SPLC's methodology for making that call isn't clear," he says. "So it's very subjective even within academia, and even more so for a motivated organization."





THE FOUNDER Postcards featuring the SPLC's Morris Dees, shown at right, are for sale at the memorial.

The SPLC's leaders say they are aware of the various critiques lodged against them but have no plans to change their approach. Heidi Beirich, the head of the SPLC's Intelligence Project, says the group's criteria are clear and transparent, pointing to the definition published on its website of hate groups as ones that "have beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for their immutable characteristics." While Beirich cites several left-wing organizations the SPLC has designated as "hate groups," she concedes that the SPLC prioritizes the other end of the political spectrum. "We are focused, whether people like it or not, on the radical right," she says. "We believe that it's uniquely threatening to democracy."

In the case of the Center for Immigration Studies, the think tank has long been considered to the right of the mainstream and has been consistently criticized for misleading methodology. The SPLC labeled it a hate group this year, saying, "The designation resulted primarily from their move to start publishing the work of discredited race scientist Jason Richwine ... and their shocking circulation of an article from one of America's most prominent white nationalist websites and another written by a fringe Holocaust-denier in their weekly newsletter." But Mark Krikorian, president of the CIS, dismisses that reasoning as a weak pretext for a hate group designation and says he believes the label was motivated more by a desire to capitalize on political opposition to Trump than by sincere conviction.

"I think the SPLC has jumped the shark," he says. "The idea that a think tank on K Street is comparable to some skinhead group is laughable."

Krikorian contends that it's not just conservatives like him but that even liberals are now professing to him a growing skepticism of the SPLC's labels. "If our being designated a hate group is a step along the way to their delegitimization," he says, "then maybe it's worth it."

While Krikorian dreams of his downfall, Dees is still rearing for a fight. As he steps back into the ring, his critics may have their points, but the SPLC has something more potent: a bulging war chest, one replenished, most recently, with $3.2 million hauled in from a May charity auction of the late Jerry Garcia's guitar.

Ben Schreckinger is staff writer at Politico Magazine.

The Washington Post

Opinions

Something strange is going on at this civil rights institution. It must be investigated.

By Jim Tharpe
April 5

Jim Tharpe is a retired journalist who lives in Atlanta and a former managing editor of the Montgomery Advertiser.

There's something strange afoot at the Southern Poverty Law Center, one of the nation's richest civil and human rights charities. In March, the center abruptly fired legendary co-founder Morris Dees. Dees's biography was quickly scrubbed from the center's website, and the SPLC announced this week that Karen Baynes-Dunning would serve as interim president and CEO, giving the civil rights organization its first black female leader.

In confirming Dees's departure, then-President Richard Cohen emphasized the center's values of "truth, justice, equity, and inclusion," and said vaguely, "When one of our own fails to meet those standards, no matter his or her role in the organization, we take it seriously and must take appropriate action." Subsequent news reports pointed to allegations of racial discrimination and sexual harassment inside an organization that had raised hundreds of millions of dollars from donors to fight just that type of injustice.

Dees has said little about why he was shown the door after 48 years at the organization he had come to define. But to those of us familiar with the SPLC and its inner workings, the allegations swirling around the latest drama were familiar. The question isn't what went wrong at the SPLC; it is why it took so long for the rest of the country to learn what local reporters already knew. It will probably take a federal investigation to fully unravel this deep-South mystery and provide a credible, long-term fix.

ADVERTISING



More than two decades ago, I was managing editor of the Montgomery Advertiser, which was located one block from the SPLC in downtown Montgomery , Ala. I proposed an investigation into the organization after ongoing complaints from former SPLC staffers, who came and went with regularity but always seemed to tell the same story. Only the names and faces changed. The SPLC, they said, was not what it appeared to be. Many urged the newspaper to take a look.

We were, at the time, anything but adversaries with the center. Like other media outlets, we generally parroted SPLC press releases. We also became friends with SPLC staffers, occasionally attending the center's parties. Some of my reporters dated staffers at the center.

That relationship, however, suddenly soured when reporters Dan Morse and Greg Jaffe (both of whom now work for The Post) began making serious inquiries about the SPLC's finances and the treatment of black employees.

SPLC leaders threatened legal action on several occasions, and at one point openly attacked the newspaper's investigation in a mass mailing to Montgomery lawyers and judges. Then they slammed the door.

"Accommodating your charade of objectivity simply takes too much of our time," center co-founder Joseph J. Levin Jr. wrote the Advertiser in 1993. "Our patience in this matter is exhausted, and we will not respond to further inquiries of any sort."

In February 1994, after three years of research, the Advertiser published an eight-part series titled "Rising Fortunes: Morris Dees and the Southern Poverty Law Center" that found a litany of problems and questionable practices at the SPLC, including a deeply troubled history with its relatively few black employees, some of whom reported hearing the use of racial slurs by the organization's staff and others who "likened the center to a plantation"; misleading donors with aggressive direct-mail tactics; exaggerating its accomplishments; spending most of its money

not on programs but on raising more money; and paying its top staffers (including Dees and Cohen) lavish salaries.

Dees and Cohen vigorously denied its findings. And the SPLC mounted an aggressive campaign against the series when it was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize — it was a 1995 finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for explanatory journalism.

And yet, based on the details of Dees's ouster, the problems we identified 25 years ago do not appear to have been resolved. And yet, a few days after Dees was canned, a friend sent me a recent mail solicitation from the SPLC touting Dees's accomplishments and asking donors to "let Morris and his colleagues know you care" not only by donating but also by using the donor's own "first-class stamp so more of your contribution goes to the SPLC."

Cohen, before he announced his own departure, said the center would bring in well-regarded lawyer Tina Tchen to conduct an investigation. It's too late for that. The Internal Revenue Service, which grants the SPLC tax-exempt status, and the civil rights division of the Justice Department would be the best bets to really figure out what's up at the center.

Any investigation should take a close look at the SPLC's finances. It should look at what the center has told donors in its mail solicitations over the years. And it should take a close look at how that donor money has been spent. Investigators should also look at how SPLC staffers have been treated over the years. Where was the center's board when this mistreatment was going on? And why did no one step up sooner?

The feds owe that to the young progressives who work at the SPLC. And they certainly owe that to the donors who have put their own first-class stamps on the checks they mailed to Montgomery.

Read more:

Marc A. Thiessen: The Southern Poverty Law Center has lost all credibility

Mark Kirkorian: How labeling my organization a hate group shuts down public debate

Arson determined for LDS church fire in Arizona

By Joseph Walker
Jul 7, 2012, 10:51pm EDT

Last week's fire that destroyed a 50-year-old LDS meetinghouse in Tolleson, Ariz., has been determined to be the work of an arsonist, according to local police officials.

"Right now the only people that know where and how the fire was started are the (Bureau of Alcohol, Firearms and Tobacco) investigators and the people who started the fire," said Tolleson Police Chief Larry Rodriguez Friday afternoon. "There was unauthorized entry and vandalism."

Rodriguez said police are offering a $10,000 reward for information that leads to an arrest in the case, which has not been classified as a hate crime.

Three wards, or congregations, of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints — consisting of about 1,400 church members — have been displaced by the fire. Local church spokeswoman Cindy Packard indicated that members are meeting in other chapels in the west Phoenix area until plans for rebuilding the Tolleson meetinghouse are finalized.

"We are saddened by today's findings, and thank the investigators for their efforts," Packard said, adding that "we appreciate the many messages of sympathy and support from our community."

Ronald Waldron, president of the church's Phoenix Arizona Maricopa West Stake (an ecclesiastical unit comprised of several local congregations, similar to a diocese in other Christian denominations), said he has received calls from city and school district officials, offering meeting space and other assistance as needed.

"Our neighbors and friends have been so supportive," Waldron said. "We appreciate their kindness and concern."

Waldron said he is urging stake members to remember a sermon that was delivered during a recent stake conference gathering. A convert to Mormonism

spoke about "hating" Mormons during her high school years. In fact, during her talk she confessed to throwing a big cup of soda on a bicycling LDS missionary as she and her friends drove past him in their car.

"Her message was simple: people change," Waldron said. "Just a few years ago she was persecuting our missionaries, and today she is a member of the church herself. We need to remember that. Whoever did this, we need to remember that people can change. Our job is to serve and to forgive and to love those involved, and to let the police do their job with the arson investigation."

Cromwell PD: Bullet holes found in local church could be connected to Southington shooting incidents

By: WTNH Staff, Jason Dunn
Posted: Jun 1, 2021/10:57 AM EDT
Updated June 1, 2021/05:54 PM EDT

CROMWELL, Conn. (WTNH) — Multiple bullet holes were found in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on South Street Monday, according to Cromwell police.

Cromwell police responded at around 2 p.m. Monday afternoon to a report of bullet holes found in the glass doors and windows of the building.

At the time of the shooting, there were no occupants in the church, and no one was injured, Cromwell police say.

Cromwell police said an arrest warrant for this incident is forthcoming.

Police said this incident may be related to the case of a Southington man who shot at several buildings Sunday night. The man in the case is identified as 74-year-old Douglas Floyd Gollnick of Plantsville.

Gollnick is at the hospital and will be charged with multiple criminal counts once he is discharged. Southington police reported Monday morning they are investigating two additional locations and add that Gollnick is possibly linked to other shootings in other communities, including Bristol.

This is an ongoing investigation.

Jefferson County church shooting: Teen missionary playing basketball shot multiple times, suspect at large

Updated: Dec. 04, 2021, 2:07 p.m. | Published: Dec. 03, 2021, 9:51 p.m.

By Carol Robinson | crobinson@al.com and Howard Koplowitz | hkoplowitz@al.com

Update at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 4: The wounded teen has been identified as Elder Michael Fauber, an 18-year-old missionary with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Fauber of Dayton, Ohio, is in serious but stable condition after undergoing surgery at UAB, according to a statement from the church. Fauber serves in the Alabama Birmingham Mission for the church.

Two other missionaries and a group of people learning more about the church were in the facility when the shooting happened Friday night. No other injuries were reported, but those present are receiving counseling, Sam Penrod, media relations manager for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, told ALcom.

Previously reported: Jefferson County deputies are searching for the "clearly armed ... clearly dangerous" man officials said shot a teen in a church gymnasium Friday night. Sheriff's Sgt. Joni Money said deputies responded just after 8:30 p.m. to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on Altadena Road in an unincorporated area of the county near Vestavia Hills.

Deputy Chief David Agee said members of a youth group were playing basketball when the shooter entered the gym and played a few games with them.

Then, seemingly unprovoked, the suspect started shooting, Agee said.

"This was the first time they've seen him at this location," Agee said, adding that it didn't appear anyone knew the suspect.

The 18-year-old victim was struck multiple times and rushed to UAB Hospital in critical, but stable, condition. Agee said he is expected to survive.

The suspect fled the scene in a vehicle.

A vehicle description has not been released, but Agee described the suspect as a Black male with a light complexion, about 6-feet, 7-inches tall and very skinny. He is believed to be in his mid-20s, Agee said.

Agee did not say how many shots were fired. "There may be shell casings we don't know about,'' he said.

Authorities said they are following up on leads provided by the other teens who were in the gym during the shooting.

"They're very helpful," he said. "It's their information that has gotten us this far."

Agee said it's concerning that someone would shoot in a church gym.

"Nobody wants to hear that, and surely we don't, but we're going to work very hard to track this guy down," he said.

Asked if the surrounding community was in danger, Agee said, "He's clearly armed, he's clearly dangerous."

Agee said he doesn't know if the victim or the church was specifically targeted, and if so, why.

"We just want to find him," Agee said.

Gunman opens fire at Nevada church, killing one

By Susannah Cullinane, CNN
Updated 2:40 AM EDT, Mon July 23, 2018

Gunman opens fire at Nevada church, killing 1

CNN —
A man is in custody after allegedly fatally shooting a man and wounding another person at a Mormon church in Nevada, police say.

The City of Fallon Police Department identified the suspected gunman as John K. O'Connor.

O'Connor was a member of the congregation at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on West Richards Street in Fallon and had attended church services prior to opening fire about 1 p.m. Sunday local time (4 p.m. ET), police said in a statement.

Ad Feedback

The gunman killed Charles E. Miller, known to Fallon residents as "Bert," and injured another person before walking home, police said.

"City of Fallon Police Officers and Churchill County Sheriff's Deputies surrounded the home while a hostage negotiator was called to the scene. After placing phone calls to the home, O'Connor agreed to exit the property and surrender to officers," the statement said.

'Does not appear ... directed at the church'

"It is too early to understand the motive, but initially, it does not appear to have been directed at the church, but an individual victim," the statement said.

O'Connor was being held at the Churchill County Jail and has yet to be formally charged, police said later Sunday.

The second shooting victim was treated at a hospital and later released.

At least 50 people witnessed the shooting inside the church, Fallon Chief of Police Kevin Gehman told a news conference. He said the gun believed to be used was a mid-size caliber handgun.

Police had "contacts" with O'Connor in the past but "nothing that would rise to this level," Gehman said.

Both Nevada's senators tweeted their condolences to the shooting victims.

Republican Sen. Dean Heller described the tragedy as "senseless."

"Deeply saddened by the act of senseless violence in Fallon today at the LDS church. We are in contact with Mayor Tedford and other officials. My family and I are praying for all loved ones, churchgoers, and community members impacted by this tragedy," he said.

Democratic Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto called for an end to gun violence.

"Devastated by the horrific news of the fatal shooting at the LDS church in Fallon. Thank you to the first responders on the scene," she tweeted. "My heart goes out to all of those impacted. Places of worship should be a safe haven. The gun violence across this country must end."

Syracuse Latter-day Saint chapel defaced, vandalized

By
Nancy Van Valkenburg
-
October 9, 2021



Syracuse Police and Fire officials responded early on Saturday, Oct. 9, after a chapel of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was vandalized. Photo: Gephardt Daily/Nancy Van Valkenburg

SYRACUSE, Utah, Oct. 9, 2021 (Gephardt Daily) — A Syracuse chapel of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was vandalized early Saturday, with reports of fire and damage inside and a visible defacement of the front of the building.

Emergency crews were called to the fire and crime scene, a few blocks southeast of Syracuse High School, at about 1:10 a.m. The fire department doused the fire, and fire officials questioned neighbors about anything they might have seen or captured on surveillance video.

Syracuse Police Department officers were back at the scene in the morning, questioning any neighbors they might have missed earlier. Several vehicles from a local cleaning company were on the scene Saturday morning, after the scene had been cleared by investigators.

Inverted crosses, and what appeared to a pentagram, were spray-painted on the front of the church. Gephardt Daily has calls in to several agencies, and will have more information on the crime investigation as details become available.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Biggs, you know that we welcome those articles. Without objection, so ordered.

You're very kind to have them by list, and we thank you so very much for your questioning.

At this time, I'm pleased to recognize the Chair of the Full Committee, Mr. Nadler for 5 minutes.

Mr. Nadler.

Chair NADLER. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Dr. Jones, are extremists used in COVID–19 anxiety and the government's response to their strategic advantage? If they are, is it limited just to propaganda and recruitment, or are you also seeing it as a motivation for violent attacks?

Mr. JONES. That's a great question, Mr. Nadler, and thanks for participating in the hearing.

The data that we have shown that COVID–19 is certainly being used to motivate individuals to extremist beliefs. It's particularly helpful on the radicalization process. What we don't see a lot yet is evidence that is being used to actually commit domestic terrorist attacks, or plots, for that matter.

So, radicalization definitely is that concerning, absolutely. We don't see it yet manifesting itself into actually attacks yet. The data does not yet show that.

Chair NADLER. Thank you.

Mr. Kaleka, you were very involved in your community's recovery from the Oak Creek tragedy, and you diligently worked on de-radicalization efforts, interfaith coordination, and law enforcement outreach.

Given your background as a former law enforcement officer, what changes do you think law enforcement departments should consider so they are more responsive to domestic violent extremist threats against minority communities?

Mr. KALEKA. Thank you, Chair Nadler. Yeah. When we think about March 2020 and what was going on at that time and the heightened tensions, we brought together community stakeholders, we brought together law enforcement officers, and the local activists to have conversations and meet one another.

We've been continuing to provide bridges of dialogue of conversation, even if people didn't get along. Since that time that we've been healing and going into sort of de-radicalization work, we have to get much further upstream. If you're waiting for somebody—and there's been numerous incidents—I can count three right now of ones that I know that we prevented from happening. Part of that was to get further upstream and not wait till the gunman or the suspect shows up to the synagogue, the Masjids, the Gurudwara, or the church.

If we don't get further upstream, it's too late at that point. It's too late for law enforcement, unfortunately, at that point. I speak this as respectful of the capacity of law enforcement officers, but even law enforcement officers know that. We need to get much further upstream and stop it at the house. Stop it at the faith communities. Stop it with somebody who can say something at that point.

Chair NADLER. Thank you. Rabbi Cytron-Walker, Deuteronomy says you must love the stranger for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You let your attacker in because he told you he was hun-

gry, and he spent the night in the cold. How does the concept of generosity to strangers shape your role as rabbi, and do you believe the threat of domestic terrorism might erode that identity?

Rabbi CYTRON-WALKER. Oh, yes. It's my hope that it's—first, thank you for the question, Chair Nadler, and that idea of love the stranger, care for the stranger is something that is of value that I continue to try to live. It's a part of who we are. I think that the threat of domestic terrorism, I think the threat against the Jewish community is very much, for many people, creating a sense of fear and concern and it is a real challenge.

So, at the same time, the chances of a terrorist attack are so remote that I pray that we don't give in to that fear. I do believe that we have to be prepared. I think that all those security trainings were very important, but I still teach and I still preach love your neighbor. I still teach and I still preach that we need to care for the stranger. We need to embrace that value of hospitality that is so much a part of our tradition.

Chair NADLER. Do you believe that fear of domestic terror attacks has affected how we all treat one another and if so, how?

Rabbi CYTRON-WALKER. I think that, at least in my community, within the Peace Together community that we've really worked hard to establish, the threat of domestic terror has actually brought a number of us more together in the community and, that is, on the interreligious and nonreligious side. It is also what led us to develop really positive relationships with the police department.

There are a number of Jews of color that, throughout our country, that see a security officer outside their house of worship and are a little bit concerned because of it, because they are concerned that they might be treated with suspicion, but overall, within our community, I can say that the relationship, the closeness between the local police department, the local government, and the interreligious and nonreligious communities has been incredibly strong.

My hope, and my prayer would be that every community would be able to have those relationships because we don't, right? We don't. We have to acknowledge that reality. So, but that is one of the things that really helped to sustain us and continues to sustain us in the aftermath.

Chair NADLER. Thank you. My time is expired.

I yield back.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. Biggs, you're still here. Just wanted to be assured that you don't have another Member at this time that may have come in. Mr. Biggs?

Mr. BIGGS. Madam Chair, I am looking, and my staff is looking. We had four Members on earlier, but I think they might've all departed and so I might be a lonely, lonely Republican on this hearing today.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Well, we will look out for those Members, and we thank you for your presence.

It's my pleasure now to yield to the gentlelady from Florida, Mrs. Demings for 5 minutes.

Mrs. DEMINGS. Thank you so much, Madam Chair. Thank you so much to our Witnesses today.

Let me, as a former law enforcement officer, as you well know, my Committee Members, of 27 years, I'm not quite really sure what to think of what a lot of what I've heard so far.

Let me just get one thing out of the way. There is an effort on this Committee to try to hijack this important hearing about the safety of our students and the safety of the people that we are supposed to represent and assist law enforcement in protecting.

Let me say it for about the millionth time: We are not going to defund the police. We're going to fund the police, and we can have the backs of our police officers and the communities in which we serve, too.

The communities most at risk from crime want more security, not less. We know that when you do get out and talk to them, that's why we're working to get police departments more resources, not less. It's why we need to expand the nonprofit security grant program, which I am working on in my other Committee through Homeland Security.

From what I've heard today, from some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, I am sure that I will be able to get many more of them to sign on to that legislation.

Our number 1 priority has to be the reduction of violent crime. I have been saying that for over three decades, but let me be clear: That also includes escalating threats by extremists targeting Black Americans and Jewish Americans and Sikh Americans and others.

I have to wonder, let me say this: I have worked alongside the brave men and women in blue that many of my colleagues talk about. I have seen them risk their lives over and over again to keep all, not just a few, all communities safe.

What I know from my experience is that those police officers, those rank-and-file officers, would be extremely concerned about the safety of students and threats against students in their communities.

Madam Chair, I invite my colleagues to get to truly know some of the law enforcement officers, some of the rank-and-file officers that they talk about and claim to know.

Dr. Wilson, thank you for your leadership at Morgan, and thank you for your powerful testimony advocating on behalf, laser-focused on advocating on behalf of those students who are just trying to get an education and are dependent on us to make sure that they can.

Last week, you wrote an opinion piece for Word in Black entitled, "HBCU Strong: Bomb Threats Will Not Deter Us."

Dr. Wilson, how would you say the history—because we know the history. I mean, we know it, but let's try to get better moving on. How would you say the history shapes the campus environment today?

I know you talked a little bit earlier, but could you talk a little bit more about how your students are handling these threats, and how are you addressing the issues? Please, tell me how having to now take away resources to respond to threat after threat after threat has really affected what should be a safe learning environment?

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much for the question, Congresswoman Demings.

Let me repeat that the psychological trauma that has been brought on by the threats is very, very severe here at Morgan and across the HBCU campuses. I do not say that in a vacuum. I certainly have been in conversations with the other HBCU presidents and chancellors, and what you see at Morgan is no different than what you will see on the other campuses where these threats have also been made.

Our number 2 priority, of course, is a long history of underfunding of these institutions, and there's a reason why I said, quote, "they are the innovators in American higher education, because they've had to," unquote, take what they had to make what they needed for the students when they walked across the stage and they got the sheep skins to be in a position to dance on the world stage with anyone, any place, anytime, and anywhere.

When you add the bomb threats and you add, if you will, the impact of the pandemic and when you add all the other things that these students have seen in a relatively short period of time, what these underfunded resource institutions must do is then to take resources from other operational areas and then shift them to the psychological, emotional well-being area and, therefore, it limits our ability to continue to advance the genre of institutions.

That's the way I would explain that in a relatively short period of time, Congresswoman Demings.

Mrs. DEMINGS. Thank you so much, Dr. Wilson.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Mrs. DEMINGS. I yield back. Thank you.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you so very much.

My pleasure to now yield to the gentlelady from California for 5 minutes, Ms. Bass.

Ms. BASS. Thank you, Madam Chair. I do want to note as the Ranking Member said, the Republican Members have left the hearing, and I think that that is emblematic of the refusal to talk about this subject. I'm saddened that in every one of their questions, they wanted to focus on crime in general, and I think you could walk away saying that the real problem is actually African-Americans. That's the real problem.

Violence and racial violence really isn't an issue at all, and the denial of what is going on in this country and what has gone on in this country historically is certainly evident in their performance today. I guess they don't think it's important, which is why they're not here.

So, let me thank you, Madam Chair, for holding this hearing. I'm sad to say that this is a particularly important topic for my home city. The liberal bastion of Los Angeles actually saw the most hate crimes of any major U.S. city over the past year, and the third highest of any U.S. city since the 1970s.

These crimes of hatred were most common against African-Americans, but we also saw a large increase in hate crimes against Latinos, Asians, the LGBTQ community, Jewish Americans, and the hate and fear is not confined to any one community.

Even in the Beverly Hills neighborhood, we saw homes littered with anti-Semitic flyers filled with hateful propaganda, and we really cannot stand by while hate-filled extremism pollutes our communities and further traumatizes our neighborhoods.

We have seen anti-Semitic literature spread not just in Beverly Hills, but throughout Los Angeles and many of the surrounding cities.

I wanted to ask Mr. Kaleka, and I also wanted to thank you for being a Witness today in spite of what you have gone through. My district is the home to the Sikh leadership headquarters. I wanted to know how you, when you're forced to confront anti-immigrant sentiment, religious discrimination, and related violence, how you deal with young Sikh Americans?

I think in the African-American community, we're used to having those conversations with our children, but I would like to know how it is for you and how young Sikh Americans are handling this?

Mr. KALEKA. Thank you so much, Congresswoman. Early on, this is going to be the 10th anniversary of the shooting, and early on, I saw a lot of our community sort of segregate itself because of fear of being outside. Arno Michaelis who joined me and was the leader of the Skinhead organization a long time ago is now working with me, and we're in Orlando together today and going to be at the Holocaust resource center. One of the things that I got approached with early on was, why do you keep bringing White people into our Sikh Temple? Don't you know we're scared, we're afraid? This was a lot of the leadership, right?

The rabbi knows this, right? A lot of the leadership who was a little bit older said, "Hey, Pardeep, you know, we're traumatized. Don't do that. Don't bring White people in here, especially don't bring White people with skinheads." I said, "listen, America—America's promise we all came here for a better life, and we do have an obligation or responsibility to this country, and if I let you sit in your segregation because you're fearful, the next doctor will not happen, the next law enforcement will not happen, the next person who's about to go out and be the next Congressperson will not happen."

So, I think we owed it to our debt in America to make sure that we get out of our—we nourish the younger generation. So, that was really my motivation. That continues to be my motivation. I speak at a lot of Sikh Temples all over the place, and I let them know, hey, you know what? At this point, somebody let us know that we weren't worth being in this country.

Ms. BASS. I want to ask you another question, but before I do, let me just say that, Madam Chair, I do hope that you have another hearing where we talk about community violence. I think that is an important topic to have, but I do want to mention that's not the topic of this hearing and if we continue the attempts to deny that radical extremism, especially White supremacy exists in our country, it's not going to move us further by just acting as though it doesn't exist.

Mr. Kaleka, in your final moments, can you talk about what Congress might learn, what support the Federal, State, and local governments can provide to military and law enforcement to reduce their vulnerability to extremist recruitment?

Mr. KALEKA. Thank you so much, Congresswoman. I'll make it short. Terror affects all of us. It affects us all, and it's a community issue [inaudible] takes seriously. It's something that we need to fund. We need to get the right people doing the right job and we

need to work side by side, and hand in tandem with law enforcement. So, I think we all need to work on this together.

Ms. BASS. Thank you. I yield because I'm out of time, Madam Chair.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. The gentlelady's time has expired.

The gentleman is recognized. Mr. Fitzgerald is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. Fitzgerald.

Mr. FITZGERALD. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Pardeep, as you know, I represent part of southeastern Wisconsin. It was 10 years ago when that tragedy happened and have been, I guess, monitoring the Sikh community and the strides you've made.

I want to certainly acknowledge that you guys have done the outreach and have done the work that I'm sure is having an impact in the community. So, thank you for being here today.

The one point I wanted to make, I know that a lot of issues are being raised, and this is a hearing, and that's what Members of Congress are supposed to be doing is kind of listening versus offering any solutions. I haven't heard any real strong solutions today, other than, to continue to work on these all-encompassing issues. This is not simple stuff by any means.

I do want to address one thing and another item, and I would ask Dr. Pennie maybe to comment on it, because it seems to be kind of the cycle that continues, and whether it is a hate crime or for my many years in the State legislature, we had penalty enhancers that were related to crimes committed with whether it be a handgun or some other very specific item that would change the overall view of a crime.

One of the issues we continue to struggle with is—and law enforcement sees it all the time where somebody's arrested and then they're prosecuted and then ultimately, they're back out on the street in a short period of time. I know—listen, I have a father who's in law enforcement for 50 years and a son who was in law enforcement, and this was one of the topics that was most frustrating was just to have repeat criminals that continue to be part of the system and rap sheets as long as your arm in the crimes they commit.

Dr. Pennie, do you have a comment on that part of the issues we're facing?

Mr. PENNIE. Absolutely. Look, it is a revolving door when dealing with violent offenders. Look, I don't want to negate any other part of this discussion, right? I want people to understand that I am educated. I was a college professor for several years. I'm a Doctor of Education. I actually wrote my dissertation on mitigating the outcome for shooting attacks on college and school campuses.

So, we are acknowledging that there is a situation that needs to be addressed in these communities, and these schooling at college campuses as it relates to dealing with radicalized behavior, but I say that because years ago when I approached Congress about revising CDA 230, the platform that gives these social media platforms the ability to recruit—to allow these radical groups to recruit and radicalize on their platforms, nobody wanted to revise it. Nobody wanted to appeal it.

I was talking in an echo chamber. So, here we are five years later, and people want to acknowledge that we do have a problem with social media.

So, we really want to get to resolving some of these issues, we have to start there. We have to start with how our young people are being recruited and radicalized. That's number 1.

Number 2, going back to dealing with these violent offenders, we have to address the individuals that are victimizing us in our communities. If we keep putting these people out, they're going to continue to escalate crime over and over again. These police officers are doing more work than anybody else because they're arresting people, they're putting them in jail, these people come out, they offend other people, they commit new murders, and officers have to get out here and go find these same people all over again.

We're doing double work. We have to do better. We have to do a better job, and if we can get politicians to step out of the way to allow us to do our job, we'll gladly do it.

Mr. FITZGERALD. Mr. Tatum, do you have a comment in relationship to what we were just discussing?

Mr. TATUM. Yes, sir. Thank you for the question. I think that it's invaluable for us to understand that there's not a single person that I've heard testify that will Act as if there's not an issue. If someone's calling and threatening the HBCU, that is a problem. As a former law enforcement officer, I hope that they go to jail, and they spend time in jail. The problem is, what is the solution to the problem? How do we get to the underlying issues?

So, it just—racism just don't happen out of thin air. Prejudice and hatred towards people just don't occur out of thin air. It is breed—it is bred in our society through certain mechanisms. I believe that we do need to take a strong stance in making sure law enforcement officers are able to arrest people who are radicalized, who hate White people, who hate Black people, who hate Jewish people, and put them in jail and they stay there.

The problem is that we—in our society, we are focused more on caring for the suspect than we do the victims. Rehabilitation is a thing that we need to address. However, these individuals need to go to jail, and they need to stay in jail instead of getting out and perpetuating more and more crimes. We need the funding for technology and innovation for law enforcement officers to be able to catch individuals who are causing these bomb threats.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. The gentleman's time is up. The gentleman's time is up.

Mr. FITZGERALD. Madam Chair.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you so very much. The gentleman's time is expired.

It is my pleasure now to recognize the gentlelady from Georgia, Congresswoman McBath, for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCBATH. Thank you, Chair Lee, and thank you so much for holding this very critical and important issue today.

I'd also like to thank our Witnesses for joining us to share your stories and to shed more light on this crisis.

I just have to say, it's important that we're absolutely clear about what this hearing is about today. Domestic terror, no matter the source, no matter the target, is inconsistent with the principles of

liberty and equality on which our great Nation was founded. I know that our Republican colleagues who have been talking about other problems today, both real and imagined, and that simply just distracts from a real problem that deserves our full attention today.

As an alumna of Virginia State University, graduating from a historically Black university has been one of my greatest honors of my lifetime. There, I not only earned an excellent education, I also grew up as a woman, as a person. I found a sisterhood in Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and took part in one of the greatest educational opportunities afforded me in preparation for my work as a Member of Congress.

Historically Black colleges and universities, along with other minority institutions, have been the bedrock of higher education for millions of Americans of color for almost 200 years, and they have offered Americans opportunities and futures when so many other doors were shut.

These recent bomb threats to HBCUs are not just a threat to the African-American community, they're also a threat to the academic and economic futures of Americans, African Americans. In my home State of Georgia, three institutions have received bomb threats in recent weeks. These include Spelman College, Fort Valley State University, and Albany State University. These hate crimes are meant to disrupt the stability and permanence of HBCUs.

These attempts to intimidate us, they're not going to succeed. HBCU graduates like me, students, and communities, we will continue to thrive and continue to flourish as we have almost done for two centuries.

I thank the FBI investigators for taking these threats so seriously. These are threats that are racially motivated, they're violent extremism, and they're hate crimes. I call on them to ensure that these investigations are thoroughly and comprehensively completed.

Dr. Wilson, last week you wrote an opinion piece for Word In Black titled, HBCU Strong: Bomb Threat Will Never (sic) Deter Us. You wrote, and I quote, "Those founders knew that the journey laid before them would be a rough one, the terrain arduous and rugged, the rivers deep and unrelenting. Moreover, they fully recognized that they were putting their very lives online as they marched for, fought for, and, sadly for many, died for the right to live free and to create institutions that would educate their sons and daughters."

Can you put into context for us the recent series of bomb threats against HBCUs in the broader story of racism and hate-based violence against African Americans in this country?

Mr. WILSON. Congresswoman McBath, this is just a continuation of that struggle that you so eloquently outlined. Of course, what we have as a connective tissue among all the HBCUs is the way that we were birthed. Whether it's Morehouse or Tuskegee or Hampton or Morgan or Prairie View, it's almost the same kind of story.

So, what I was saying for the university community, indeed to the Nation, that if you were to look just at Morgan, one of our visionary founders was the late Reverend Samuel Green, who is depicted in the movie Harriet, and he was born a slave in Dorchester

County, and it was against the law to learn how to read and write, but his owner basically taught him to read and write.

Then there was a Fugitive Slave Act in existence that said, okay, but if you go north of the Mason-Dixon Line and you're caught, then you could be returned to your owner or you could be jailed. Well, he was caught beyond the Mason-Dixon Line, and he was sentenced to 10 years in a Baltimore City penitentiary. He served 5 years. When he came out in 1862, he basically had more desire to found institutions that would be about creating literacy for those sons and daughters that were about to be freed.

So, our students and the faculty and staff and alumni here at Morgan and across the HBCU space, we have to understand this resilience. We have to understand that we really are about simply saying to our great country, we are not a truly functioning democracy if, for example, our laws and practices are designed to marginalize and keep everyone from fully participating. Our ancestors knew that, and they fought so hard to enable our Constitution to live up to those ideals. So, we try and motivate and inspire in spite of the challenges that are brought on by the struggle.

Mrs. MCBATH. Thank you so much. I'm out of time. I yield back.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. The gentlelady's time has expired.

I now recognize Mr. Tiffany for 5 minutes. Mr. Tiffany?

Mr. TIFFANY. Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to yield my time to Representative Biggs from Arizona.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Your time is now yielded to Mr. Biggs. You're recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. Biggs? You've been yielded to by Mr. Tiffany for 5 minutes.

Mr. BIGGS. Yeah, I was talking away without unmuting, Madam Chair.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. All right.

Mr. BIGGS. That just happens now and then on these Zoom issues, so I apologize for that.

I was saying that I appreciate the testimony of the Witnesses. I appreciate that we have covered a broad spectrum of things. I do find it interesting that some of the concerns people have mentioned have been characterized as real and imagined. I thought that was interesting, because I think everybody here is sincere in attempting to try to resolve issues that I think are important.

One of the things, Rabbi, you mentioned, and I have to say, Mr. Kaleka, you mentioned it, Mr. Jones mentioned it, and Dr. Wilson, President Wilson, all mentioned this notion of speaking and communicating and trying to resolve some issues by how we communicate with each other and get to the bottom of these things.

I thought it was an inflammatory statement that somebody made saying that Republicans are trying to hijack this Committee hearing. I don't think that's the case at all. I think what we're trying to do is same thing that I believe, in all sincerity, that the Witnesses are trying to do and my colleagues on the other side, and that's to move the ball forward and try to find solutions to violence, whether it be race-based violence at historically Black colleges and universities, whether it be anti-Semitic violence or anti-Sikh or any other kind of group, and I mentioned my denomination, its period of victimization. I think this is really critical.

I hope that we're not spending our time talking past each other. I hope that we're talking to each other and communicating and understanding with sincere hearts what's being said today.

So, I want to talk about one of the suggestions that was made by Dr. Pennie and was echoed as well by Mr. Tatum, and it goes like this: Section 230, so we talk about radicalization, because radicalization, if we're going to resolve some of these issues, we have to get to how are people, particularly young people, being radicalized and why they would view themselves inside and view others as outside and attack them for whatever reason.

You've mentioned section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. What do you—what role do you think that these platforms are playing, Dr. Pennie and Mr. Tatum, in the radicalization of people who then do things like plant bombs—or not—in this case not plant bombs but seek to terrorize historically Black colleges and universities because, for whatever reason? But, maybe it's hate, I don't know. We're still investigating. I've got to know what you think section 230, how that impacts, something like that. Dr. Pennie.

Mr. PENNIE. Absolutely. I think it's important for people to understand what section 230 is. Basically, what it's a policy that essentially shields these social media companies from liability from what a third-party posts on their platform.

So, let's remember, now, this Communications Decency Act was passed back in 1996. We're in two thousand—we're in 2022. So, there are some real issues that need to be addressed. These social media platforms, they understand that. They use it to their ability to allow these radical groups—and a lot of this content is being—whether you want—look, that's a whole other issue, whether we want to talk about it or not, but we're being influenced by foreign entities.

They know the difference between rubles being paid on their platforms and United States currency. They know the difference, but they're not saying anything. They're allowing individuals to fund rhetoric and content in our community—in our country that's being used to incite our people to violence.

Look, just for clarification. Guys, I went to an HBCU university, right. I'm from the Black community. I love people. I'm a member of a prominent Jewish organization. I'm a member of a prominent African-American organization. The issue that our Democrat colleagues are throwing out there, there is no agenda here.

Guys, we're trying to get to a real solution in how we can fix problems in this country. The bottom line is force and intimidation that is used for the purposes of changing governmental policy—

Ms. JACKSON LEE. The gentleman's time is expired. The gentleman's time is expired. Thank you so very much.

It's my pleasure to now yield to the gentlelady from Pennsylvania, Ms. Dean, for 5 minutes, Congresswoman Dean for 5 minutes. Thank you.

Ms. DEAN. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Also, thank you to all the folks here who have offered us your testimony, your expertise, your personal experience.

In particular, Mr. Kaleka, I offer my family's sympathy to your family's.

Rabbi Cytron-Walker, we're so thankful that you're here, that you are anywhere, and extraordinary the circumstances that you and your congregation had to endure.

I've been thinking about this, and I'm a former college professor, I taught writing and rhetoric and ethics. So, I loved that many of you used the expression that I used too often in my class, words matter. Our words matter.

So, let me associate myself first with the words of Representatives Bass and Demings and McBath. Our words matter as we ask questions, as we pull information out that we might be able to benefit from in this important hearing.

So, I'm going to try to get to, in my limited time, two different things.

Ms. Huang, I want to get to the "why." If you don't mind, why do you believe in—and Southern Poverty Law Center, what does the data show us why do we have an increase in domestic violent extremism in our country? If you could briefly give us a little kernel about that.

Ms. HUANG. Thank you, Congresswoman Dean. I think what you've stated is really important, that the framing of talking about crime is completely different than talking about domestic terrorism. It's not fair to ask first responders to crime to deal with the problems of extremism and domestic terrorism. It's not safe for us to ask them to do that. This requires a multiprong response.

To your question why we're seeing the rise and influence of these extremist groups, I think there's a few reasons.

First, it is increasingly being mainstreamed into our political discourse. We've seen references to extremist views, we've seen calls to extremist organizations from high-profile Members of the former Administration, as well as from Members of Congress, and that gives supporters, advocates, believers, adherents to these ideologies the encouragement to Act on these beliefs.

Second, I agree with my colleagues who've cited the importance of social media. There's no question that many people are learning about extremist ideologies online, but we need to do much more research to understand why being exposed to those ideologies online is actually encouraging more and more people to take action. Unfortunately, we don't have enough research at this time.

Ms. DEAN. Thank you for both of those answers.

