

Amazon's Use of Southern Poverty Law Center 'Hate List' Challenged by Consumer Group

By [Matthew Vadum](#)

Online retail giant [Amazon](#) should stop using the embattled Southern Poverty Law Center's ideologically biased "hate group" list to decide which charities qualify to receive donations under its AmazonSmile program, a consumer group says.

AmazonSmile allows Amazon shoppers to help charities of their choice by donating 0.5 percent of the price of any purchase. The money passes through the Seattle-based AmazonSmile Foundation, which, according to its [2015 IRS filing](#), disbursed just under \$13 million that year for charitable purposes.

Hate-group designations made by the Montgomery, Alabama-based Southern Poverty Law Center are often hotly contested by groups so labeled. Critics say the idea of the "hate group" itself is nebulous and difficult to define and therefore open to abuse. The SPLC has suffered internal turmoil lately as its founder, Morris Dees, and its president, Richard Cohen, were forced out amid allegations of sexual improprieties, racial discrimination, and a hostile work environment for its employees.

'Hate Groups'

Critics, often members of mainstream conservative organizations, say the SPLC is a far-left group that uses a politically-skewed definition of hate to hurt its ideological enemies. The Center lumps mainstream conservatives in with fringe extremists, white-supremacists, and neo-Nazis. Critics say the group treats all opposition to open borders and multiculturalist initiatives as "hate," and political expression of those views as "hate speech."

After the SPLC labeled the Family Research Council—the mainstream conservative religious organization—as a hate group, gay activist Floyd Lee Corkins II in 2012 shot and badly wounded the FRC building manager who halted his planned killing spree. Corkins told investigators that he decided to attack the FRC office after finding the group listed on an SPLC "Hate Map." He

entered guilty pleas to three felonies and was convicted under the District of Columbia's Anti-Terrorism Act of 2002.

In June 2018, the SPLC paid more than \$3 million as part of a legal settlement to former Muslim extremist [Maajid Nawaz](#) for wrongfully placing him and his counter-extremism group, Quillam, on an anti-Muslim hate list.

"Sometimes, the press will describe us as monitoring hate groups," former SPLC spokesman Mark Potok has said. "I want to say plainly that our aim in life is to destroy these groups, completely destroy them," using a "strictly ideological process."

The [agreement](#) that charities have to sign to participate in AmazonSmile defines "eligible organizations" as public charities that the IRS recognizes under Section 501(c)(3) of the tax code that are in good legal standing and headquartered in the United States.

Such eligible charities must not "engage in, support, encourage, or promote: intolerance, discrimination or discriminatory practices based on race, sex, religion, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, or age; hate, terrorism, or violence; money laundering; other illegal, deceptive, or misleading activities."

Emails to Amazon

Brian Glicklich, executive director of Citizens for Corporate Accountability, outlined his group's campaign aimed at Amazon.

"As a publicly traded company, Amazon is obliged to keep the best interest of shareholders front and center," Glicklich told The Epoch Times.

"We are showing Amazon and its board how many Americans are distressed and angry that they have elected to help the Southern Poverty Law Center in its plan to economically harass peaceful conservative nonprofits, through what can best be described as a smear campaign.

"As of this morning, we have delivered over 25,000 petition emails to Amazon and its board in just a few days. By the date of their annual meeting, May 22nd, they will have received at least half a million emails. It's hard to imagine how Amazon or its board can ignore the voice of conservative America in order to defend SPLC, an organization that has been the subject of hundreds of stories about its wrongdoing and corruption."

Among the conservative groups that have been labeled "hate groups" are the David Horowitz Freedom Center, Alliance Defending Freedom, Center for Immigration Studies, Center for Security Policy, Liberty Counsel, and Christians

and Jews United for Israel.

Glicklich said his organization doesn't necessarily support all groups that have received the hate group designation from SPLC.

"But we do not believe organizations espousing peaceful social and/or religious views belong on a 'hate list,' and denied access to business services afforded others, or placed alongside truly violent and extremist organizations."

SPLC Influences Others

Amazon is not the only institution that has been guided by the SPLC.

YouTube polices mainstream conservative voices based on SPLC recommendations. The SPLC's Heidi Beirich has acknowledged her group is part of YouTube's "Trusted Flaggers" program. YouTube (owned by [Google](#)) has suspended the accounts of several conservatives and demonetized them—that is, revoked their ability to collect ad revenues based on viewership.

[Twitter](#) routinely purges users based on SPLC-inspired criteria. Such an ideological cleansing was needed at Twitter, the SPLC has claimed, because "the racist 'alt-right'—a collection of far-right ideologies, groups, and individuals who believe multicultural forces are using 'political correctness' to undermine white people" had become popular on the social media platform.

Some anti-SPLC activism directed at Internet platforms has been successful.

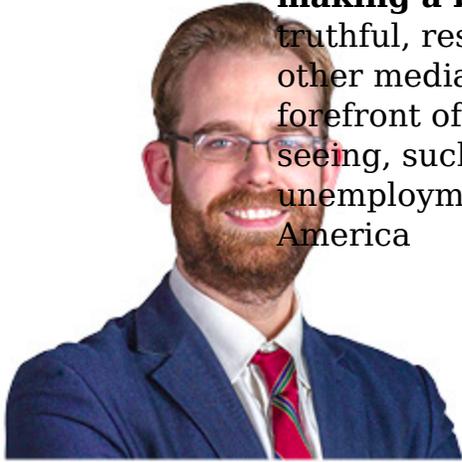
Under pressure from conservative groups, GuideStar, a website that provides a database of information on nonprofits, changed its policy in 2017 and announced it would no longer flag nonprofits on its site that the SPLC labels hate groups.

The same year, the Department of Defense's Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity removed all SPLC-provided training material pertaining to extremist groups. In the documents, the SPLC compared Roman Catholics and Protestants to al-Qaeda.

Neither the Southern Poverty Law Center nor Amazon responded to requests by The Epoch Times for comment for this article.

Correction: A previous version of this article misspelled the name of Maajid Nawaz and erroneously described him. Nawaz calls himself a secular liberal Muslim. The Epoch Times regrets the error.

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JASPER FAKKERT
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF