

**United States House of Representatives
Committee on the Judiciary
Hearing on the Southern Poverty Law Center, Part II**

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I. Introduction

This hearing has been scheduled at a moment of great urgency in the United States. Evidence makes clear that racially-motivated violence and hate crimes remain part of the political reality faced by Black people and other marginalized communities in our country. This hearing, and its purported focus on the Southern Poverty Law Center, is a distraction from the very real threats that vulnerable communities face right now in the wake of ongoing hate.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded in 1909 in the wake of widespread racial violence and lynchings of African Americans. The Springfield, Illinois race riot of 1908 served as the tipping point that galvanized the founding of the Association.¹ The race riot arose out of white residents' anger toward two Black men accused of alleged crimes against whites. The mob that formed lynched the two accused men. The mob then went on to murder and injure Black citizens, destroy Black homes and businesses, and drive thousands of others out of town.² The interracial group of founders, including Ida B. Wells, W.E.B. DuBois, and Mary White Ovington, went on to forge an anti-lynching campaign nationwide and lobbied for anti-lynching laws.³ In 1908 alone, eighty-nine Black Americans were lynched. After the newly incited activism and the formation of the NAACP in 1909, lynchings persisted but the number dropped to sixty-nine in one year.⁴

Since its founding in 1909, confronting hate crime violence has been at the core of the mission of the NAACP. As Jim Crow laws impacted communities across the South through hate-motivated violence such as lynchings and massacres, the burning of Black churches, the destruction of Black communities and physical violence, the NAACP has steadfastly challenged these systematic patterns of violence throughout its history and called for Congress to pass legislation that directly addressed the hate crime crisis gripping the country.

Addressing hate crime violence is at the core of the NAACP's mission, which is why we pledge to continue advocating against hate violence faced by Black people and other targeted communities.

The NAACP unequivocally opposes the targeting of the Southern Poverty Law Center, an organization dedicated to combatting hate violence in America. NAACP President Derrick Johnson observed "SPLC is the latest target in the DOJ's coordinated attack on the civil rights movement and democracy itself, following actions such as Executive Orders calling for an end to DEIA programs and the dismissal of significant litigation and pending settlement agreements by the Civil Rights Division." President Johnson also observed that attacks on SPLC come as this same administration "has pardoned January 6 insurrectionists — including individuals tied to white supremacist and paramilitary groups — while calling longstanding civil rights laws "discrimination" and portraying civil rights work itself as criminal." We reject the premise of

¹ <https://naacp.org/about/our-history>

² <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2024/08/16/a-proclamation-on-the-establishment-of-the-springfield-1908-race-riot-national-monument/#:~:text=In%20August%201908%2C%20mere%20blocks%20from%20the%20former,Americans%20and%20burning%20homes%20down%20to%20their%20foundations.>

³ <https://naacp.org/about/our-history>

⁴ [Lynchings-Stats-Year-Dates-Causes.pdf](#)

today's hearing. The NAACP stands in solidarity with SPLC an organization being targeted because of their civil rights work and their aggressive efforts to keep all communities safe.

II. Federal Legislative Responses Historically to Hate Crime Violence

Following advocacy by the NAACP and other civil rights organizations and families impacted by hate crimes, Congress has passed critical federal civil rights laws that provide important tools for holding perpetrators of hate crimes accountable, and for preventing the scourge of hate. Under this administration, we have seen a precipitous decline in enforcement of these important laws. We urge Congress to shift its focus away from SPLC and towards providing oversight of the federal government's enforcement of the law, or lack thereof.

For example, in recent years, we have seen the emergence of “white towns” that unlawfully prohibit Black people and other non-white groups from residing within their boundaries. In 1968, shortly after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Congress passed and President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Fair Housing Act (FHA).⁵ While the FHA protects against discriminatory housing practices, it also shields protected groups from unlawful intimidation and hate-motivated violence intended to drive residents away from their homes and communities based on their race, national origin, and religion.⁶ We urge Congress to study and examine the precipitous increase in the number of white towns that we are seeing in modern-day America and urge the Justice Department to formally investigate the alarming growth of these communities.