In my limited time left, I want to call upon both Dr. Wilson and Rabbi Cytron-Walker to turn to the "how." How do we get to healing? I'm certain that one of the ways is through education. I'm reminded of the words of Eboo Patel, who said, "it matters who gets to a young person's microphone first. Who do they hear from first?"

So, how do we get to healing, Dr. Wilson and Rabbi Cytron-Walker?

Mr. WILSON. I would just be very brief. I think you started down the right path. It is through education. I would be disingenuous if I did not say that I'm very alarmed by what I see happening with State legislatures and school districts across the country with regard to removing books and sanitizing curricular. That's not the way you're going to solve this problem, if you will.

Then I think for what I'm seeing across the campuses, I do think that perhaps some additional resources may be coming through

Health and Human Services to enable us to minister to the psychological and emotional well-being of our community. Certainly, it would be welcomed as well.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you. The gentlelady's time is up. I'm pleased to recognize the gentlelady from—

Ms. DEAN. Oh, I had a little time left. I was hoping to hear from the rabbi. Maybe I don't.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. You do.

Rabbi CYTRON-WALKER. Oh, then, sorry, my apologies.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I moved too quickly. Thank you.

Rabbi CYTRON-WALKER. That's okay. Thank you, Representative. So, just briefly, I would say that with regard to healing, healing means that something is already—something bad has already happened and that we need to heal from, right. So, all that love and support that we have gotten from people from every background, it matters. It really helps.

I would hope that the HBCUs, that anyone who deals the Sikh community, that anyone who deals with trauma and terror is able to receive that love and support. Part of what we need to do is to show that love and support before something bad happens, right, to really care for, not just our own community, but other communities as well. That's—those are key. That's key. It's something that's hard to legislate, but that's something that's incumbent upon each of us.

Ms. DEAN. I thank you. Beautifully said.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I yield back.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you. Thank you for your understanding. If they needed to speak a little bit longer, I indulge you on that, but thank you so very much for your questioning.

It's my pleasure now to yield to the gentlelady from Pennsylvania, Ms. Scanlon, for 5 minutes. Thank you.

Ms. SCANLON. Thank you, Chair Jackson Lee, for calling this timely and very important hearing.

The data we have shows, that incidents of domestic terrorism and extremism and hate-based violence are all on the rise. While some may seek to deflect attention from this hate-fueled violence by terming it "identity politics," we must recognize that these incidents occur when extremists target individuals based upon their identities, seeking to divide our communities by sowing hate and chaos.

My district is a reflection of the diverse melting pot that is America. Twenty-five percent of my constituents are Black, 7 percent are Asian, and 4 percent Hispanic. More than 12 percent are foreign born. Unfortunately, our community has also seen the recent rise in extremist violence targeting racial and religious minorities.

According to the Philadelphia Anti-Defamation League, 2020 was the third highest year on record for anti-Semitic incidents in Pennsylvania, including vandalism of a Philadelphia synagogue and online verbal and physical harassment of Jewish community members in my region.

There's a large Sikh population in my district, and in visiting at the gurdwara and meeting with community members, I know they are frequently harassed and confronted with anti-immigrant sentiment, religious discrimination, and hate-based violence. As bomb

threats have targeted over 20 historically Black colleges and universities in recent weeks, we've been concerned for the students and faculty at Cheyney University, the Nation's first HBCU here in my district. I'm really grateful to our Witnesses for being here today and eager to hear more about the ways in which the Federal government can better support institutions facing threats as well as preventing incidents of domestic terrorism in the first place.

Dr. Jones, the CSIS report from April 12, 2021, indicated that 66 percent of terrorist plots and attacks in the United States were committed by White supremacists, extremist militia members, and other far-right extremists. How does that volume when focused of right-wing extremist activity compared to prior years?

Mr. JONES. It's actually similar in many ways to the percentages from recent years. We continue to see the majority of violence—of domestic terrorism that is perpetrated by White supremacists and antigovernment militias. We do see in our data set domestic terrorism perpetrated by antifascists and others, but the highest percentages continue to be those perpetrated by White supremacists. I should also add, in addition, to attacks and plots, the highest levels of fatalities are also committed by those on the White supremacist side.

Ms. SCANLON. Thank you.

Ms. Huang, how are disinformation, false narratives, and conspiracy theories used to recruit new members, and what can we do about that?

Ms. HUANG. Thank you, Congresswoman Scanlon. One of the most important things we have to do is to focus on prevention initiatives. We need to be making investments in education, and ensuring that schools can teach inclusive history, not just the good parts of American history but all our history. That enables us to have conversations about the types of experiences we've had in the past with slavery, with genocide, with other problems of White supremacy so that it's not some kind of hidden or opaque myth.

The other thing that's really important to do is to focus on investing in preventative and resilient measures. Some of my colleagues on the panel have talked about this. There are calls for increased funding for security reasons. The Nonprofit Security Fund, for example, is important. It has to be complemented with efforts to educate and build resilience in communities to stop radicalization.

We've worked with the PERIL lab at American University to put out some guidance for parents and families on how they can look out for possible radicalization amongst young people and take steps to stop that when it's identified. So, we'd like to see more investments concomitant with that. Of course, Congresswoman Lee's legislation that she's introduced, the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act, would be a terrific help.

Ms. SCANLON. Thank you.

Mr. Kaleka, you've worked some in this field, as I understand it, to counter hate and promote understanding. You've worked with deradicalization, helping families respond when loved ones become involved in extremist groups or when they want to move away. Can you talk about what you think—what lessons Congress can learn from your deradicalization efforts?

Mr. KALEKA. Yeah, thank you so much, Congresswoman. Yeah, I think what we're trying to do is attempt to scale what we're doing, and scaling it means that we need to teach people how to create a counseling subspecialty around terrorism, what are some of the indicators that we look at, what are ways that we can change behavior as it goes forward. While I can't comment on cases, I can let that we're seeing a rise in domestic terrorism cases on our end as well.

Ms. SCANLON. Thank you.

Madam Chair, I see my time is expired, but I would request unanimous consent to enter into the record a report from the Philadelphia Anti-Defamation League titled, "2020 Third-Highest Year on Record for Anti-Semitic Incidents in Pennsylvania."

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Without objection, so ordered.

[The information follows:]

MS. SCANLON FOR THE RECORD

FIGHTING HATE FOR GOOD



Posted in **Anti-Semitism**, **Anti-Semitism**, **Combating Hate**, **United States**.

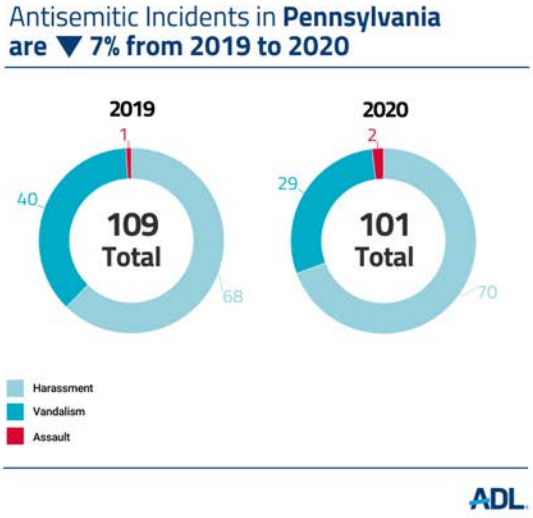
2020 Third-Highest Year on Record for Antisemitic Incidents in Pennsylvania

April 27, 2021

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In 2020, Pennsylvania experienced the third-highest number of antisemitic incidents recorded in the Commonwealth since tracking began in 1979, according to new data from ADL (the Anti-Defamation League).



ADL recorded 101 antisemitic incidents in Pennsylvania in its 2020 *Audit of Antisemitic Incidents*. While a slight decrease from the 109 incidents recorded in 2019, antisemitic incidents in 2020 remained near historic highs and were 55 percent higher than the Commonwealth's annual average of 64 incidents a year.

For the second year in a row, Pennsylvania had the fifth-highest number of antisemitic incidents in the nation, behind only New York (336), New Jersey (295), California (289) and Florida (127).

Incident Breakdown

The ADL Audit includes both criminal and non-criminal acts of harassment and intimidation, including distribution of hate propaganda, threats and slurs.

The Audit classifies incidents into three categories: harassment, vandalism and assault. Of the total incidents reported in Pennsylvania in 2020:

Harassment: There were 70 harassment incidents, a 3 percent increase over the previous year. ADL defines harassment as cases in which one or more Jews reported feeling targeted or threatened by antisemitic language or acts.

Vandalism: There were 29 vandalism incidents, a 28 percent decrease over the previous year. ADL defines vandalism as cases in which property was damaged in a manner that harmed or intimidated Jews. Swastikas, which are generally interpreted as symbols of antisemitic hatred, were present in 76 percent of these incidents.

Assault: There were 2 assault incidents, an increase from 1 in 2019. ADL defines assaults as cases in which individuals were physically targeted with violence accompanied by evidence of antisemitic animus.



Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic

As it did with so many aspects of Americans' lives in 2020, the coronavirus pandemic significantly impacted antisemitic attitudes and manifestations last year. ADL's Center on Extremism tracked the proliferation of antisemitic conspiracy theories around the origins of the virus, government restrictions, vaccines and other aspects of the pandemic. These hateful ideas fueled much of the antisemitic rhetoric and acts in the Commonwealth last year.

Perhaps unsurprising, many in-person locations experienced a decline in antisemitic incidents as schools and businesses closed and people isolated from others. ADL recorded drops in incidents at residences, businesses and public areas of 43%, 18% and 14%, respectively. Pandemic restrictions may have

been partially responsible for the significant decrease in vandalism incidents at these and other in-person locations across the Commonwealth.

Educational institutions experienced similar trends, though pre-pandemic incident data suggest that levels of antisemitism in schools remained at elevated levels in 2020. In January and February, ADL tracked twice as many antisemitic incidents in Pennsylvania schools as compared to the same period in 2019, but those numbers dropped as educational institutions switched to remote learning. ADL recorded 10 incidents at K-12 non-Jewish schools in 2020, down 23% from 13 in 2019, but half of those incidents occurred in just the first two months of the year. Similarly, ADL logged 4 incidents at colleges and universities in 2020, down 70% from 13 in 2019, even though the number of incidents before campuses closed remained comparable to the same time period the previous year.

By contrast, Jewish institutions were targeted at a significantly higher rate in 2020 across the Commonwealth. ADL recorded 22 antisemitic incidents at Jewish institutions, including synagogues, Jewish community centers, retirement homes and schools. This was a 120% increase from 10 in 2019 and the second year in a row that incidents more-than-doubled.

Online antisemitic incidents also skyrocketed in 2020 as people spent more time in virtual spaces. ADL tracked a near-tripling in antisemitic incidents online, from 5 to 14. The pandemic inspired the development of a new tactic in antisemitic harassment known as Zoombombing, in which malicious actors intentionally disrupt virtual meetings with graphic or hateful messages. Pennsylvania experienced 10 antisemitic Zoombombing incidents in 2020, 7 of which specifically targeted Jewish institutions.

For the purposes of the Audit, ADL counts instances in which individuals report having been the direct targets of online antisemitic harassment,



including on social media. It does not include antisemitic rhetoric without a specific target, which ADL's Center on Technology and Society works to track and expose alongside other forms of online hate.

Extremists and Antisemitism

Extremists continued to act on their hateful ideologies in 2020. Known extremist groups or individuals inspired by extremist ideology were responsible for 16 antisemitic incidents in Pennsylvania. While the number of extremist-related antisemitic incidents was down 33% in 2020, they made up 16% of the total number of incidents in the Commonwealth.

Of the 16 extremist incidents in Pennsylvania, 13 were white supremacist propaganda distributions featuring antisemitic content or targeting Jewish individuals or institutions. These incidents were part of a record-breaking amount of white supremacist propaganda that ADL tracked in the region last year.



Select Pennsylvania Incidents

Below is a small sampling of antisemitic incidents in eastern Pennsylvania recorded by ADL in 2020. The full list of incidents can be accessed on ADL's interactive H.E.A.T. (Hate, Extremism, Antisemitism, Terrorism) Map, found at www.adl.org/heat-map.

January: The coach of a youth hockey team called 10-year-old Jewish players "dirty Jews" in the handshake line. (Northampton County)

January: The white supremacist symbols "1488" and SS bolts were written in a bathroom at a supermarket. (Northumberland County)

January: A man entered a kosher market in Northeast Philadelphia shouting antisemitic remarks and making threatening gestures. (Philadelphia County)

February: A Jewish Community Center received a bomb threat via email. (Lackawanna County)

March: A Jewish woman received harassing antisemitic direct messages from an individual who called her a "kike" and a "dirty Jew-loving whore." (Montgomery County)

March: A swastika and a message that read "DIE RAT DIE WERE COMIN" were found spray-painted on two residence halls and the Student Memorial Center at Millersville University. (Lancaster County)

April: In a Facebook comment to another user, a woman blamed "rich Jews in NY" for overburdening Philadelphia hospitals with coronavirus patients. (Delaware County)

May: A Jewish woman received a message over Facebook stating, "OK Jew, go back to your blood drinking religious practices." (Philadelphia County)

May: Two Jewish professors at Susquehanna University received threatening antisemitic voicemails. (Susquehanna County)

May: The American Red Cross building and two nearby sites in Center City were vandalized with swastika graffiti. (Philadelphia County)

June: A synagogue's Shabbat prayer services on Zoom were disrupted by unknown participants who told worshipers "Death to the Jews" and drew swastikas on the screen. (Lehigh County)

June: Jewish teenagers at a Jewish-led protest in support of Black Lives Matter were harassed by a passerby who shouted "Go back to Germany" and "Heil Hitler." (Montgomery County)

July: Members of the National Socialist Movement, a neo-Nazi group, marched through Brandon Park carrying flags with swastikas during their national meeting. At one point, one of the members made a speech

in which he stated, "The fucking swastika is beautiful, it's timeless," and a member of the crowd was heard shouting, "Fuck the Jew." (Lycoming County)

July: A sign outside a synagogue was vandalized with a drawing of a swastika and the messages "Long live Hitler" and "Jews are scum." (Philadelphia County)

August: A synagogue was vandalized with spray-painted swastika graffiti. (Cumberland County)

August: A restroom at a convenience store was vandalized with swastika drawings. (Dauphin County)

September: A synagogue's Rosh Hashana services on Zoom were disrupted by an unknown participant who wrote to the congregants, "I'm going to rape the shit out of your Jewish ass." (Montgomery County)

September: Swastika graffiti was found spray-painted on two road signs. (Union County)

October: During a Black Lives Matter protest, three Jewish men were verbally harassed and physically assaulted by protesters who called them the "Synagogue of Satan" and "Amalek." (Philadelphia County)

November: A large swastika was found traced into the soil outside an elementary school. (Chester County)

November: Patriot Front, a white supremacist group, distributed propaganda including a sticker that read: "Just say 'No' to ZOG," an antisemitic acronym that stands for "Zionist Occupied Government". (Monroe County)

December: A Jewish man and woman were attacked by a passerby on the street who charged at them and shouted, "You are fucking Jews, aren't you? I'm going to fucking kill you!" (Philadelphia County)



Regional Incidents

ADL's Philadelphia Regional Office saw high levels of antisemitic activity throughout its entire area of service, which includes the 37 counties in eastern Pennsylvania, 7 counties in southern New Jersey and the entire state of Delaware. In 2020, ADL recorded 130 incidents in this region, the second-highest level of the last six years, including 90 incidents in eastern Pennsylvania, 34 incidents in southern New Jersey and 9 incidents in Delaware.



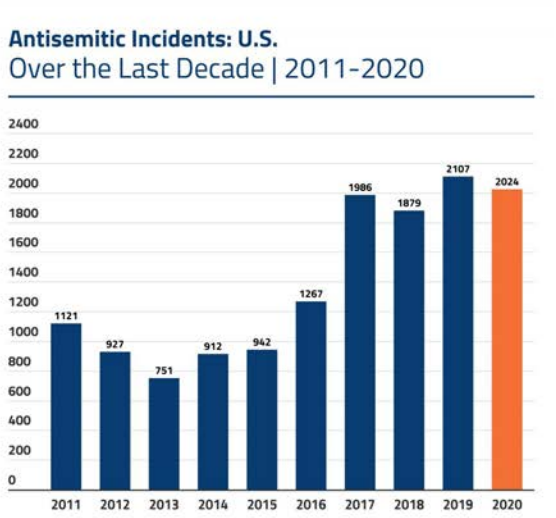
Of the 101 antisemitic incidents across Pennsylvania, 89% took place in 19 counties in eastern Pennsylvania, with the largest number of incidents occurring in Philadelphia County (39), Montgomery County (19) and Lehigh County (5).

National Incidents

In 2020, regional antisemitic incidents mirrored national trends. Nationwide, antisemitic incidents remained at historically high levels last year, with a total of 2,024 reported incidents. While national antisemitic incidents declined by 4 percent after hitting an all-time high in 2019, 2020 was the third-highest year for incidents against American Jews on record. There were

incidents reported in every state except Hawaii, North Dakota and Wyoming. The Audit found there were, on average, nearly six antisemitic incidents in the U.S. for every day last year.

The full national report can be found at https://www.adl.org/audit2020.



How ADL is Responding

ADL pursues a comprehensive approach to addressing antisemitic incidents and behavior. ADL is the largest anti-bias educator in the United States, annually teaching hundreds of thousands of youth and adults to challenge antisemitism and other forms of bias in themselves and others. ADL is a leading partner to law enforcement across the nation, helping over 10,000 law enforcement officers each year better prevent and respond to hate crimes and extremism. ADL is a tireless champion of civil rights for all, advocating at

the federal, state and local levels for better prevention and response to antisemitism and all forms of hate.

In the Philadelphia region, ADL works diligently to combat antisemitism and other forms of bias through investigation, advocacy and education. The coronavirus pandemic did not slow down ADL's work to fight antisemitism and all forms of hate across eastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey and Delaware in 2020:

- ADL Philadelphia educated over 600 law enforcement professionals on extremism, hate crimes and managing implicit bias, and provided investigative assistance in over 100 extremism-related cases in the region.
- ADL impacted over 100,000 students in the region through its No Place for Hate® and A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute bias and bullying prevention programs, in addition to training hundreds of additional students and educators through our antisemitism and Holocaust education programs.
- ADL Philadelphia supported victims of antisemitism and other forms of bias, built diverse coalitions and worked with dozens of schools, campuses, workplaces and other institutions while responding to nearly 400 requests for assistance.
- ADL Philadelphia piloted a new partnership with the Urban League of Philadelphia to build stronger relations between the African American and American Jewish communities and advocate around issues of mutual concern. The partnership expanded nation-wide thanks to the success of the Philadelphia regional pilot.
- More information about ADL's important work to combat hate in eastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey and Delaware in 2020 can be found

in our annual impact report.

ADL Policy Recommendations

In response to the historic rise in antisemitic incidents over the past few years, ADL has made the following policy recommendations:

Public officials and civic leaders must use their bully pulpits to speak out against antisemitism and all forms of hate and extremism.

The Pennsylvania Legislature should hold hearings on the high levels of hate crimes, the rise of extremist groups and proliferation of their propaganda, and support legislation that improves responses to hate crimes and domestic terror.

Pennsylvania should increase funding for non-profit security grants for synagogues and other houses of worship, schools and community centers.

Policymakers should support efforts to provide law enforcement officials with the tools and training they need to prevent and effectively respond to hate crimes. Federal, state and local law enforcement agencies should also improve their procedures for responding to and reporting hate crimes.

School districts should promote bias and bullying prevention and Holocaust education programs in elementary and secondary schools. Elected officials in Pennsylvania should help incentivize and equip schools to adopt effective anti-bias policies and programs.

