

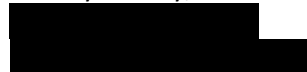


April 4, 2019

Amazon

Mr. Jeff Bezos, Chief Executive Officer

Mr. Jay Carney, Senior Vice President Global Corporate Affairs



Dear Mr. Bezos & Mr. Carney,

Citizens for Corporate Accountability is a coalition of politically diverse individuals supporting free speech and free markets. We request and require that you terminate immediately your use of the Southern Poverty Law Center's so-called "hate group" list in determining eligibility for the Amazon Smile Charitable Support program. The "hate group" list falsely purports to identify dangerous organizations promoting hate and violence, and Amazon has acceded to the demands of SPLC that Amazon terminate participation of named organizations in the Amazon Smile program.¹ However, this list mixes together racist and violent organizations like the Ku Klux Klan with those that simply espouse mainstream political and social views with which the SPLC and apparently many of its donors disagree.² For this reason, the list is permanently compromised, and cannot be relied upon for business decisions by Amazon or any other organization.

Additionally, dozens of media reports in recent weeks—including at the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*—have detailed the current internal turmoil within the Southern Poverty Law Center brought on by corruption and misdeeds at the highest levels of leadership.^{3 4} In addition to the termination of its co-founder and resignation of its long-time president, many current and former employees have come forward with stories that reveal "a systemic culture of racism and sexism within its workplace."⁵ SPLC has refused to discuss the reasons for these leadership changes in any detail, and has hired a political operative to conduct a secret investigation with no public accountability. This alone should be enough to cause Amazon to re-think its collaboration with SPLC, which has cynically billed itself for decades as a discrimination watchdog.

Coupled with the overt political motivations that compel the SPLC to associate mainstream conservative groups with members of the KKK, the toxic environment within the SPLC raises overwhelming concerns about the organization's credibility. However, these reports also confirm an equally insidious conspiracy – that the "hate group" list is a deceptive ongoing direct mail pitch designed to raise millions by sowing fear, division, and hate in American life.

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/magazine/wp/2018/11/08/feature/is-the-southern-poverty-law-center-judging-hate-fairly/>

² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/magazine/wp/2018/11/08/feature/is-the-southern-poverty-law-center-judging-hate-fairly/>

³ <https://www.npr.org/2019/03/14/703526235/southern-poverty-law-center-fires-morris-dees-its-co-founder/>; <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/03/23/southern-poverty-law-center-president-steps-down-organization-begins-workplace-review/>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/25/us/morris-dees-leaves-splc.html>.

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/22/us/splc-richard-cohen-resigns.html>

⁵ <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/03/29/us/splc-leadership-crisis/index.html>

Numerous employees and journalists have reported that the SPLC's so-called "hate group" list is not a principled database, but rather a highly successful and cynical fundraising tool. Former employees have described in great detail how the now-terminated SPLC founder developed the list to generate large donations from "gullible northern liberals."⁶ Indeed, the lack of research or rationale for many organizations on the list, other than being deemed undesirable by the SPLC and its politically active, wealthy donors, has caused it to rightly be called an "outright fraud" and "willful deception."⁷

By dishonestly redefining hate to include mainstream conservative organizations, SPLC has been able to urgently demand larger donations annually to combat what they define as an increasing problem, one that fits nicely with the politics of those receiving their hyperbolic appeals.⁸ This has been a disturbingly effective fundraising strategy. SPLC has parked nearly a half billion unused donor dollars in an endowment, with over \$100 million hidden in offshore accounts⁹. And with the help of corporations like Amazon, who accept their demands, they are able to show their politically driven donors that they are successful in redefining and suppressing speech SPLC and their donors find objectionable.

It is regrettable that Amazon has played a part in this corrupt speech suppression effort by using the SPLC's lists in the Amazon Smile program. Today, however, there is no legitimate reason for Amazon to continue its reliance on this fraudulent and fatally flawed product. We request and require the following:

1. Immediately terminate use of SPLC's "hate group" list and associated materials in determining eligibility for the Amazon Smile program.
2. Publicly renounce the use of SPLC's "hate group" list and associated materials in decision-making about any aspect of Amazon's business.

We believe that the moral bankruptcy of the SPLC and its politically-motivated "hate group" list is so clear, convincing, and well reported that no further detail is required in this letter. If you do not respond favorably, please know that we will ask Amazon shareholders, employees, and vendors, and the general public, for their support, with the intention of running a public information campaign.

We would appreciate your confirmation that you will terminate the use of SPLC's "hate group" list in your business no later than ten days from the date of this letter. We welcome further communication with you to clarify our position.

Best Regards,

Brian Glicklich
Executive Director
Citizens for Corporate Accountability

⁶ <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-reckoning-of-morris-dees-and-the-southern-poverty-law-center>

⁷ <https://www.currentaffairs.org/2019/03/the-southern-poverty-law-center-is-everything-thats-wrong-with-liberalism>

⁸ <https://www.splcenter.org/hate-map>

⁹ https://www.cotton.senate.gov/?p=press_release&id=1096