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*Promoting Tolerance • Monitoring Hate • Seeking Justice*  
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Dear Center Supporters:

I want to personally thank you for supporting the Southern Poverty Law Center's educational and legal work to fight hate and promote tolerance.

The \$225 gift you sent ensures your name will be included on the Wall of Tolerance, which was dedicated in October 2005. Thank you for joining us in the effort to preserve the values of tolerance and justice - values you and I share.

Because you are new to the Center, I'd like to take you on a short journey in time to help you understand why we began our work, why the Wall of Tolerance is so important, and how your continued support will make a difference in people's lives.

Our story is quite personal to me.

It all started back in 1969 when two African-American women walked into my law office with their small boys. They wanted their children to attend the Montgomery YMCA's summer swim camp. The segregated YMCA rejected them.

I was no civil rights lawyer back then, but I could not ignore the hurt I saw in those small boys' eyes.

We sued the YMCA and won. My life would change forever.

I never could have imagined that this case would be the seed for a tolerance project now involving more than 80,000 schools and millions of students.

Nor could I have foreseen that the Ku Klux Klan would later burn our law offices and try to kill me.

But I'm getting a little ahead of the story.

Growing up, I was lucky to have very special parents. They were cotton farmers, certainly not liberals, but they taught me some important lessons.

I remember one hot day in July 1948. I was 12. My job was waterboy, carrying buckets of cool spring water to the workers chopping grass from young cotton plants.

Mrs. Lee, a black lady, was the first to drink from the dipper. My daddy put down his hoe and then drank from the same dipper.

This may not be significant to you today, but it was to me. We had separate water fountains for blacks back then.

My uncle often called my daddy a "nigger lover" for doing things like

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this. After I sued the YMCA, these same hurtful words were whispered about me to my children. My white neighbors frowned on me.

My black friends embraced me and began seeking my help. About that time, a courageous young lawyer, Joe Levin, teamed up with me. We formed the nonprofit Southern Poverty Law Center in 1971 to seek justice for our clients.

We fought some tough battles over the next ten years. We integrated the Alabama Legislature and the state police force, put women and blacks on jury rolls, and defended minorities unfairly facing the death penalty. We even stopped the forced sterilization of black teenagers.

Our legal work spread across the South. Our staff grew. Our financial support came from concerned people like you.

In 1980, we defended Curtis Robinson, a black man charged with attempted murder. He shot a robed Klansman attacking his family with a club. Fortunately, we saved Mr. Robinson from going to prison.

You may have heard of Curtis Robinson. He had once been a member of The Coasters. He sang the memorable line in *Charlie Brown* -- "...why's everybody always picking on me?"

We filed a lawsuit against the Klansmen who had been "picking on" Curtis. We also sued their Klan group, The Invisible Empire. Until then, no hate group had been sued for the acts of its members.

We won again. From this case grew our Intelligence Project to track and expose hate groups.

Over the next 20 years, we took hate groups to court again and again, from North Carolina to Indiana to Oregon.

In 1987, we bankrupted the notorious United Klans of America with a \$7 million judgment for the mother of a black teenager lynched by Klansmen. In a touch of poetic justice, she obtained the deed to the group's new 7,500 square foot headquarters.

This was the same Klan group whose members bombed the black Birmingham church in 1963, killing four little girls.

Not long ago, we bankrupted the Idaho-based Aryan Nations with a \$6 million verdict. The group's armed guards violently assaulted our clients as they drove by the group's rural compound. They thought our clients were Jews.

These hate groups don't have millions, but we take what they own. With our donors' help, we pay all litigation costs and give our clients all we recover. We charge no fees.

While trying these cases, I've met many angry, impressionable young men taught to hate - much like the white boys I grew up with.

I especially remember one young Klansman who burned a black South Carolina church in 1997. His testimony helped us get a very large verdict against the "Christian" Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

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I spent many hours interviewing him in his prison cell, where he was serving 19 years for arson. He told me how he, like me, had once spent hours playing with black friends. One was a member of the Macedonia Baptist Church he later helped burn.