University leadership should respond firmly and forcefully to antisemitic acts on campus, including incidents that target Jewish students because of their actual or perceived support of the state of Israel.

In response to the rising threat of domestic extremism in the wake of the Jan. 6 insurrection at our nation's Capitol, ADL

recently announced the PROTECT and REPAIR plans outlining a whole-of-society approach to address this pernicious threat in person and online.

ADL's Audit of Antisemitic Incidents

Compiled using information provided by victims, law enforcement and community leaders, and evaluated by ADL's professional staff, the ADL Audit provides a regular snapshot of one specific aspect of a nationwide problem while identifying possible trends or changes in the types of activity reported. This information assists ADL in developing and enhancing its programs to counter and prevent the spread of antisemitism and other forms of bigotry.

The Audit offers one method to examine how American Jews encounter antisemitism, but a full understanding of antisemitism in the U.S. requires other forms of analysis as well, including but not limited to public opinion polling, assessments of online antisemitism and examinations of extremist activity, all of which ADL offers in other reports, such as ADL Global 100, Online Hate and Harassment: The American Experience 2020, Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2020, the 2021 Survey on Jewish Americans' Experiences with Antisemitism and the ADL Survey of American Attitudes Toward Jews. For a broader examination of antisemitism, see ADL's resource, Antisemitism Uncovered.

Posted in **Anti-Semitism**, **Anti-Semitism**, **Combating Hate**, **United States**.

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Ms. JACKSON LEE. The gentlelady's time is expired.

We know that our rabbi has to log out of this virtual in a short order, and I'm trying to make sure that all our remaining Members are able to have him present when they speak. Mr. Cicilline, you are now recognized for 5 minutes, and we have two other Members.

Rabbi, thank you for your generous time.

Mr. Cicilline for 5 minutes.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, Madam Chair, for holding this really important hearing, and thank you to our Witnesses.

Domestic terrorism widely fueled by White supremacy is one of the greatest threats to our country's safety and security. We have seen over the past decade Black Americans senselessly murdered at Emanuel AME Church; increased threats against HBCUs; Jews murdered in Poway, California; the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh; and now taken hostage in Texas; Hispanic people targeted in El Paso in a shooting that left 23 innocent people dead; and a deranged gunman going on a killing spree across three massage parlors targeting Asian women in Georgia; and too many other violent hate crimes irrevocably harming minority communities.

Yet, instead of these attacks spurring action to confront the threat of White supremacy and hate groups and the threats that they pose, these organizations have actually grown and so has domestic terrorism. The year 2020 saw the highest rates of domestic terrorism since data started being collected more than 25 years ago, and White supremacists or far-right extremist groups were responsible for two-thirds of terror plots and attacks in the United States that year.

Sadly, I want to join my colleagues, Congresswoman Bass, Congresswoman Demings, and others who have made the point—instead of focusing on this very real threat, some of our Republican colleagues have tried to use this hearing as a campaign forum to promote the false claim that Democrats are against funding the police.

Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. That is not the position of the Democratic Party. In fact, when we had the opportunity to test that, we funded the police to the tune of $350 billion in the American CARES Act that was eligible for law enforcement to use, local law enforcement. Every single Republican in Congress voted no to that funding for law enforcement. So, let's put that nonsense aside and focus on the hearing before us today and this very real issue.

My first question is for you, Dr. Jones. Can you just speak to how disinformation and false narratives and conspiracy theories really are used to recruit new members to extremist groups and what you think is the status of the government's efforts to disrupt online disinformation and recruitment by extremist groups, and is what the government doing to disrupt that working?

Mr. JONES. Yeah, thanks for the great question. Disinformation happens in at least two major ways. One is primarily disinformation caused by domestic organizations in the U.S. or extremist groups operating overseas. What we see is false information about immigrants, numbers of immigrants, about activity being pursued by racial or ethnic communities. The entire use of disinformation is designed to energize individuals, to effect emo-

tions in ways that they (a) radicalize, and then, (b) Act on it eventually.

The second area we have seen is some activity by foreign actors, particularly some of Russia's intelligence services, the SVR, the Foreign Intelligence Service, as well as Russia's GRU, the Main Intelligence Directorate, attempting to exploit using disinformation and online platforms inside of the United States, using disinformation to also exploit polarization, ethnic, racial, and other divisions. So, we've seen both domestic actors doing it as well as foreign.

As to whether Congress and the government have done enough, I will say that there has been an uptick in my conversations with some of the Joint Terrorism Task Forces and the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security to pay more attention to this. We are way behind the eight ball for where we were on the Salafi-Jihadist side, the monitoring—

Mr. CICILLINE. Yeah. I'm going to try to get in a couple more questions, so I don't want to cut you off.

Mr. JONES. Yeah, okay.

Mr. CICILLINE. We have a lot of work to do.

Mr. JONES. We're behind.

Mr. CICILLINE. Yeah.

Mr. JONES. We're behind, yeah.

Mr. CICILLINE. So, I'm going to ask the last two questions and then I'm going to ask the Witnesses to answer them so I can get them both in.

Ms. Huang, first, thank you the incredible work you do, and your organization does. What would you like to see more done to help people actually move away from extremism and to prevent this violence, and how can the Federal government support these efforts? Because it's almost like deprogramming people who have joined gangs. Like, what do we need to do?

Rabbi, thank you for your beautiful testimony and for your heroism and for the humanity for which you brought to this hearing. I wondered if you'd speak a little bit about the challenges of leading a congregation bearing the burden of generational trauma and the residual anxiety that comes from that and what that has meant for your congregation and for you as a rabbi.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. The gentleman has 15 seconds.

Mr. CICILLINE. The Chair will not, I'm sure, interrupt the rabbi or Ms. Huang as they answer that question.

Ms. HUANG. Thank you, Congressman Cicilline.

Is it all right, Congresswoman Jackson Lee, to go ahead?

Ms. JACKSON LEE. You may proceed. Thank you.

Ms. HUANG. Thank you.

I just wanted to emphasize, I think it's critically important to note that the balance of domestic extremism that we're seeing right now really is being led by the focus on White supremacy, and that means that some of the steps that have to be taken address White supremacy directly.

It is not just the Southern Poverty Law Center who's noted this. We've heard this from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the FBI, and the Department of Homeland Security in their strategic intelligence assessment, the view of FBI Director

Wray and DHS Secretary Mayorkas in their congressional testimony last September.

All these government agencies have lifted up the importance of focusing on White supremacy, which means that we need to look at these underlying causes, including steps like Congresswoman Jackson Lee's H.R. 40 bill, which would commission a study of reparations for slavery, enabling us to look at the underlying history in this country of White supremacy and how has it affected different groups. It's just one example, but I want to be mindful of time. Thank you.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you very much.

Let me ask the rabbi to remember my dear friend Mr. Cicilline's question, and let me allow Mr. Lieu to go forward, and then if you can incorporate your answer. You're so valuable, all of you, and we'd like to get Mr. Lieu and Mr. Cohen in before you have to do your duties, Rabbi. Thank you for your graciousness.

Mr. Lieu, you're recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you, Chair Sheila Jackson Lee, for holding this very important hearing.

First, I'd like to do is to ask unanimous consent to enter two documents for the record. The first is the Congressional Bipartisan HBCU Caucus letter to Attorney General Garland and FBI Director Wray, dated February 4, 2022; and the second is the American Council on Education letter to congressional leaders regarding the bomb threats, dated February 14, 2022.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Without objection, so ordered.

[The information follows:]

MR. LIEU FOR THE RECORD

February 04, 2022

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice

The Honorable Christopher Wray
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Dear Director Wray and Attorney General Garland:

We are writing to request additional information about what actions are taking place at the federal level in the wake of recent bomb threats targeting Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) across the country. At least 23 HBCUs have reported bomb threats on three separate days as recently as February 1. On Wednesday, January 5, at least eight HBCUs reported receiving bomb threats, disrupting campus operations and prompting local police investigations[1]. Just weeks later, on Monday, January 31, at least six HBCUs reported receiving bomb threats, prompting further investigations by your agencies.[2] On Tuesday, February 1, the first day of Black History Month, at least thirteen HBCUs reported receiving bomb threats.[3]

As the co-chairs of the Congressional HBCU Caucus, we are deeply concerned about these disturbing, repeated threats of violence against these institutions. This situation has caused considerable and understandable alarm in the HBCU community. Students, faculty, and staff should never have to question their safety on campus.

Given the seriousness and urgency of this matter, we respectfully request your response to the following questions no later than February 07, 2022:

1. What details of the ongoing investigation(s) can be made public at this time?

2. What progress has been made in identifying the individual(s), groups, or entities responsible for these threats?

3. What trends or patterns, if any, have your agencies been tracking relating to which HBCUs have been targeted?

4. How are these developments being regularly communicated to appropriate HBCU leaders and staff?

5. University presidents and police chiefs have stated that these repeated threats have been a serious drain on institutional and municipal resources. What resources or personnel have your agencies or other law enforcement agencies provided to HBCUs to support them during this time?

6. What actions are your agencies and other relevant law enforcement entities taking to assist HBCU campuses in their preparedness efforts and response to such threats now and, potentially, in the future?

7. What best practices for security protocols and preparedness are currently in place, and how are those disseminated?

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[1] https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/howard-spelman-hbcu-campuses-targeted-bomb-threats-rcna11136
[2] https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/31/us/hbcus-bomb-threats/index.html
[3] https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/01/us/hbcu-bomb-threats-tuesday/index.html

a. To what extent do any such best practices include recommendations about how to support faculty, staff, and student mental health, as well as guidance on how to access resources to help implement those recommendations?

8. What can we and our colleagues do to be helpful as you respond to these threats and work to protect the vital mission of our nation's HBCUs?

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention and response to this matter. We appreciate your work, and are willing and able to provide any support or assistance you may need. Please confirm receipt of this letter.

Sincerely,

Senator Tim Scott
Co-Chair
HBCU Caucus

Senator Chris Coons
Co-Chair
HBCU Caucus

Representative J. French Hill
Co-Chair
HBCU Caucus

Representative Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Co-Chair
HBCU Caucus

cc: The Honorable Miguel Cardona, Secretary of Education
The Honorable Marvin Richardson, Acting Director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives
The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security

ACE® American Council on Education®

February 14, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Room H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Room H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Room S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Room S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader Schumer and Leader McConnell:

After working and consulting with UNCF, the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, and the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, the American Council on Education and the undersigned associations and organizations write to seek your assistance on an urgent matter of national importance.

In recent weeks, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have been subjected to repeated, systematic threats to their students and campuses. These acts of terror deliberately strike at institutions that have a unique significance to Black Americans and to American higher education. HBCUs are targeted precisely because they serve as powerful symbols of Black Americans' strength and achievement. All of America's colleges and universities pledge to do everything we can to support and enhance these incredible institutions.

Regrettably, threats like this are nothing new for HBCUs and their communities. They have faced, and faced down, too many attacks over time, are rightfully proud of their legacy, and will not be deterred by more threats of violence.

Just because attacks like these recent bomb threats are not new does not mean we must not act. We appreciate that the FBI and other law enforcement agencies are actively investigating these threats. But we also need action from Congress in this moment.

First, these crimes must be fully and aggressively investigated, and the offenders prosecuted in accordance with the grievous harm they have caused. We urge you to work with your congressional colleagues and the Administration to ensure that is the case.

Second, we ask you to immediately pass H.Con.Res. 70 to put Congress on record on this matter of national importance.

Finally, the egregious nature of these crimes, their scope and scale, and the racist motivations behind them deserve specific attention. Congress has both the unique authority and responsibility to address this. For this reason, we request you hold congressional hearings on an expedited basis, with a focus on the persistent issues underlying these crimes and how to prevent future occurrences.

We reiterate that for too many of our students and colleagues, the threats against HBCUs across the country are a reminder of the reality of racial violence and inequities that are present every day. Congress can take meaningful action to address the very real harm that has been caused. We urge you to do so, and quickly.

Sincerely,



Ted Mitchell
President

On behalf of:

Achieving the Dream
ACPA-College Student Educators International
ACT
American Association of Colleges and Universities
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Association of University Professors
American College Health Association
American Council on Education
American Dental Education Association
American Federation of Teachers
American Indian Higher Education Consortium
APPA, "Leadership in Educational Facilities"
Association of American Universities
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
Association of Community College Trustees
Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Association of Research Libraries
Center for American Progress

Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities
College Board
Common App
Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area
Council for Advancement and Support of Education
Council for Higher Education Accreditation
Council for Opportunity in Education
Council of Graduate Schools
Council of Independent Colleges
Council on Social Work Education
EDUCAUSE
ETS
Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce
Georgia Budget and Policy Institute
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
Institution for Higher Education Policy
KIPP Public Schools
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education
National Association of College and University Business Officers
National Association of Colleges and Employers
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
National Association of System Heads
National Collegiate Athletic Association
National Council of University Research Administrators
New America Higher Education Program
Phi Beta Kappa Society
SACSCOC
Silicon Valley Leadership Group
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
The Education Trust
The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice
The Institute for College Access & Success
Third Way
Thurgood Marshall College Fund
UNCF
Yes We Must Coalition

Cc: The Honorable Patty Murray
The Honorable Richard Burr
The Honorable Bobby Scott
The Honorable Virginia Foxx
The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
The Honorable Jim Jordan
The Honorable Dick Durbin
The Honorable Chuck Grassley

Mr. LIEU. Now, I would like to read a statement from my friend and colleague, Congresswoman Alma Adams, who's a Co-Chair of the Congressional HBCU Caucus. She says, "I pray for our beloved HBCUs this past week." However, as a proud alum twice of North Carolina A&T State University, as a former professor at Bennett College, and as a founder and Co-Chair of the Congressional Bipartisan HBCU Caucus, I know for a fact HBCUs can overcome any challenge. However, HBCUs shouldn't have to face the violence and terror my generation experienced during segregation. Terrorism and racism have no place in college campuses or anywhere else.

Congresswoman Adams continues, "I also want to take this opportunity to address the perpetrators of these crimes. Just as I have prayed for our HBCUs, I am praying for you. I am praying that you learn from the pain you've caused. I am praying that the hate that inspired these acts leaves your heart forever. Like many others around the world, I owe our HBCUs a debt that can never be repaid. That is why I continue to pray for our institutions and the souls of those who cannot or will not honor them."

Congresswoman Adams concludes, "In the wake of more threats levied against Spelman College, Howard University, and Winston-Salem State University in the past weeks, our Nation is being forced to once again recon with our history of racism and discrimination. Now, is the time to respond as a Nation, as a Congress, and as individuals. Such threats of violence must be stopped."

At this point, I have some questions for President Wilson. President Wilson, has the FBI updated you about their investigation of these bomb threats?

Mr. WILSON. As much as I can say in this format, we are in communication with the FBI and with the Department of Homeland Security. Our Chief of Police is in continuous conversation with them.

Mr. LIEU. Has the FBI or local law enforcement advised you on what HBCUs are supposed to do when you get future bomb threats?

Mr. WILSON. Resources have been made available to us from the FBI in terms of possible training opportunities which, of course, we welcome. We have a law enforcement and armed law enforcement contingent here of pretty close to 60 members, that's the authorization. So, certainly any training opportunities that can come our way, we would welcome them, Congressman.

Of course, we just don't want any more bomb threats. I mean, that's the bottom line that the fragility of our campus is quite alarming. I hate to even talk about just preparing the university for more threats and who knows what else, but that's the sad reality.

Mr. LIEU. All right. Thank you.

Rabbi Cytron-Walker, I'm going give you an opportunity to answer the question from my colleague, David Cicilline. I also have a question for you as well. I've been working with Congressman Colin Allred on their nonprofit security grants that you mentioned earlier. We're trying to increase funding.

My question to you is: Are there things for which you would like that grant to apply to you for which it currently does not? In other

words, are there places you think we should expand the applicability of these grants?

With that, I'll yield and let you answer those two questions, one from David Cicilline and one from me.

Rabbi CYTRON-WALKER. Regarding the grants, yes, to expand it. I don't know the details enough or the specifics. I'm not that policy expert. I do know that there was testimony given by the—Eric Fingerhut of—Congressman Fingerhut of Jewish Federations and Michael Masters from SCN, the Secure Communities Network, that I believe would help address how it can be expanded, not just in terms of funding.

We certainly want support for smaller congregations. That is one thing I can certainly speak to. Smaller congregations don't have the resources to write out the grants and do that work, so we need support as far as that goes.

Regarding the Representative's question about generational trauma, if I believe that is correct and just how do we heal, I will say that the way that I've been taking it is one day at a time. We need to address our security concerns. We also need to be able to move past this incident.

We are trying to celebrate as a community and rejoice as a community, and when people need those hugs, when fewer people are seeing me and bursting into tears, fewer people are hearing my voice for the first time and choking up, which is a good thing.

I'm a huge fan and I've been preaching a lot about taking advantage of mental health resources. We need to have that sense of support, and we need to be able to celebrate and—so I don't know how much more I could offer there, but our therapists are telling us that as soon as we can get back to normal, that's a positive thing.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you. Thank you so very much and thank you for those questions. Thank you.

Very quickly, Rabbi, let me yield to our dear friend from Tennessee, Mr. Cohen, for 5 minutes. Mr. Cohen, you're recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, Madam Chair. It's been rather hectic here. I've got a tax townhall in a few minutes, but I did want to address a few things that I wanted to speak earlier, and I think you more or less addressed them, and I think all of our Members have the same problem. This is a serious issue, and it's great that you had this hearing, and the Witnesses have been marvelous. They've all been marvelous.

Rabbi, you're a hero. You spent that time—didn't know, with your other members of the congregation, whether you were going to live or not, and you all did great, and you are heroic, and I thank you. I don't know if you know Rabbi Greenstein, but if you do, you're a Rabbi Greenstein. You'll know that's an honor.

The Republicans all talked about some people on this Committee, it's what Biggs said and what Mr. Burgess said, was that Members of this Committee, plural, have talked about defund the police. I know of only one Member on this Committee who might have talked about defunding the police, and I wanted to ask them to name the Members they're talking about, so the Members could tell them, yes, you're right, or, no, you're not. They're not with us. So,

I can say, with the exception of one person, the Democrats have not called on defund the police.

Mr. BIGGS. Madam Chair, I am here if he wishes to ask me a question.

Mr. COHEN. Who were you mentioning? You said some Members have said defund the police on this Committee. Who were you addressing, sir?

Mr. BIGGS. Yeah. First, Chair Nadler agreed the New York Police Department budget should be cut, stating, quote, there should be substantial cuts to the—

Mr. COHEN. Sir, the only question I have for you is, who said defund the police?

Mr. BIGGS. I'm reading to you what he said exactly.

Mr. COHEN. He didn't say defund the police, did he?

Mr. BIGGS. Is that your best defense, Mr. Cohen? Okay. All right. I could go forward. I can give you—okay. I'll just go Chair Nadler, Representative Bush, Representative Mondaire Jones, Representative Hakeem Jeffries, I'll give you Hakeem Jeffries because he was more equivocal, and Representative Jayapal. I've got their statements. I've got their references to those statements. I'm happy to submit those to the record, Madam Chair, and I appreciate the gentleman's question.

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, Mr. Biggs.

Mr. BIGGS. I'll yield back.

Mr. COHEN. Madam Chair, how many of those Members are on the Subcommittee? Just is Ms. Bush on the Subcommittee and Mr. Nadler?

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Are you posing a question? Those are Members of the Subcommittee. Mr. Nadler is a Member of all Subcommittees.

Mr. COHEN. Yeah. Other than that, Ms. Bush is the only one he mentioned that was on the Subcommittee?

Ms. JACKSON LEE. That is my understanding.

Mr. COHEN. So, Ms. Bush isn't here to say, and I think she probably has said defund the police. I don't think Mr. Nadler has. The other people, I can't speak to them, but they weren't on the Subcommittee. Bottom line is, most, if not 90 percent of the Democrats, 95 percent have never talked about defund the police.

I'm a former Memphis Police legal adviser. I've advocated for strong policing. We had in our American Recovery Act $350 billion that could be used by police. No Republican voted for it. $350 billion that only Democrats voted for giving police, local governments the opportunity to hire more policemen, to fund policemen, and to improve their systems. We are for common defense for police protection and have funded it with—so we've walked the walk not just talked the talk.

There are problems, but there are problems indeed on the hearing matter that's been called. The hate in this country, the terrorism, mostly from the radical White supremacists is horrific. It's un-American. It's in inhuman. It's wrong. It's been synagogues, it's been churches, it's been NAACP headquarters.

When I was a child, I remember the Atlanta synagogue being bombed. I'll never forget such. In Birmingham, it was the church—I think it was the 16th Street Church bombed. African Americans

and Jews have suffered the most hate in this country. Sikhs are suffering it now, Muslims and Arabs too. It must stop.

Now, indeed, in Tennessee, a man just pled guilty to bombing four White Protestant churches. So, the right wing sometimes goes off and they even destroy or deface religious institutions that are akin to their own, if they have a religion. These people might just be worshipping Satan.

Thank you for our Witnesses. Thank you for our Chair. The truth will win out, and we need to shine a light on it. That's what Ida B. Wells told us and shared with us that the best disinfectant is the truth, and we should speak the truth.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I thank the gentleman from Memphis and thank him for his intensity. His time has been yielded and now expired.

Let me yield to Mr. Biggs, if he has any additional comments that he chooses to make at this time, the Ranking Member.

Mr. BIGGS. Madam Chair, thank you. I, again, thank you. I thank the Witnesses for being here. This has been actually a very—in my mind, a very productive and very enlightening hearing, and I appreciate your leadership on this issue. I appreciate all the Witnesses that have testified.

I've got to comment just a little bit to the gentleman from Tennessee and also the gentleman from Rhode Island who said that it was the Republicans are defunding the police. I'll just tell you that I'm going to submit for the record, Madam Chair, an article of July 7, 2021, that debunks what the gentleman from Rhode Island said. In fact, that claim that he made got three Pinocchios in The Washington Post. So, I'll submit that to you.

Then I'll also submit, Madam Chair, if possible, without objection, the citations for the individuals on our Committee, not our Subcommittee, I didn't say our Subcommittee, I said our Committee, which is the Judiciary Committee. I'll submit those to you as well, the statement, so we can all see the statements that they made.

Now, I want to talk—

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Without objection, so ordered.

[The information follows:]

MR. BIGGS FOR THE RECORD

Cori Bush says she won't stop saying 'defund the police' despite pressure from other Democrats

BY CAMERON JENKINS - 02/09/22 12:42 PM ET

SHARETWEET

Greg Nash

Rep. Cori Bush (D-Mo.) said this week that she stands behind the slogan "defund the police" even though members of her party have asked her not to use the phrase.

"I always tell [fellow Democrats], 'If you all had fixed this before I got here, I wouldn't have to say these things,'" Bush told a group of Black reporters during an hourlong conversation, according to Axios.

Many of Bush's colleagues have blamed the use of the slogan for Democratic political losses. They also fear the phrase will be used against them in the midterm elections.

Bush said that if Democrats lose the House majority in November, it will be because the party failed to pass key legislation.

"'Defund the police' is not the problem," she said, Axios reported. "We dangled the carrot in front of people's faces and said we can get it done and that Democrats deliver, when we haven't totally delivered."

"If [Republicans] take the majority, it's just done as far as trying to get the legislation across," she added.

She also said that her party members should work harder to explain the meaning behind the slogan.

Defund the police is intended to divert funds from police departments and toward social services.

Another reason the White House and a number of Democrats have shunned the phrase is because of rising crime in the United States, which Republicans have sought to blame on calls to defund the police.

The GOP has signaled it intends to use rising crime statistics against Democrats in the coming campaign.

Bush in the hourlong discussion said lawmakers should be working to bring an end to procedures that have caused Black people harm, such as no-knock warrants and chokeholds, according to Axios.

She also pushed back on suggestions from some Congressional Black Caucus members that the party focus on passing pieces of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act amid a stalemate over the bill.

“If we couldn’t get George Floyd done back when millions of people were marching in the street, then how do we expect to get more than one thing done [on policing] over the next few years?” the lawmaker said.

Rep. Jeffries on his fight to ban police chokeholds & activists' push to defund law enforcement

Inside Politics

CNN'S Dana Bash speaks with Rep. Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY) about the sweeping police reform bill that Democrats will introduce next week.
Source: CNN

Jerry Nadler Thinks the NYPD Budget Should Be Cut, and He's Getting Ready if Trump Disputes Election Results

June 7, 2020 | 4:37 PM - Updated on June 5, 2022 | 11:34 PM
in CRIME, NEWS, POLITICS

By Michael McDowell

From a pandemic that has killed nearly 22,000 New Yorkers, to citywide protests many have compared to the marches of the 1960s, epochal change has coincided with the start of a new decade in New York City.

The Rag spoke with Congressman Jerry Nadler, who has represented the Upper West Side in the House for nearly 30 years, about the death of George Floyd, how the federal government can support the City's recovery from coronavirus, and his plans to investigate (former?) President Trump in 2021. Nadler is facing a rare primary challenge from two contenders — Lindsey Boylan and Jonathan Herzog — on June 23.

This conversation has been condensed and edited. It's the first of two parts.

WSR: Before we get started, at the Rag we're all wishing your wife [who was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer] a swift recovery. How's she doing?
JN: Thank you. Well, she's got chemotherapy every couple weeks, it knocks the heck out of her, but that will be finished at the end of July and hopefully she'll be somewhat better then. Hopefully the chemotherapy is working, you can't really tell—the side effects are very rough and she's been going through that since early February.
WSR: George Floyd's funeral was Thursday. In terms of legislative steps toward police reform, what do you have to say about banning the use of chokeholds, ending the Defense Department practice of giving surplus military weapons to local law enforcement—

JN: We'll be announcing some legislation probably Monday in Washington, and we'll hold a hearing on Wednesday. I look forward to moving the legislation to the floor of the House the week of June 22nd. The legislation, which I'm developing—working closely with the Black Caucus—will ban the use of chokeholds. It will also ban the militarization of the police, which is what you were just referring to.
It will do a lot of other things. It will develop a national registry of police officers, so that someone can't be fired or disciplined in one place and then get hired in another, because they don't know that he's a veteran cop that was fired for bad conduct or disciplined. We'll probably be ending the doctrine of qualified immunity, which prevents police from being held legally accountable when they break the law.

All of this will be in the legislation that we'll be talking about next week and hopefully enacting, at least in the House, by the end of the month, and then we'll have to try to push it through the Senate.

WSR: Closer to home, the NYPD budget has grown to about $6 billion. There have been calls to defund or cut the NYPD budget. Is that something that you would be in support of?
JN: Yes, it should certainly be cut. The City's needs at this point are much more in terms of social services, jobs, feeding people, education, and health, and much less in police, especially during this pandemic, which unfortunately is going to be with us for awhile. We're spending too much on the police. There should be substantial cuts to the police budget and a reallocation of those funds to where we need them.
WSR: We've seen a lot of talk about rent strikes, but residential and commercial landlords have mortgages and city taxes to pay. Many would argue that the federal government is the only entity that can run a deficit to absorb the economic impact of the coronavirus calamity. How will Congress save city and state budgets, as well as renters and mortgage holders who live in the district?
JN: That's entirely correct. The federal government is the only entity that can run deficits. Almost all the states, certainly New York, have constitutional provisions in the state constitution that they must run balanced budgets. The federal

government can run a deficit, can run a limitless deficit, and in this time, we ought to run very high deficits.
We passed the Heroes Act in the House about two weeks ago. The Senate Republicans haven't started negotiating on it yet, though I'm predicting they will. It would give a huge amount of money—$1 trillion (and $3 trillion altogether)—to state and local governments, so that they don't have to cut their expenditures to balance their budgets, number one.

Number two, it would have about $500 billion in it that is for payment of rent, and payment of mortgages and property taxes. I was one of the authors of this bill, which we're trying to get passed in the Senate now.

WSR: On the subject of recovering from coronavirus, who will rescue the MTA?
JN: Well, again: only the federal government has the money to do that. In the Cares Act, which we passed about a month and a half ago, we provided $4 billion to the MTA, In the Heroes Act, which is the bill I was just referring to, we provide another $4 billion for the MTA. We may have to increase that. Under the Heroes Act that I mentioned, $1 trillion in aid goes to state and local governments. New York State would get about $34 billion of that. New York City would get about $17 billion of that. The MTA would get about $4 billion of that.
WSR: How do Democrats in Congress plan to protect the November election?
JN: That is a very serious question. There are several things we have already done and other things we have to do.
First of all, given the pandemic, you don't want to force people to choose between their health and their vote. In the Heroes Act that I mentioned, we mandate that every state have total mail-in balloting, as an option. People could still go and vote if they wanted to, on Election Day or early voting, but every state would have to provide for total mail-in balloting.

We also provide $4 billion dollars in that bill for the expenses of the states in instituting mail-in balloting, because it takes time, and time is starting to run out to order paper ballots—among other things. That's the main thing we have to do.

There's another thing that we have to do, and that is cybersecurity for hacking attacks against the voter base or against the elections, by Russia or someone else. We passed legislation in the House to do that last year, but Senator McConnell and the Republicans refused to do it, maybe because they know that the Russians helped Trump last time and they want to enable them to help him again. That's a separate danger.

WSR: If Biden wins in November, and Trump disputes the result or refuses to leave the White House, what will you do in Congress?
JN: You can't really tell, until you see what Trump or [the Trump Administration] does. I think the biggest danger is that they screw around with the voting totals, perhaps electronically, and try to then contest it, saying this state is very close, that state is very close. All you can really do on that, besides providing cyber protection, is have a corps of lawyers in every state, ready to go, and to keep an eye on what they're doing.
The worst-case scenario is that Trump simply refuses to leave the White House and tries to declare the election null and void somehow, and then it becomes a question of force. The armed forces have to obey the Constitution and not the incumbent president at that point.

WSR: Thinking about federal agencies that serve New Yorkers who live in the 10th, from the Equal Employment and Opportunity Commission, to the Environmental Protection Agency, do Democrats in Congress have a comprehensive plan to address what the Trump Administration has done to federal agencies and the bureaucracy?
JN: Well, we're going to have to approach it agency by agency. I don't know if you can talk about a comprehensive plan, because they've done so much damage to so many different agencies. There are certain things that they've done across the board that we'll have to deal with across the board, and we are preparing for that. Unfortunately, as long as Trump is president and you have a Republican Senate, we're not going to get any of this through.
Come January, God willing, when we don't have a Republican Senate and we don't have Trump, we're teeing up a lot of legislation and proposals to undo the damage, to restore civil liberties, and to restore due process. For example: to say

that the president can't fire inspectors general except for cause, one thing, and to get around the administration's thumbing its nose at congressional subpoenas, so there's a lack of accountability.

This Justice Department—which is really Trump—[determined] that a sitting president cannot be prosecuted, which is why Mueller, in the Mueller Report, said he couldn't consider an indictment of the president.

I think we should re-examine that. I think that is wrong, and we should, as a matter of law, change that. The president should not be above the law. Any president.

Secondly, I think once Trump is out of office, then we're going to have to indict and prosecute him for all of the crimes he's committed, and let that set an example for future presidents.

WSR: If Biden is elected in 2020, you would move to investigate Donald Trump in 2021?
JN: Well I certainly think it ought to be done.
Look, Michael Cohen was prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney in New York, for in effect paying off Stormy Daniels, which is an illegal campaign contribution. The Mueller Report said that he was ordered to do so by Person 1, whom they didn't identify, but which is obviously the President.

If Michael Cohen was guilty and is in jail, the President was part of the same crime. And he ought to be prosecuted for that. He wasn't prosecuted only because the Justice Department takes the position that you can't prosecute a president, which I think is wrong. The president has obviously committed many other crimes, and no person is above the law.

I would think he would be prosecuted. That's after the election because obviously he won't permit the Justice Department to prosecute him.

Part two of this interview will feature Rep. Nadler on the issues. We'll be checking in with Nadler's challengers too. More information on voting and voter registration is available here.

Candidate Profile: Mondaire Jones For Congress

The South Nyack resident shares why he should be on the ballot for the 2020 election. Check out the full Q&A with Patch.

Posted Tue, Jun 16, 2020 at 1:50 pm ET

South Nyack resident Mondaire Jones is running for Congress in New York's District 17. (Laura Brett)

HUDSON VALLEY, NY - New Yorkers will be hitting the polls on June 23 for the primary election to choose who will be on the ballot for the general election in November.

Among the local races, some residents of the Hudson Valley will be able to elect who will run for Congressional District 17 on the Democratic line. Longtime Rep. Nita Lowey is retiring at the end of the term.

In anticipation of the election, Patch asked candidates in the contested races to answer questions about their campaigns and will be publishing candidate profiles as election day draws near.

Mondaire Jones is seeking the Democratic line on the ballot in November. His opponents in the June 23 Democratic primary are Evelyn Farkas, Adam P. Schleifer, Allison H. Fine, Asha Castleberry-Hernandez, David Buchwald and David Carlucci.

Jones, 33, is a former litigator in the Westchester County Law Department and former Department of Justice staffer during the Obama Administration. He has degrees from Stanford University and Harvard Law School.

Why are you seeking elective office?
I'm running for Congress because, for me, policy is personal. I know what it is for a working family to struggle and rely on government assistance to survive, and I am going to bring those lived experiences with me to Congress.

I grew up in the working-class village of Spring Valley, where I was raised by a young, single mom who, like so many women throughout my district, and all throughout this country, worked multiple jobs just to provide for our family—even as we relied on Section 8 housing and food stamps. When we talk about the fight for a $15 minimum wage at the federal level, that fight is personal for me.

My mom got help from my grandparents. My grandfather was a janitor at our local middle school, and later, he was a small business owner. My grandmother cleaned homes, and when day care was too expensive, she took me to work with her. Now, I'm running to represent the same people whose homes I watched my grandmother clean growing up. When we talk about the fight for universal child care, that's a fight I'm invested in based on my own experience.

After my grandfather died of cancer, I watched helplessly as my grandmother worked well past the age of retirement just to pay for the high cost of prescription drugs and medical procedures not fully covered by Medicare as we know it. When I quit my job to try to better my community by running for Congress, I lost my health insurance. I believe health care should be a human right in the richest nation on Earth, not tied to employment status or economic means.

I'm 32 years old. I remember what it's like to be a broke college student, because for me, that wasn't so long ago. And the fact is, this country has failed its young people. Thousands of people in my district, my age and younger, despite having college degrees, are still living at home with their parents because they can't afford to pay rent or own a home. We were told that if we just went to college and graduated like our parents may have, things would work out. But we know that that's not true. Part of that is due to low wages in this broken economy -- wages that have been stagnant for decades as the cost of living has soared -- but it's also due to a student debt crisis to the tune of $1.7 trillion. I propose tuition-free public colleges and universities and forgiving college debt to liberate an entire generation of people to meaningfully participate in our economy.

The Green New Deal is personal for me, and in fact the environment is my number one priority. Our generation is inheriting a planet that stands to be devastated by climate catastrophe because people who have been in office for a really long time have failed to act with the kind of urgency the issue requires.

And when Democrats huddle together to talk about how to respond to this President's embrace of white supremacy, and his assault daily on members of the LGBTQ+ community, of which I am a part, I think that more people like me need to be at the table participating in that discussion and indeed driving the conversation. In fact, there has never been an openly gay, black member of Congress in the 244-year history of the United States.

We have never been at a moment in American history when we have more urgently needed people in office for whom policy is personal. I think we get better policy outcomes when we have more people in Congress for whom policy is personal. Representatives like me can be trusted to always fight for the best interests of their constituents, even when the doors are closed in the halls of Congress and our constituents can't see what we are doing.

The fact is, I've been fighting my whole life. First, it was against the odds of my upbringing, to the point where I was able to make it to Stanford University, work in the Obama Administration at the Department of Justice (vetting candidates for federal judgeships and working on criminal justice reform), and then attend Harvard Law School. More recently, as a lawyer in government, I've been fighting in the courtrooms of Westchester County on behalf of my future constituents. Now, I'm running to fight for all of the people in my district and across the country.

The single most pressing issue facing our nation/state/community is _____, and this is what I intend to do about it.

The single most pressing issue facing our nation and our world is climate change, and I will fight tooth and nail to ensure that we have a planet to live on.

Our planet is in peril. According to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, we only have 10 years left in which we can act to prevent irreversible damage to Earth due to global warming.

We need bold solutions to meet this unprecedented challenge. The Green New Deal, outlined in H.R. 109, proposes federal mandates to decarbonize our economy instead of unproven market-based ideas. It would transition America to 100% renewable energy by 2030 and avert climate catastrophe, creating 20 million good-paying jobs in the process. It would also ensure that there is a just transition to green jobs for fossil fuel workers who are displaced, hold fossil fuel companies accountable, provide dedicated support to the

communities most at risk, and invest in new, sustainable infrastructure across the country.

I will also co-sponsor the Green New Deal for Public Housing Act, which would invest up to $180 billion over 10 years in sustainable retrofits that include all needed repairs; vastly improved health, safety, and comfort; and the elimination of carbon emissions in our federal public housing stock by transitioning them to solar energy.

The transportation sector is the single biggest contributor to carbon emissions globally. We need to wean ourselves off of relying on automobiles and transition to high-speed and light rail powered by clean, renewable energy sources. This would be especially useful in Rockland, where rail service is lacking.

What are the critical differences between you and the other candidates seeking this post?

Health care is a human right. But I am the only candidate in my race who supports Medicare for All, which is the only proposal that would ensure every single American has health care.

I am the only candidate in my race who supports an unadulterated Green New Deal, which would stop climate change while creating millions of good-paying jobs. I am the only candidate supporting universal child care, an issue that is deeply personal for me and which would help so many families throughout our country and district. And I am the only candidate who supports full college debt forgiveness, which would liberate an entire generation of young people to meaningfully participate in this economy.

Unlike many of my opponents in this race, I do not come from money or from a political family. I am not accepting any money from corporate PACs. I am not able to self-fund with millions of dollars of my own money, nor would I if I could because it would be a distortion of our democratic process.

If you are a challenger, in what way has the current board or officeholder failed the community (or district or constituency) Describe the other issues that define your campaign platform

Some of my other priorities, which are outlined in further detail on my website, include:

Reducing the role of money in our elections, including by passing a system of public financing of our campaigns (as outlined in H.R. 1) and enacting a constitutional amendment to overturn Citizens United.

Universal child care, including co-sponsoring the Universal Child Care and Early Learning Act (H.R. 3315), and supporting paid parental leave. A massive investment in affordable housing, including co-sponsoring the American Housing and Economic Mobility Act (H.R. 1737) and repealing the Faircloth Amendment.

A $15 minimum wage, and raising the federal poverty line, as I recently wrote about in Crooked Media. Fully funding our public schools, including increasing Title I funding for our most impoverished schools, as well as increasing funding under Titles II and IV and fully funding the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act. LGBTQ+ rights and equity, including co-sponsoring the Equality Act (H.R. 5).

College debt relief and tuition-free public college, which will benefit students of color who are disproportionately burdened by debt. A suite of criminal justice reforms to redress racial inequalities and harms in our justice system, including repealing the 1994 crime bill that fueled mass incarceration, defunding police and reinvesting this money in health, education, and alternatives to incarceration, eliminating mandatory minimums in sentencing, legalizing cannabis, and banning the box in employment applications.

Reproductive justice, including a constitutional amendment and federal statute to codify Roe v. Wade, repealing the Hyde Amendment, ensuring comprehensive sex education, and ensuring abortion and contraceptive coverage in any Medicare for All legislation that is enacted. Comprehensive immigration reform, including a pathway to citizenship for our undocumented community, as well as co-sponsoring the DREAM Act (H.R. 6) and ending family separation.