He said he often climbed a tall pecan tree near the church to wait for his friend to join him after Sunday services. The two would then race off across the fields to play.

His eyes filled with tears as he recalled. "I wanted to go inside, but Momma would never have let me." I don't hate black people," he sobbed. "It was the Klan's teaching." I understood.

Cases like this made me realize the importance of teaching young people acceptance and tolerance. Children aren't born hating. That's why we founded Teaching Tolerance.

We got experts like Harvard's Dr. Robert Coles and Duke University's Dr. John Hope Franklin to support us. With their help, Teaching Tolerance grew into one of the most successful education programs created by a private organization.

We made an early decision to provide our video-and-text education kits free to all K-12 schools that ordered them. Our donors increased their support to make this possible.

Our first teaching kit, "America's Civil Rights Movement," was a big success. The video won an Oscar, and the kit received top education awards.

More importantly, over 75,000 schools ordered copies. Letters of praise from teachers poured in. Teaching Tolerance was helping change young lives.

We have completed seven teaching kits since 1990. One of our newest is the Academy Award-winning documentary film "Mighty Times: The Children's March," a lesson of youthful courage, inspiration and hope. Gifts from Center supporters like you helped make this film possible.

More than half a million teachers also receive our award-winning magazine, *Teaching Tolerance*, free twice yearly. They can also find resources on our websites: [www.teachingtolerance.org](http://www.teachingtolerance.org) and [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org). I encourage you to visit these helpful sites.

As the Center has grown, we've made some powerful enemies along the way. Our supporters helped us respond to constant threats by funding a state-of-the-art security system to keep us safe.

I hope you can visit the Center one day and meet our people.

You'll see the Civil Rights Memorial across from our building. It was designed by Vietnam Veterans Memorial architect Maya Lin. A thin sheet of water flows over a circular black granite table and across the inscribed names of those who died for the rights of all people.

You can also visit Dr. Martin Luther King's church - located just a block from our offices. I can see it from my desk. I often think about his

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inspiring words.

"I have a dream," he told a divided nation in 1963, "that one day...little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and little white girls as brothers and sisters."

More than 30 years ago, Dr. King's dream became my dream - and the dream of everyone who works here at the Center. It is the dream you share with us as a supporter of our legal efforts, our Intelligence Project, and Teaching Tolerance.

Despite our successes, we still have a long way to go before that dream becomes a reality. The number of hate groups is at a record high - more than 700. These groups are still teaching impressionable young people their hate-filled ideals - and driving many to acts of violence against innocent people.

Over a lifetime fighting hate, I've learned that we can never be silent in the face of intolerance. We can never fear the consequences of standing up to hate. And we can never be indifferent to acts of injustice.

That's why Joe and I founded the Southern Poverty Law Center.

It's why we're constantly expanding Teaching Tolerance to reach young people before they learn to hate...why the Intelligence Project staff works so tirelessly to track and expose hate groups...and why our legal team works to protect victims of injustice.

We need you on our side. You and I - and all concerned people - must join together to stand up and speak out against those who seek to divide our nation...against those who seek to hurt and even kill people because they are of a different race, culture, religion, or lifestyle.

The Wall of Tolerance honors individuals like you who have taken that strong, public stance.

Your name on the Wall symbolizes your commitment to tolerance and justice. I hope it will also represent your continued support of our work. With your help, we will surely move forward in achieving Dr. King's - and our - dream.

Sincerely,



Morris Dees  
Founder

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P.S. Thank you again for adding your name to the Wall of Tolerance and supporting our work. I am confident that your decision will add great meaning to your life - as it has to mine. Together we can help advance tolerance and justice in the lives of all people.

I will be sending you a free video, so you can actually see the deep impact of the Center's work in classrooms and communities. You'll also receive some publications that will help you fight hate and promote tolerance in your community.