Disability rights, including expanding Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income to end the backlog of 800,000 cases, and ending the sub-minimum wage for people with disabilities.

What accomplishments in your past would you cite as evidence you can handle this job?

My time in the Obama Administration, where I worked in the Office of Legal Policy at the Department of Justice on criminal justice reform and judicial nominations (including now-Supreme Court Justice Kagan), helped me engage with and learn the inner-workings of our federal government and gives me a keen understanding of how to make policy at the federal level. As a lawyer in the Westchester County Law Department, I worked on and won some of the County's biggest cases, and am also proud of drafting legislation and helping the County's Human Rights Commission respond to the uptick in acts of hate in Westchester.

My work co-founding a national nonprofit called Rising Leaders, which teaches professional skills to underserved middle-school students and has gotten two grants from the Gates Foundation, has given me hands-on experience in improving the lives of our most vulnerable young people, and insight into what interventions will work best. My activism with the Spring Valley NAACP, and as a former member of the NAACP's National Board of Directors, has given me invaluable experience organizing residents at the local level for important causes, in addition to substantive policy experience nationally.

And I have already demonstrated an ability to organize my community to stand up to systemic racism: as a senior in college, after the Palo Alto Police Chief made comments embracing racial profiling, I successfully organized my fellow students and Palo Alto residents to pressure the department until she resigned and we obtained policing reforms.

I also believe that governing is a moral endeavor as much as it is a technical one, and that your personal experiences inform how hard you fight, and what you fight for. We need more elected officials for whom policy is personal - people who share the lived experiences of so many regular Americans who have to struggle to make ends meet, who have crippling student debt, who have experienced daily the realities of structural racism and inequality. As an attorney, I understand the laws that govern our society - and as a black, gay man and young person, I understand on a personal level how unjust laws affect people's lives. I am running for Congress to fight for a better world for everyone.

The best advice ever shared with me was:

Growing up in the Village of Spring Valley, my mother told me that I could be anything I wanted. It was a radical idea. My mom, who struggled with mental illness, had dropped out of college and was working multiple jobs just to make ends meet — even as we relied on Section 8 housing and food stamps. But I took her advice, and I dreamed big. She opened my world to a universe of possibilities that would have been unthinkable for most people born into my circumstances. That's why I am drawn to public service: because every kid in this district should be able to dream big. My story should not be the exception.

What else would you like voters to know about yourself and your positions?

Our campaign has been endorsed by The New York Times, Sen. Bernie Sanders, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, Sec. Julián Castro, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rep. Ayanna Pressley, Rep. Pramila Jayapal, Rep. Deb Haaland, Rep. Ro Khanna, Rep. David Cicilline, Rep. Barbara Lee, Rep. Mark Pocan, the Stony Point Democrats, United Auto Workers, the Congressional Progressive Caucus PAC, the Working Families Party, Democracy for America, The Collective PAC, Victory Fund, the Progressive Change Campaign Committee, New York Communities for Change, Food and Water Action, Rockland United, the Hispanic Democrats of Westchester, Equality PAC, Common Defense, Empire State Indivisible, New York Immigration Coalition, and over 40 local leaders in Westchester and Rockland counties.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that.

I want to get to really what I think has been just some remarkable testimony that we have to get to, and I appreciate the—well, I'm sorry. I've got to clarify one other thing. We had—most of our Members were on this Committee—who are on the Subcommittee were in attendance at one time or another. Some of them actually have conflicting Subcommittees or Committee hearings while we speak, so they weren't all able to be with us the entire time.

I thought Dr. Jones' testimony was particularly insightful because it substantiated a lot of what Dr. Pennie had said about addition—not just domestic actors participating in indoctrination and radicalization of American actors, but there were also foreign actors participating there. That's a terrible thing, and we need to do better.

Section 230, in my opinion, is just part of the way we get that. I've been working on that for the last 2 years, just so everyone can know. I think my friend from Rhode Island is actually working on big tech issues as well, and I think those would deal with radicalization as much as the additional censorship, and I appreciate his efforts on some of that—in that area as well.

I wanted to tell Dr. Wilson, I really appreciate his testimony. I thought it was very clarifying and very important and very substantive as well, and I appreciate that testimony.

I also want to thank Brandon Tatum who testified. As an alumni myself of the University of Arizona Law School and a native of Arizona, I remember Brandon playing—Mr. Tatum playing on the University of Arizona Wildcat football team, which was enjoying better times when he played than it is enjoying today. So, I appreciate you being here and testifying today.

I express to the rabbi and also to Mr. Kaleka heartfelt condolences and sympathy to what you've endured, and I appreciate it.

Madam Chair, I could go on because I do think this is a very important topic. I've written it down, additional notes to go from, and I will take much having learned much today. I thank you, and I yield back to you, Madam Chair.

Mr. CICILLINE. Madam Chair, I have a unanimous consent request.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Cicilline, you're recognized for a unanimous consent request.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you. Madam Chair, I'd ask that a statement from the Sikh Coalition regarding increased violence against their community made a part of the record.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Without objection, so ordered.

[The information follows:]

MR. CICILLINE FOR THE RECORD

THE SIKHCOALITION

February 17, 2022

House Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Thomas P. O'Neill Federal Building, Room 6340
200 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20024

Re: Outside Witness Testimony from the Sikh Coalition to the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security on the Judiciary regarding the hearing titled "The Rise in Violence Against Minority Institutions"

Dear Chairwoman Jackson Lee, Ranking Member Biggs, and Members of the Subcommittee:

As an organization that represents the Sikh community in the United States and addresses hate-related backlash attacks against the Sikh American community since 9/11, we write to address our concern on the rise in violence against Sikhs and other minorities.

To be clear, ours is a community that has long faced discrimination and bigotry. Sikhs have faced hate crimes in the United States since arriving in this country in the late 1800s. A new wave of hate began, however, in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks; the Sikh Coalition tracked more than 300 hate incidents in the first month after that terrible day, and the first deadly hate crime after 9/11 saw a Sikh American named Balbir Singh Sodhi murdered outside his gas station in Mesa, Arizona on September 15, 2011.[1] Nearly 20 years later, many still wrongfully associate anti-Sikh hate violence with "mistaken identity"--that is, the notion that Sikhs are targeted because they are believed to be Muslim--but defaulting to this framework fails to account for the other bias-related motivations behind violence against Sikhs, and often falsely implies that there is a group that *should* be targeted by those who lash out in hate.[2] Hate crimes, including attacks against minority institutions, terrorize not only the targeted individual and their families, but entire communities that are similarly situated.

Due to our long history of facing bias, we believe that the challenges that Sikhs face often foreshadow systemic problems for the rest of the nation. The worst attack on an American house of worship in nearly 50 years occurred on August 5, 2012, when a white supremacist murdered seven Sikhs at a gurdwara (Sikh house of worship) in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. The shooting, perpetrated by a gunman with white nationalist ties, killed six Sikh worshippers at the time and injured several others. Baba Punjab Singh, a courageous and beloved 72-year-old Sikh religious teacher who was shot and paralyzed during the

[1] *Hate killed my brother 4 days after 9/11. What has changed (and hasn't) 20 years later*, azcentral (Sep. 9, 2021), available at https://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/2021/09/09/hate-killed-balbir-singh-sodhi-after-sept-11-what-changed/5773998001/.
[2] *Sikhs in America: A History of Hate*, ProPublica (Aug. 4, 2017), available at https://www.propublica.org/article/sikhs-in-america-hate-crime-victims-and-bias.

assault, sadly passed away from his injuries on March 2, 2020, making him the seventh victim of this deadly assault.[3] Since the Oak Creek shooting, additional gurdwaras and other minority houses of worship throughout the nation have been actively targeted through vandalism, arson, bomb threats, bioterrorism, and mass shootings.

Following the Oak Creek shooting, the Sikh Coalition, in collaboration with other advocacy organizations, advocated for updating the FBI's hate crime reporting codes to more accurately capture anti-bias incidents, including anti-Sikh incidents for the first time, in the Uniform Crime Report.[4] Since then the FBI's annual hate crime report consistently categorizes anti-Sikh violence within the top five most targeted religious communities, but when one controls for population sizes of these religious minorities, it quickly becomes clear that Sikhs remain more vulnerable than likely any other religious population in the country.

Since the reporting of hate crimes to the FBI remains voluntary, federal hate crime statistics remain woefully inadequate. According to the most recent reporting by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, there were an estimated 246,900 hate crimes transpiring annually within the United States from 2005 to 2019.[5] The FBI's most recent annual hate crime report in 2020, by contrast, reported only 3 percent of this estimate, with just 8,263 hate crime incidents documented. With just 16 percent of participating agencies reporting hate crimes data, it is apparent that the current model of voluntary reporting and hate crime response training yields very limited statistics.[6] The large gaps in hate crime reporting and failures to prioritize hate crime threats remain among our nation's largest security threats; this, and the broader danger of white supremacist extremist ideology that continues to target our and other communities, requires further substantial action by Congress.

The failures to address hate crimes and white supremacist violence against individuals has resulted in more acts of hate being directed at minority institutions, including our houses of worship. The Sikh Coalition has tracked an alarming increase in attacks against gurdwaras over the past five years. In September of 2017, a white man defaced a gurdwara in Hollywood, California calling for the nuking and death of Sikhs and threatened to slit the throat of an onlooker.[7] In July of 2019, a gurdwara in Hughson, California, was broken into and the Sikh caretaker was assaulted and told to "go back" to a foreign country.[8] In January

[3] *Priest Paralyzed in Mass Shooting at Sikh Temple in 2012 Dies from Injuries*, New York Times (March 4, 2020), available at https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/04/us/baba-punjab-singh-wisconsin.html.
[4] *Making History, First Sikh Testifies at U.S. Senate Hearing*, The Sikh Coalition (Sep. 20, 2012), available at https://www.sikhcoalition.org/blog/2012/making-history-first-sikh-testifies-at-us-senate-hearing/.
[5] *Hate Crime Victimization, 2005-2019*, Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics (Sep. 2021) available at https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/hate-crime-victimization-2005-2019.
[6] *2020 Hate Crime Statistics* (2021), Federal Bureau of Investigations (2021), available at https://crime-data-explorer.fr.cloud.gov/pages/explorer/crime/hate-crime.
[7] *LAPD seeks suspect who vandalized Los Feliz Sikh temple, threatened witness*, LA Times (Sep. 18, 2017), available at https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-sikh-temple-hate-crime-20170918-story.html.
[8] *Sikh Priest Attacked Inside Hughson Home Told 'Go Back, Go Back'*, CBS Sacramento (Jul. 26, 2019), available at https://sacramento.cbslocal.com/2019/07/26/sikh-priest-attacked-go-back/.

2020, another Gurdwara in Orangevale, California was vandalized with white nationalist graffiti[9] after its grand opening; reporters later discovered that a prominent and dangerous white supremacist[10] lived within a mile of the gurdwara. In August of last year a gurdwara under construction in Long Island, New York was vandalized with hateful slurs and pro-Trump messaging.[11] In September 2021, a gurdwara in Federal Way, Washington was vandalized and had equipment stolen.[12] We fear that without federal intervention, more gurdwaras and minority houses of worship will continue to see hate violence come to their doorsteps.

New Policies and Better Tracking to Prevent Hate Crimes

Better tracking is essential to solving the policy problem of hate, as is the development of new policies to prevent hate crimes and the targeting of minority institutions. Congress must mandate all local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to provide more accurate hate crime statistics to the FBI on a quarterly basis. Data has to drive policy, and we need ways to collect information on actual victim identities rather than just perceived bias identities. We recommend that this committee investigate the feasibility of mandating data collection on hate crimes to eliminate underreporting by law enforcement agencies and better inform targeted communities on the threats they face.

Congress must also ensure that the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, and its provisions from the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act, are being effectively implemented with adequate funding. The recently enacted law would modernize the federal hate crime reporting system and encourage state and local law enforcement to report hate crime statistics to the federal government. It will also create opportunities to rehabilitate hate crime offenders by giving them the option of learning more about the community they targeted and participating in community service projects. Lastly, this bill will create better hate crime victim support and assistance services like hate crime reporting hotlines. However, without adequate funding, these policy improvements cannot go into effect or protect our communities.

Finally, we note that victims of hate crimes are often denied access to justice for acts of hate committed against them. Congress must close the loophole in federal hate crime prosecution, current law requires an act of bigotry to be the singular motivating factor of the crime. Many times, bias is just one of many factors in the targeting of an individual for a hate crime; without intervention, justice is denied to hate crime victims and perpetrators are not held accountable for their acts of hate. Reintroducing and passing the Justice for

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[9] *Swastikas, 'white power' spray-painted outside of Sikh temple in Orangevale*, Fox 40 (Jan. 13, 2020), available at https://fox40.com/news/local-news/swastikas-white-power-spray-painted-outside-of-sikh-temple-in-orangevale/.
[10] *Leader Of Dylann Roof-Worshipping Neo-Nazi Group Under Police Investigation*, Huffington Post (Jul 27, 2020), available at https://www.huffpost.com/entry/andrew-casarez-neo-nazi-police-investigation_n_5f1f510cc5b638cfec48ba4.
[11] *Racist, pro-Trump vandal targets Sikh temple on Long Island*, Daily News (Sep. 5, 2021), available at https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nyc-crime/ny-racist-vandalism-sikh-temple-long-island-donald-trump-20210805-hovi7lbvebabnkcxbhs72qc43e-story.html.
[12] *Police investigating after Federal Way Sikh center vandalized*, The Seattle Times (Sep. 19, 2021), available at https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/police-investigating-after-federal-way-sikh-center-vandalized/.

Victims of Hate Crimes Act can ensure that hate crime perpetrators can no longer avoid federal prosecution by allowing for hate crime charges when bias is part of other motivating factors.

Improving Access to Critical Security Resources and Support Programs that Reduce Community Tensions

The Sikh Coalition has assisted more than 80 gurdwaras throughout the United States in accessing federal and state resources to better protect them against acts of hate. We have also outlined for gurdwaras how to apply to grant programs like the Non-Profit Security Grant (NGSP), which was established to help houses of worship harden their security postures. Smaller congregations, however--including most gurdwaras--face a number of barriers that prohibit them from applying to this program. The narrow filing timelines and level of technical expertise required for the complicated application process effectively limits the reach of NGSP funding, excluding the communities that need it the most (who often rely on volunteer labor or have limited English proficiency). Even when the grants are submitted, there is often no information provided as to why they are rejected--which in turn limits applicants' abilities to improve future applications.

Congress should act to remediate the NGSP by expanding the filing application timelines, simplifying the application requirements, providing technical assistance programs to houses of worship, and ensuring equitable access of funding to smaller congregations that are vulnerable to hate crimes and white supremacist activity. The program also requires significantly more funding to protect more houses of worship across the nation.

Additionally, community programs such as the Department of Justice Community Relations Service are vital to promoting a greater understanding of minority communities. The program has developed critical resources including protecting houses of worship forums, convening community stakeholder listening sessions, developing cultural competency resources for the Sikh and Muslim community, and providing rapid response to hate crime incidents. Continued funding for this program ensures that misconceptions about Sikhs and other communities do not escalate into violence. Congress must continue to increase funding for these services to address the threats facing our communities.

Elevate Federal Responses to White Supremacist Violent Activity and Internet Radicalization

The federal government's response continues to inadequately address the severity of the problem of white supremacist and nationalist violence.[13] Oak Creek was a painful reminder that white supremacist views were alive and well in America, and that they have deadly consequences for a wide range of communities. With each subsequent attack on other houses of worship, the pattern of white supremacist violence targeting our communities is undeniable.

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[13] *U.S. Law Enforcement Failed to See the Threat of White Nationalism. Now They Don't Know How to Stop It*, New York Times (Nov. 3, 2018), available at https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/03/magazine/FBI-charlottesville-white-nationalism-far-right.html.

Congress must pass the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act (H. R. 350) to improve the federal government's efforts to prevent domestic terrorism. The bill would require federal law enforcement agencies to regularly assess domestic threats and provide training and resources to assist state, local, and tribal law enforcement in addressing domestic threats. Given the persistent threats posed by far-right extremists, our government must do more to prevent another minority institution from being targeted by white supremacist violence.

It is no coincidence that our minority institutions continue to come under attack by perpetrators that are radicalized by white supremacist and nationalist ideology. These hate groups use internet communities and social media to issue propaganda, coordinate training (including combat training), organize protests, raise funds, recruit members, and communicate with a broader audience. The Oak Creek shooter was among one of the earliest cases with links to these extremist internet forums; he was a member of an organized white supremacist group, the Hammerskins Nation, and was encouraging others to incite a racial holy war both in person, and online.[14]

Despite those early warning indicators from Oak Creek, social media platforms continue to be an epicenter of hate group activity, allowing bigots to perpetuate wrongful associations of individuals with turbans as terrorists or enemies of America. Hate speech posted on popular social media platforms calls for the execution of "ragheads," among other slurs, which have real-world consequences and can radicalize individuals to conduct criminal acts of hate. Current systems in place at social media companies do not sufficiently address the safety requirements of communities targeted by hate. Congress must ensure that all social media platforms are held accountable for extremist activity that is hosted and broadcasted.

Conclusion

Ten years after Oak Creek, Sikh houses of worship--like other minority institutions--remain under threat. The Sikh Coalition is grateful for the opportunity to submit this statement for the hearing record and looks forward to working with partners in government, civil society, and grassroots communities nationwide to eliminate bigotry, hate crimes, and violent extremism in the United States. If you have questions about these recommendations or seek additional information, please contact Sim J. Singh Attariwala at advocacy@sikhcoalition.org.

Thank you for considering our views on this matter.

Sincerely,
The Sikh Coalition

[14] *Profile: Wisconsin Sikh temple shooter Wade Michael Page*, BBC (August 7, 2012), available at https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-19167324.

SALDEF
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund

The Honorable Sheila Jackson Lee
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism,
and Homeland Security
U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary
2141 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Andy Biggs
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism,
and Homeland Security
U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary
2141 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

February 23, 2022

Dear Chairwoman Jackson Lee, Ranking Member Biggs, and members of the U.S. House Crime, Terrorism, and Security Subcommittee,

On behalf of the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF) and the Sikh American community, we want to thank you for holding the recent hearing, "The Rise in Violence Against Minority Institutions." While the wave of violence for which this subcommittee is convening today's hearing is cresting during the pandemic, it is not a new phenomenon in America by any means. Today, we are only a few months away from the ten-year anniversary of the mass shooting at the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin in Oak Creek, when an avowed white supremacist opened fire with a semi-automatic weapon on volunteers preparing a communal meal. The six fatalities and three hospitalizations made the attack, at the time, the deadliest on any house of worship on American soil since the 1964 Birmingham church bombing. Law enforcement correctly categorized and investigated this incident as a hate crime, and SALDEF remains committed to working with law enforcement, every level of government, and other community organizations to prevent, address, and combat hate crimes and domestic extremism, no matter how many more decades it may take.

Since arriving in North America in 1897, Sikhs have played a pivotal role in the opening of the West, construction of the Panama Canal in 1904, and the building of the railroads in California throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. In 1912, the first Gurdwara in the United States (Sikh congregational place of worship) was established in Stockton, California. Notably, Dalip Singh Saund, member of the United States House of Representatives, serving the 29th District of California from 1957 to 1963, was not only the first Sikh American member of the United States Congress, but also the first Asian American member. Sikh values of equality and religious tolerance align with American values, and since their arrival, Sikh Americans have played a vital economic role in all facets of American life. Unfortunately, in the ten years since Oak Creek, despite law enforcement and policymakers working alongside SALDEF and other Sikh American advocacy organizations more closely, bias incidents against Sikh institutions and Sikhs themselves have not abated. Observant Sikhs are distinguished by *dastaars* (Sikh Turbans), uncut hair, and other conspicuous articles of faith - articles that have too often been lightning rods for acts of hate rooted in ignorance and fear. **According to an analysis of**

population size, Sikh Americans are the most disproportionately targeted group in the United States - at a rate of four times the national average.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) released the annual report on hate crimes showing that 8,052 single-bias incidents involving 11,126 victims occurred in 2020. Nearly 62% of victims were targeted because of the offenders' bias against the race/ethnicity/ancestry of the victims. **Anti-Sikh hate crimes also hit a record high of 89 documented incidents, reflecting an 82% increase over 2019**, despite an overall decrease in the number of anti-religious hate crimes.

The number of hate crimes and hate or bias incidents against communities is historically under-reported for a variety of reasons, including lack of access to culturally appropriate and in-language reporting by communities, limited outreach by government agencies, and a lack of training in identifying acts of hate and bias by law enforcement and prosecutors. After years of advocacy by SALDEF, the FBI started publishing data on anti-Sikh hate crimes beginning in 2015. SALDEF works to combat anti-Sikh violence by conducting forums in communities, sharing information about security grants for gurdwaras, and training law enforcement about Sikh practices.

Here are some specific hate incidents in just the last two years that have affected the Sikh community across the country, in states that range politically from deep red to purple to deep blue:

On April 29, 2020 in Lakewood, Colorado, a Sikh man named Lakhwant Singh was attacked by a man identified as Eric Breemen. Breemen entered Lakhwant Singh's store and began harassing Mr Singh and his wife. He damaged numerous items, shouted profanity, and repeatedly told the couple to "go back to your country." When Breemen finally left the store, Mr. Singh followed him outside to take a photo of his license plate so that he could report the abuse. Breemen then struck Mr. Singh with his vehicle, throwing him several feet across the parking lot, causing multiple injuries. Breemen then continued his spree, attacking two additional minority individuals in the area.

In June 2020, a Sikh-owned Indian Restaurant called India Palace in Sante Fe, New Mexico, was vandalized with hate messages scrawled on its walls including words like "white power", "go home [to your country]", and other profanities.

On April 15, 2021, a gunman launched an attack on a FedEx ground facility in Indianapolis, IN. The facility was widely known for employing a high concentration of Sikh workers. In the shooting, eight innocent people were killed, four of whom were Sikhs in the Indianapolis Sikh community.

On September 20, 2021, the Khalsa Gurmat Center gurdwara, a significant Sikh community center near Seattle, was vandalized and burglarized. A/V equipment was stolen and numerous objects, including musical instruments, were smashed to pieces.

This year, on January 3rd, a Sikh taxi driver was attacked at John F Kennedy International Airport. Mr. Singh parked his cab curbside and collected a customer, but was blocked in by another cab driver. When he asked the other driver to move his car briefly so he could depart, the driver hit Mr. Singh with his car door before physically assaulting him. Mr. Singh's turban became unraveled and fell off as the man attacking him repeatedly used slurs and told him to "go back to [his] country." In each of these cases, Sikhs attempting to do nothing more than conduct their day-to-day lives were met with spasms of racist violence for having the courage to wear the articles of their faith in keeping with the First Amendment.

SALDEF has been disappointed by the historic tendency of data-oriented agencies like the Census Bureau to not disaggregate AAPI communities (due to their relative size), and so we have conducted in-house surveys to paint a picture of our nationwide community. One survey, the National Sikh American Survey, involved reaching out to Sikh individuals; another, the Gurdwara Survey, involved reaching out to the houses of worship that serve as community centers for Sikhs.

The Sikh American Survey revealed some disheartening, but not unsurprising, figures: 15% of respondents said they only sometimes felt safe practicing Sikhism, with respondents living in the South feeling the least safe. 58% of respondents reported being bullied or harassed because of their Sikh identity, with 60% of respondents living in the Midwest reporting such mistreatment. 63% of turbaned respondents reported being discriminated against for wearing one. When sorted regionally, 70% of turbaned respondents living in the South experienced turban-related discrimination.

The Gurdwara Survey, which targeted 20 gurdwaras in its first iteration, found that nearly 50% of respondents had not reviewed an emergency scenario with their congregations. Almost 70% of gurdwaras surveyed were interested in increasing security measures, but 61% of gurdwaras responded that they had not taken steps apart from safety infrastructure, like active shooter training. More than half of gurdwaras had not heard of or had any member of their staff attend an active shooter training. While our surveys revealed some concerning blind spots, they also revealed opportunities for the federal government to help.

We would like to underscore some key experiences detailed in oral testimony to the House Subcommittee during the hearing on February 17, to which we strongly related. The Sikh community is all too familiar with the fear mixed with relief in the voice of **Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker** of Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, who testified that the only reason the hostage situation there in January was resolved without loss of life was a series of small, lucky events. The struggle Rabbi Cryton-Walker outlined with balancing a religious obligation to welcome all with his responsibility as a leader to protect his people is familiar to anyone who has welcomed a stranger to a gurdwara.

Our community is also familiar with the sentiment espoused by **Dr. David Wilson**, president of Morgan State University, an HBCU, about the shocking volume of psychological and emotional

fallout borne by students and their families in the face of a siege of harassment. We applaud his resolution to continue to work to protect and empower his students, and feel the same resilience in our Sikh communities nationwide.

While some witnesses were correct about a troubling overall rise in crime, SALDEF feels it is important to remember that the incidents for which the subcommittee hearing was convened are part of a distinct historical phenomenon that existed long before any policy changes around police funding. We agree with the comments of **Dr. Seth Jones**, a security expert who clarified that bomb threats and other hate crimes outlined in the testimony received by the subcommittee are acts of terrorism, intended "to terrorize a [specific] population" like ours, and should be taken extremely seriously by enforcement agencies at every level.

Most significantly, we fully echo the recommendations of **Pardeep Singh Kaleka**, executive director of the Interfaith Council of Milwaukee and the son of a Sikh worshiper slain in the hate crime against the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin in Oak Creek. The subcommittee and all of Congress must act decisively to combat the persistent threat of white supremacy through public health and community engagement. We must invest in early-stage interventions to correct the pain that precedes acts of violence, through accurate and inclusive education and holding social media platforms accountable for hosting hate speech.

It is essential, as Mr. Kaleka argued, to **pass the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act**, which will give the federal government essential tools and funding to track and combat hate crimes and bias incidents at a scale proportionate to their perpetration. Similarly, the **Justice for Victims of Hate Crimes Act must be passed**, to close a loophole in how hate crimes are prosecuted at the federal level. Access to federal resources can be improved through **nonprofit security grants to protect sacred places** like the gurdwara in Oak Creek. Mr. Kaleka's recommendations echo what we have outlined throughout this written testimony: that action to protect communities like the Sikh community must be taken urgently through new laws, more resources, and deeper engagement with and between local law enforcement and advocates.

SALDEF would also like to highlight the recommendations made in a recent Homeland Security Advisory Council Report, particularly the recommendation that the **Department of Homeland Security should install a central point of contact for Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs)**. Specifically, this role should be at the Assistant Secretary level (or higher) to serve as Director of all DHS faith-based programs and representing DHS within the Interagency. The report also recommends that the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs creates an FBO working group oriented around improving security of houses of worship, to be convened at the National Security Council to support policy formulation within the Interagency and across the federal government.

We also strongly agree with the report's recommendations that DHS takes the lead to **establish a package approach to FBO security** in conjunction with state and local officials, and that DHS **encourages FBOs to work with local first responders to develop real-time**

information sharing systems. We urge DHS to work with the Department of State to earmark **additional funding to increase connectivity with FBOs, particularly in rural areas.**

DHS should also focus efforts, as the report recommends, on **enhancing the role of Protective Security Advisors (PSAs)** with specific requirements and additional funding to increase the numbers of PSAs as needed. Similarly, DHS should work with state and local officials to **standardize and uplift Fusion Centers** to these communities. Fusion Centers should all be organized around the principle of proactive outreach to all houses of worship within the Fusion Center's area of responsibility, and evaluate all Fusion Centers to identify areas to improve effectiveness, increase transparency in procedures and guidelines, and reinforce the expectation that Fusion Centers and PSAs are to collaborate as a team to protect local FBOs.

The report makes excellent recommendations around Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grants. DHS should **seek additional funding for FBO security grants, and establish an office dedicated to assisting applicants**, particularly from small or poorly staffed FBOs struggling to navigate the federal grants process. The responsibility for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program should be added to the portfolio of the new DHS Director, and the office of grant application assistance should be separate from grant-awarding arms of the agency to minimize conflicts of interest.

Finally, the report finds a critical gap: **the lack of a domestic terrorism statute.** This is a real threat disproportionately faced by minority communities like Sikh Americans, manifesting in ways both large and small as highlighted earlier in my testimony. Congress, working with DHS and the Department of Justice, **must pass a statute defining acts of domestic terrorism and funding the monitoring of these acts** so law enforcement can better monitor, understand, investigate, and prosecute acts of domestic terrorism. Domestic terrorism has been painfully real for our community for much longer than ten years, and it is our hope that today's hearing represents a meaningful step toward naming and fighting it as such.

Sincerely,

Kiran Kaur Gill
Executive Director

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let me, first, thank Ranking Member Biggs for putting on the record the importance of this hearing, and I prayerfully hope that he has gained additional insight. I am very grateful that he has acknowledged his own faith. He is right.

I would say to you, Mr. Biggs, many of my friends are in your faith, and I have known the discrimination historically and even present that has impacted your community. So, I think your acceptance and insight of the importance of this is crucial because that's the only way we can move forward in a bipartisan way.

So, I want to restate, just for a few minutes, this hearing's topic was a rise in violence against minority institutions, but we are grateful that we have heard what words can do. We see with Mr. Kaleka, he tragically lost friends, fellow worshippers, and most, his loving father. Someone died, persons died. I've known the Sikh community. They are very strong in Houston. We are close. People died. So, I appreciate your presence here today.

Dr. Jones, your statistics are going to be very helpful in moving forward on a domestic terrorism legislation, because it is shocking to many of us that the Federal government does not have a greater presence in data collection, prosecution because people die. I think that is what this hearing should suggest.

Out of these words and actions, out of the tiki torches in Charlottesville, Virginia, someone died. Out of the anti-Semitic remarks, synagogues across the Nation have had people die. How grateful we are that in Colleyville, lives were saved even though the perpetrator said Jews control the world, a greatly anti-Semitic statement. People died.

Thank you, Dr. Wilson, for digging into the deep generational trauma that our young Black students face. I'll have a question for you very briefly and a question for Ms. Huang.

Again, we hug and honor, we mourn, hug, and honor. We honor and hug the rabbi because he lived, and those in that synagogue lived that were under threat. The tragedy, of course, that out of threats some violence comes and people die.

That is the cruciality of this hearing. That is the topic that should not be diminished. People die. The pain that I have and that my Members have, this Congress should have and the nation should have, is that across the nation of HBCUs presidents are charged with academic responsibility, but they are not FBI. They are not law enforcement. They are not national security experts. We are telling our presidents of Black universities and other universities of color that they now have to take on another responsibility because children could die. I cannot leave this hearing without making that point.

So, let me first go to Ms. Huang for the storied history of the Southern Poverty Leadership Conference and to thank you for now your new leadership, which I am so proud of. Can you respond to my point—and, again, you are right, H.R. 40 that is now ready to pass this Congress or to become law is that very important response to stopping for a moment to discern racism and its deeply embedded core as relates to African Americans, the descendants of enslaved Africans. We are ready for that bill.

Could you in your history of the Southern Poverty Leadership tie words to ultimate killings and violence? That seems to be missed, and I want that to be clear on the record. Ms. Huang?

Ms. HUANG. Thank you so much, Congresswoman Jackson Lee. I believe you know that every year, the Southern Poverty Law Center issues a Year in Hate report, and in that report, we track the activities of more than 1,200 hate and extremist groups across the country, many of whom—and increasingly many of whom embrace White supremacy as their leading ideology.

There's no question that we cannot successfully tackle domestic terrorism without dealing with the problem of White supremacy in this country. The efforts right now that we're seeing to discourage teachers and schools from talking about our honest history are contributing to this narrative that White supremacy is not the problem, and it is. We've seen that time and time again from the data that is collected by the government and from the activities of the groups that we track and monitor.

I would just add, what's most important is that over the long term, we have to focus on anti-bias, anti-hate prevention, and civic engagement initiatives. This is how we're going to counter domestic terrorism. It is the fourth pillar of the National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism that was put out by the White House and this Biden Administration. We hope that this Committee and Congress will take those recommendations very seriously and prioritize addressing White supremacy as the key to addressing all these problems.

Thank you, Congresswoman.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you. Just out of those words, have you documented that people die, words and actions that you've just evidenced?

Ms. HUANG. We have seen time and time again that people die because of White supremacy, because of hate and extremism in this country, and it's why we have spent so much of our time and energy trying to document these ideologies and to give warning and support to communities who want to stand up and protect themselves.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I thank you very much.

Dr. Morgan (sic), as an academician and the President of the university representing the world of HBCUs and Thurgood Marshall schools, coming from your historic history, which in this day and time is important for people to know that there is that history, in your leadership and your ability to give strength to your students, but do you have as your trepidation your history that when anger and hateful comments were made people died?

Mr. WILSON. Unfortunately, that is a part of the great history of the formation and survival of HBCUs. I have documented in my testimony, going back to 1865, how acts of racism have destroyed buildings on the campuses, have led to deaths of students and deaths of professors.

Madam Chair, based on what you just heard from Margaret Huang of the Southern Poverty Law Center, it is really that connected with your comment that keeps me up at night and keeps other HBCU presidents and chancellors up at night. We are in a period where we don't know if one of these threats will no longer

just simply be a threat, and that is a very, very frightening place to be.

Our students who come to Morgan and to other HBCUs, they come to get an education. They come to prepare themselves for the future of work and the work of the future. They just want to have an education in an environment that their very lives are not being threatened every day.

There is no other genre of institutions that I'm aware of, as I have raised my hand in this hearing today, that is receiving the bomb threats with the kind of regularity that we see across HBCUs. I hope the Nation wakes up and responds in a way that will bring this to an end. I appreciate the opportunity, Madam Chair, for having presented before this Subcommittee today.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Dr. Wilson, thank you.

Thank you to, as well, I don't think I mentioned Dr. Pennie and Dr. Tatum.

Thank you to all the other Witnesses, which I did express my appreciation.

Dr. Wilson, let it be clear that this Committee, this Congress, and this Nation will be standing with you.

I wish to introduce into the record a series of texts that are now appearing in the trial of the Mike Michaels, one to read, referring to Black people: "They ruin everything. That's why I love what I do now. Not a n-i-g-g-e-r in sight," Mike Michaels said in the message. There's a series of these that are prevalent in the testimony. I want to add—ask unanimous consent to include these in the record, which I will do without objection.

Then, I want to introduce into the record a letter that was sent by Chair Nadler, Chair Jackson Lee, Chair Beatty to the FBI, in sync Dr. Wilson, and with all of the Witnesses for there to be a full briefing of this Committee and, of course, the Congressional Black Caucus, on the question of the attacks on historically Black colleges and, of course, the rise in racism and anti-Semitism among many other groups.

We're insisting—let me put that on the record. I want to ensure Director Wray to know that we will be in touch and want this to be immediate and not later, because for Congress to act, we must have these kinds of serious briefings. So, that letter will be put into the record as well.

[The information follows:]

MS. JACKSON LEE FOR THE RECORD

Text messages of Ahmaud Arbery's killers contained racist slurs, prosecutor claims

Travis McMichael, a prosecutor said, once texted a friend saying he loved his job because "zero n——rs work with me."

Associated Press |

Feb 16, 2022

BRUNSWICK, Ga. — The three white men convicted of killing **Ahmaud Arbery** had histories of making racist comments or using slurs in text messages that stunned their friends and colleagues, a federal prosecutor told jurors Monday as the trio stood trial on hate crime charges in the 25-year-old Black man's death.

During opening statements in the case, defense attorneys admitted their clients had each expressed offensive and indefensible opinions about Black people. But they insisted the trio's pursuit of Arbery as he ran in their neighborhood was prompted by honest, though erroneous, suspicion that he had committed crimes — not by his race.

THE **PUBLISHER** DESK

This combo of booking photos provided by the Glynn County, Ga., Detention Center shows (from left) Travis McMichael, his father Gregory McMichael and William "Roddie" Bryan Jr. (Photos: Glynn County Detention Center via AP, File)

"I'm not going to ask you to like **Travis McMichael**," **Amy Lee Copeland**, the defense attorney for the man who fatally shot Arbery, told the jury. "I'm not going to ask you to decide that he had done nothing wrong. But I'm going to ask you to return a verdict of not guilty to this indictment."

McMichael and his father, **Greg McMichael**, armed themselves and chased Arbery in a pickup truck after he ran past their coastal Georgia home on Feb. 23, 2020. A neighbor, **William "Roddie" Bryan**, joined the pursuit in his own truck and recorded cellphone video of Travis McMichael blasting Arbery with a shotgun. Arrests came only after the video leaked online two months later.

THE **PUBLISHER** DESK

All three were convicted of murder and a judge sentenced them to life in prison last month.



Also Read:
Jury with three black members sworn in for federal trial of Ahmaud Arbery's killers

Now the McMichaels and Bryan are on trial again, this time in U.S. District Court, where federal prosecutors have charged them with hate crimes that allege they violated Arbery's civil rights and targeted him because he was Black.

Security cameras inside a nearby home under construction had recorded video of Arbery wandering inside, but never taking anything, several times in the months before his death. White people had also been seen entering the home, which had no doors or windows. Yet the McMichaels assumed Arbery must be a criminal and kept a lookout for him, prosecutor **Bobbi Bernstein** told the jury.

THE **PUBLISHER** DESK

"If Ahmaud Arbery had been white, he'd have gone for a jog, checked out a cool house that was under construction and been home in time for Sunday dinner," Bernstein said. "Instead, he ended up running for his life."



Also Read:
Black FedEx driver seeks hate crime probe after attempted shooting in Mississippi

Bernstein said prosecutors will show evidence of comments by the McMichaels and Bryan that reveal a mindset that led them to suspect an innocent Black man of wrongdoing.

Travis McMichael, she said, once texted a friend saying he loved his job because "zero n——rs work with me." Commenting on an online video of a Black man lighting a firecracker stuffed in his nose, he messaged a friend saying: "It'd be cooler if it blew the f—-ing n——r's head off," Bernstein said. The friend was taken aback by how angry McMichael sounded, she said.

One allegation never mentioned in the prosecutor's opening statement was that Bryan told investigators he heard Travis McMichael utter a racial slur after shooting Arbery. The comment was widely reported after Georgia Bureau of Investigation agent **Richard Dial** testified to it during a June 2020 pretrial hearing in the state murder case. Travis McMichael's attorneys denied he said it, and state prosecutors never brought up the comment during the murder trial.



Also Read:
South Carolina push to be 49th state with hate crime law stalls

As for Greg McMichael, Bernstein said a former colleague of his will testify that McMichael responded angrily in a conversation about the 2015 death of civil rights activist **Julian Bond**, saying: "Those Blacks are all nothing but trouble."

And just days before Arbery was shot, Bernstein said, Bryan had become upset after learning that his daughter was dating a Black man. She said Bryan commented that his daughter "has her n——r now."

A jury of eight white people, three Black people and one Hispanic person was sworn in to hear the case Monday morning along with four alternate jurors. Judge **Lisa Godbey Wood** and the attorneys disclosed the panel's racial makeup in court.



Also Read:
Judge rejects plea deal for man who killed Ahmaud Arbery

Attorneys for the McMichaels and Bryan acknowledged that their clients had made racially offensive remarks. But they urged jurors to decide the hate crimes case based on facts rather than the raw emotions such words may stir.

"I've heard the N-word more today than I've heard it in the past three or four years, and we haven't even heard any evidence yet," Bryan's attorney, **Pete Theodocion**, told the jury.

Greg McMichael's attorney, **A.J. Balbo**, said his client initiated the pursuit of Arbery not because Arbery was Black, but because McMichael recognized him from security videos as the man who had kept entering a neighbor's unfinished house.



Also Read:
Ahmaud Arbery's family 'devastated' by federal plea deal for his killers, lawyer says

"Greg didn't know the name, but he recognized the face," Balbo said. "There was no mistaking who has just run by him."

Theodocion said that Bryan joined the chase assuming Arbery had done something wrong because he saw Arbery run past his house with the McMichaels in pursuit, yelling for Arbery to stop.

Copeland, Travis McMichael's attorney, said evidence will show he "was in shock" after shooting Arbery at close range as Arbery threw punches and grabbed for the gun.

"You're not going to hear any evidence that he was pumping his fists, that he was gleeful," Copeland said.



Also Read:
20 mental health books and podcasts you need in your life right now

The judge said she expects the hate crimes trial to last between seven and 12 days.

In contrast to the federal trial, the jury in the state murder trial of the three defendants last fall was disproportionately white, drawing objections from prosecutors and complaints from Arbery's family. The state judge allowed the panel to be seated after defense lawyers stated nonracial reasons for striking most Black jurors from the pool.

Arbery's father, **Marcus Arbery**, told reporters outside the courthouse in the port city of Brunswick that he was "very pleased" with the federal jury.

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 3, 2022

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530-0001

Christopher A. Wray
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20535-0001

Dear Attorney General Garland and Director Wray,

We write to request that the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation provide a briefing for the House Judiciary Committee and the Congressional Black Caucus about recent bomb threats to Historically Black Colleges and Universities ("HBCUs") around the country.

According to the *Washington Post*, on Tuesday alone, the following HBCU's received threats of a bomb on campus: Rust College, Tougaloo College, Jackson State University, Alcorn State University, Mississippi Valley State University, Fort Valley State University, Spelman College, Morgan State University, Coppin State University, Harris-Stowe State, Kentucky State University, Xavier University, Philander Smith College, Edward Waters University, Howard University, and the University of the District of Columbia.[1] Notably, this was Howard University's third bomb threat in thirty days.[2]

The students and faculty at these institutions should not have to fear for their lives on campus. We urge you to make direct contact with the leaders of these HBCUs, in order to better facilitate communication regarding these threats. To the extent that these bomb threats are

[1] Lauren Lumpkin and Susan Svrluga, *Fear, anxiety follow third wave of bomb threats targeting HBCUs*, Wash. Post, Feb. 1, 2022.
[2] *Id.*

linked to the recent surge in violence at other minority institutions and houses of worship, we also urge you to coordinate your response with state and local law enforcement officials and across federal agencies. The whole of government must be directed at bringing the perpetrators of these threats to justice without delay.

Although we understand that the Department and the FBI do not comment on the specifics of ongoing investigations, we note that many members of the House Judiciary Committee and the Congressional Black Caucus attended and are otherwise closely affiliated with several of these colleges and universities. Any information you can provide today will help us better serve these institutions and ensure they remain safe for years to come.

We look forward to your briefing. Thank you for your consideration.

Jerrold Nadler
Chair
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Two of the men convicted of killing Ahmaud Arbery used racist slurs in messages, a witness testifies at their federal hate crime trial

By Jason Hanna, Pamela Kirkland and Alta Spells, CNN

Updated 9:46 PM ET, Wed February 16, 2022



Ahmaud Arbery was out jogging when he was shot and killed 02:20

(CNN) Texts and social media messages from two of the White men convicted of murdering Ahmaud Arbery included racist insults about African Americans, an FBI intelligence analyst testified Wednesday in their federal hate crime trial in Georgia.

FBI analyst Amy Vaughn testified about several text messages between Travis McMichael -- who fatally shot Arbery, a Black man, in February 2020 -- and friends using offensive language and racist slurs.

The first text message introduced into evidence was between Travis McMichael and a friend, dated March 16, 2019, in which Vaughn said they were discussing Travis' new job and why he liked that he didn't work with Black people.

"They ruin everything. That's why I love what I do now. Not a n****er in sight," McMichael said in the message, according to Vaughan.



Ahmaud Arbery would not have been killed if he were White, prosecutors say in hate crimes trial

Vaughn also testified messages found in defendant William "Roddie" Bryan's phone showed evidence of racial animus.

She found messages using the n-word as well and the word, "bootlip," which she described as "Mr. Bryan's word of choice." She went on to explain that "bootlip" is a derogatory term for a Black person, referencing a stereotypical characterization of a Black person's face, in her testimony.

close dialog

Race Deconstructed

When a prosecutor asked her if she found evidence of racial animus against African Americans during her investigation, Vaughn said she had.

The analyst also testified about a number of messages and social media posts from Travis McMichael that came up in her investigation related to racial violence. On a Facebook video of what Vaughn described as a mob beating a White teenager, McMichael posted a public comment suggesting shooting the group of primarily Black teenagers.

The three White defendants -- McMichael, 36; his father, Gregory McMichael, 66; and their neighbor Bryan, 52 -- were convicted in November of felony murder and other charges for Arbery's February 2020 killing in the Satilla Shores neighborhood outside Brunswick, Georgia.

In this federal trial in Brunswick, the three men are each charged with interference with rights -- a hate crime -- and attempted kidnapping. The McMichaels also each face a weapons charge. The McMichaels initially agreed to plead guilty, but the judge overseeing the case rejected the plea deal because of concerns about the agreed-upon sentence. The three men have since pleaded not guilty.



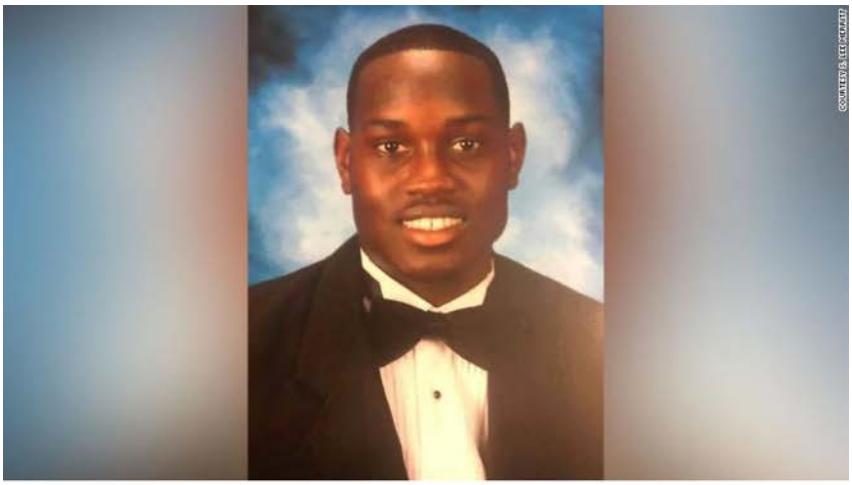
Here's how views on race played a role in jury selection

Federal prosecutors and Arbery's family have said he was out for a jog when he was killed. Defense attorneys in the state trial contended the McMichaels, suspecting Arbery of burglary, pursued him through neighborhood streets to conduct a citizen's arrest. Travis McMichael argued he shot Arbery in self-defense as they wrestled over McMichael's shotgun. Bryan had pursued Arbery with his own vehicle and recorded video of the pursuit and shooting.

Last year's state murder trial avoided discussion of race. This federal hate crimes trial is more clearly focusing on race, as prosecutors must prove the men acted out of racial animus.

The defendants are already serving life sentences in prison for the murder convictions, although they have said they plan to appeal the verdicts. Convictions in this trial could bring steep fines and more life sentences.

The jury was finalized Monday morning and consists of eight White jurors, three Black jurors and one Hispanic juror, according to details provided in court. Three White people and one Pacific Islander have also been selected as alternates.



Ahmaud Arbery, 25, was chased down and fatally shot in February 2020 outside Brunswick, Georgia.

US District Court Judge Lisa Godbey Wood had warned jurors that they would hear evidence of racist statements made by the defendants.

"You may consider each statement against the defendant who made it," the judge said, adding the jury may not consider the evidence to decide if the defendant engaged in the action or to judge the defendant's character, but they may use it to determine whether the defendants acted because of race.

The jurors appeared to be very attentive Wednesday, looking at their individual screens while the evidence was shown but didn't appear to express any emotion.

Leigh McMichael, mother of Travis and wife of Gregory McMichael, appeared solemn. The defendants appeared stoic and emotionless during Vaughn's testimony, looking at the screens in front of them where the evidence could be seen.

Speaking outside the federal courthouse on Wednesday afternoon, Arbery's mother, Wanda Cooper-Jones, said she hoped for "another guilty verdict" by the anniversary of her son's death, February 23.

"Ain't no quitting until we get justice for Ahmaud," Arbery's father, Marcus Arbery Sr., said as he was leaving the courthouse.

More messages from Travis McMichael

Vaughn testified Wednesday she reviewed the cell phones of Travis McMichael and Bryan; Instagram posts of Travis McMichael; Facebook files for all three defendants; and the Facebook account of the Satilla Shores neighborhood.

Vaughn said she had extracted the text messages from Travis McMichael's phone the day Arbery was killed.

A text message dated January 21, 2019, referenced Travis McMichael meeting a friend at a local Cracker Barrel restaurant. Vaughn read the conversation aloud in court. The friend tells Travis, "This Cracker Barrel up here is full of some other kinds of people." Travis' reply used a racist slur about African Americans.

As this discussion was happening, Arbery's father walked out of the courtroom shaking his head. He returned a short time later, still shaking his head as the testimony continued.

A Facebook message that Travis McMichael sent another friend, Vaughn testified, included a video with a Johnny Rebel song containing a racist slur. The video was played as part of the evidence in court.

The song had been edited onto another video showing a segment from "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" with a young Black boy dancing. The actual video from the show does not use the offensive song.

In another message entered into evidence, dated November 1, 2016, the day after Halloween, Travis McMichael is sent a photo from a friend. Vaughn said the photo appeared to be a "crude attempt" to depict Trayvon Martin after he was killed. The text was laughing about a man in blackface with a red splotch on a hoodie, the friend called it "the winner of Halloween 2016."

Evidence was also entered into record that Vaughn described as showing vigilantism from the older McMichael. Vaughn described a comment from Gregory McMichael on a social media post about a stolen surfboard where he suggested he might catch the culprit, and added: "We still hang horse and board thieves up here. Woe be to the sticky-fingered bastard."

Bryan used slurs against Black people in messages about Martin Luther King Jr. Day, witness testifies

Vaughn testified Bryan regularly used slurs against Black people in messages on Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

In what appeared to be a personal joke, Bryan was referred to as the "Grand Marshal" in a message from a friend. Vaughn testified that this was a joke that referred to the idea that Bryan would be the grand marshal of an MLK Day parade.

"He would never do that, because he doesn't particularly care for Black people or MLK Day," Vaughn testified as she explained the joke.

Also introduced into evidence was a WhatsApp message dated January 20, 2020, from Bryan to a friend, that was read aloud in court.

"Happy Bootlip Day," Bryan wrote. Bryan went on to say, "I worked like a n***er today," according to Vaughn.

Another set of WhatsApp messages discussed Bryan discovering that his daughter was dating a Black man. A message between Bryan and friend dated February 19, 2020 -- four days before Arbery's killing -- had Bryan using a slur in reference to the boyfriend.

Vaughn said Bryan's daughter's relationship remained an ongoing theme in messages. A photo posted on Facebook of Bryan's daughter and her Black boyfriend together was sent to Bryan in a WhatsApp message on April 8, 2020. Bryan responded that if his daughter did not care about herself, "Why should we?"

Prosecution argues defendants followed Arbery because of perceptions about Black people

The defense argued at the state murder trial that the pursuit began when the elder McMichael saw Arbery running from the direction of an under-construction home, and that he believed he matched the description of someone who'd been recorded there previously. Unbeknownst to McMichael, a neighbor had just called police to report that Arbery was at the construction site alone, and that Arbery ran as the neighbor called, according to testimony.



Federal judge rejects plea deal on hate crime charges in Ahmaud Arbery's killing over sentencing concerns

The prosecution in the murder trial conceded surveillance videos did show Arbery at the construction site multiple times, including the day he was killed, but always without breaking in and without taking anything.

During the murder trial, witnesses testified that the McMichaels did not know for certain that Arbery was at the site that day, or whether the man in the videos had ever taken anything. Prosecutors argued the pursuers acted on rumors and had no immediate knowledge Arbery had committed a crime, which is required to claim a citizen's arrest.

In opening statements for the hate crime trial, a prosecutor said the defendants previously used racist language and followed Arbery because of their perceptions of Black people.

"At the end of the day, the evidence in this case will prove that if Ahmaud Arbery had been White, he would have gone for a jog, checked out a cool house under construction, and been home in time for Sunday supper," Assistant US Attorney Barbara Bernstein told the jury Monday. "Instead, he went out for a jog and ended up running for his life."

The defendants' attorneys, speaking separately, acknowledged the men had used racist language -- but said that their actions toward Arbery were not related to race.

"Greg and Travis McMichael followed Ahmaud Arbery not because he was a Black man, but because he was the man who had been illegally entering the house that was under construction," A.J. Balbo, Gregory McMichael's defense attorney, said Monday.

CNN's Kevin Conlon and Nick Valencia contributed to this report.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. As I conclude, let me say to my own city of Houston, we are in this fight together. Let me thank Chief Finner, Mayor Sylvester Turner for the hard work that is going on, that I am joining them in, and the many neighbors that are standing up against crime, but the many victims who have been victimized by crime. We do not take it lightly, and we are equal to cities across the Nation.

We're coming into a period that mixes the toxicity of the pandemic and the toxicity of the divisive language that was evidenced on January 6th and in the past years. We now have to overcome that with healing and coming together and, yes, legislation like H.R. 40.

I think this hearing has emphasized the importance of the work that the Committee is doing, and we will look forward to hearings addressing the question of violence forthcoming, because that's what we do in Judiciary Committee. We take up the issues of concern.

I want to finally say that Members on this Committee have the right to have differing opinions and characterize their own words, and I'm sure that all Members appreciate the good work of our law enforcement officers that are protecting us across the Nation.

With that, this concludes today's hearing. I thank all of you and our distinguished Witnesses for attending. We mourn those who have lost loved ones, and we commit ourselves to finding solutions.

Without objection, all Members will have 5 legislative days to submit additional written questions for the Witnesses or additional materials for the record.

The hearing is now adjourned. Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 1:08 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

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June 23, 2022

Congresswoman Cori Bush
563 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Bush,

It was great to see you at the hearing on "The Rise in Violence against Minority Institutions," organized by the House Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security. In particular, I want to thank you for your excellent question for the record, which we received on June 21, 2022. You asked, "The FBI has labeled many activists in the movement for Black lives 'Black Identity Extremist' – and in some instances used this classification to detain protesters indefinitely. Can you explain how counterterrorism methods like mass surveillance have historically harmed Black student activists on HBCU campuses specifically?"

Our data set at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), which I used to brief you and other Members of the Committee, includes 1,040 terrorist attacks and plots in the United States between January 1, 1994, and December 31, 2021. We defined terrorism as the deliberate use—or threat—of violence by non-state actors in order to achieve political goals and create a broad psychological impact. For inclusion in the data set, events had to meet all parts of this definition. The data includes numerous variables, such as the date of the attack or plot, location, motivation, perpetrator, target, weapons, fatalities, casualties, and many others.

Since we focused predominantly on domestic terrorist *attacks and plots*, our data set does not include a range of other issues, such as the use of mass surveillance against Black student or other activists. Consequently, we don't have data on the frequency or impact of surveillance. Nor have we done an historical analysis of how methods like mass surveillance have historically harmed communities in the United States—including Black student activists. Moving forward, this would be a superb subject to examine. At this point, however, we have not done systematic work on the subject.

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Thanks again for your comments and question, and thanks in particular for your outstanding and tireless work. Feel free to reach out to me with any additional questions or comments.

Sincerely,

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SPLC | ACTION

Follow up question from Congresswoman Cori Bush (MO-01)
House Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Crime, Violence, and Terrorism
Hearing on "The Rise in Violence Against Minority Institutions"
February 17, 2022

Question: Ms. Huang: You emphasized that "approaches to hate crimes and violent extremism should be de-securitized," particularly in the context of educating our youth on the history of white supremacist violence. Do you see any connection with the assault on Critical Race Theory and the 16 bomb threats levied against HBCUs in recent months?

SPLC Response: The connection with the assault on Critical Race Theory and the many bomb threats levied against HBCUs in recent months is indicative of demonstrations of hate that have historically beset the practice of liberatory education. As the SPLC continues the next 50 years of a civil rights legacy, we are aware of the harms that have been aimed directly toward institutions and individuals committed to a curriculum that expands democracy and makes it real for everyone.

The assaults on Critical Race Theory are reminiscent of the assaults made nearly 60 years ago during Freedom Summer where young people across race and class came to Mississippi to offer a more democratic way of learning to poor, marginalized Black students and their families. These assaults were coupled with church bombings as the Black churches served as institutions of support, power, and extended learning spaces just as our HBCUs are today. We are witnessing the same pattern of hate and extremism and its connection to teaching a curriculum that questions white supremacy, includes everyone in the vision for democracy, and encourages active engagement participation in this democracy.



Office of the President

Congresswoman Cori Bush (MO-01)
House Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Crime, Violence, and Terrorism
Hearing on The Rise in Violence Against Minority Institutions
February 17, 2022

1. Dr. Wilson: In instances where law enforcement officials are themselves arbiters of white supremacist violence against Black students at HBCUs, what resources and tools are available to prevent students from incurring physical and mental harm?

Our institutions are severely under-resourced and have limited resources to adequately respond to the myriad of physical and mental health challenges impacting students when they experience violence that might emanate from law enforcement. Violence against Black students at HBCUs by law enforcement has a long history. It must be eradicated. Engaging in transformative practices, there is a need to create critical consciousness, develop a concrete measurable plan (that is both proactive and reactive) and identify viable resources. Proactive strategies may include trauma informed, skill-based training about driving education and safety precautions while driving and walking, de-escalation training, and how to respond to an encounter with the police (i.e. being mindful of one's language, tone, responses, disposition, and movement). Reactive strategies may include having debriefings, consultations, mindfulness activities, relaxation techniques and/or counseling after an encounter due to high probability of anxiety, depression, isolative behavior and stress after an encounter. Viable resources such as awareness marketing and collaborating with campus safety and police regarding programming about mental health, misuse of power, resiliency, stress management, and anger management would be beneficial. These suggestions may not prevent students from incurring physical and mental harm but will arm them with tools of survival.

2. Dr. Wilson: Your testimony evoked multiple instances of white supremacist violence against HBCUs–particularly the tragic "Orangeburg Massacre," in which white state troopers indiscriminately fired into a crowd of Black students and killed 3 people. Of the numerous historical examples you provided, can you please explain the role law enforcement played in both preventing and provoking violence at HBCU campuses?

Law enforcement plays a vital role in both preventing and provoking violence at HBCU campuses. Law enforcement can prevent violence by creating safety plans, safe places, and access to support services. In addition, cultivating community relationships and/or partnerships

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with departments (i.e. the counseling center) on campus is favorable. Training such as Multicultural/Diversity competence, familiarity of the culture of the campus trauma informed education, de-escalation, critical incident, bystander intervention, and mental health first aid training would be advantageous. Also, problem solving workshops, town hall meetings, focus groups, facilitated dialogues and threat assessment team review of case studies would be useful. In terms of provocation, one must be aware of their implicit biases, repressed emotions, misuse of power, utilization of abrasive policing tactics and the use of threats and fear.