The Church Arson Prevention Act of 1996 sought to address the dramatic spike in attacks on African American churches.⁷ In all, this Act provides the government with more tools to hold perpetrators accountable when they direct violence at, burn, or otherwise unlawfully desecrate houses of worship.⁸

In 2009, the passage of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crime Prevention Act expanded protections against hate crimes.⁹ The bill provided prosecutors with “new tools in the fight against hate motivated violence.”¹⁰ In 1998, Matthew Shepard, an openly gay man, was killed by hate violence fueled by homophobia. He was lured from a local bar by two men, tied to a fence, beaten, and left to die.¹¹ That same year, James Byrd, Jr., a Black man, was lynched by white supremacists who chained him to a truck and dragged him through the street. Commemorating the passage of this Act, President Barack Obama stated,

“You understand that we must stand against crimes that are meant not only to break bones, but to break spirits—not only to inflict harm, but to instill fear. You understand that the

⁵ 42 U.S.C. § 3601

⁶ 42 U.S.C. § 3631(b)

⁷ 18 U.S.C. § 247

⁸ <https://www.usccr.gov/files/historical/1996/96-003-U.pdf>

⁹ 18 U.S.C. § 249

¹⁰ <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-reception-commemorating-enactment-matthew-shepard-and-james-byrd/>

¹¹ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Matthew-Shepard>

rights afforded every citizen under our Constitution mean nothing if we do not protect those rights—both from unjust laws and violent acts.”¹²

We continue to see racially-motivated violence and violence directed at the LGBTQ community in our country. More must be done to ensure the safety and security of these communities, and vigorous enforcement of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act is as necessary as ever.

In 2021, Congress passed the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act.¹³ This Act responded to an alarming rise in hate crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁴ This Act gave the Attorney General power to issue guidance to State, local, and Tribal entities in creating new reporting channels, data collection, and campaigns directed toward stopping hate against AAPI’s.¹⁵ Following the passage of the Act, the Justice Department announced “\$10 million in grant solicitations in newly created grant programs to address hate crimes and hate incidents.”¹⁶

The Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act¹⁷ was also passed to address the incomplete data on hate crimes occurring at State, local, and Tribal levels.¹⁸ Khalid Jabara was a Lebanese man murdered by his Islamophobic neighbor who harassed Jabara’s family for years.¹⁹ Jabara’s neighbor was prosecuted under hate crime laws, yet Jabara’s murder was not accounted for in hate crime statistics.²⁰ Heather Heyer fatally struck by a white supremacist during the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia.²¹ Like Jabara, Heyer’s murder was not reported in hate crime statistics.²² Inaccurate and incomplete data hinders government action in addressing these crimes while leaving the public in the dark about the widespread nature of hate crimes across the country.

In response to these important laws, the Justice Department previously increased resources and expanded coordination with State, local, and Tribal partners to increase their ability to identify, track, and address acts of hate.²³ The Justice Department facilitated the expedited review of hate crimes to assess whether acts of hate violate federal criminal laws and more.²⁴ Under this administration, we have seen many of these efforts come to a grinding halt—grant programs have been terminated, federal-state cooperation has collapsed, training programs have dried up and enforcement rates have declined. Congress must direct attention to addressing the Justice Department’s retreat in the fight against hate.

¹² <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-reception-commemorating-enactment-matthew-shepard-and-james-byrd/>

¹³ Pub. L. No. 117-13, § 30501, 135 Stat. 265 (2021)

¹⁴ <https://www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ13/PLAW-117publ13.pdf>

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ 34 U.S.C. § 30507

¹⁸ <https://www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ13/PLAW-117publ13.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://civilrights.org/blog/remembering-khalid-jabara-and-heather-heyer/>

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*

²² <https://www.aaiusa.org/library/the-khalid-jabara-and-heather-heyer-no-hate-act#:~:text=While%20their%20murders%20were%20prosecuted%20as%20hate%20crimes%2C,for%20improved%20hate%20crime%20reporting%20and%20data%20collection.>

²³ <https://www.justice.gov/archives/ag/file/1557621/dl>

²⁴ *Id.*

In 2022, Congress passed the Emmett Till Antilynching Act,²⁵ a bill that took well over a century to achieve final passage following many thwarted attempts like the NAACP-backed Dyer Anti-lynching Bill of 1918.²⁶ Emmett Till was a 14-year-old boy lynched by a group of white supremacists who beat Till beyond recognition, fatally shot him, and discarded his body in the Tallahatchie River in Mississippi in 1955.²⁷ Senators Cory Booker (D) and Tim Scott (R) introduced the bipartisan Emmett Till Anti-lynching bill, and President Joe Biden signed the legislation into law. The bill enhanced penalties for crimes that resulted in death or serious bodily injury, and addressed hate crimes involving conspiracy.²⁸ More must be done to raise awareness around this new law and the additional tools that it provides in the fight against hate.

Campaigns and policies against lynching and other hate crimes are integral to the safety and security of all Americans. Under this administration, the stark downturn in the fight against hate crimes is alarming and leaves more Americans less safe and more vulnerable. The attack against the Southern Poverty Law Center is a symptom of this downturn and is a distraction from the alarming rate of racially-motivated violence and hate crimes that we continue to see across the country.

III. The Current Administration's Retreat in the Fight Against Hate

The NAACP recognizes the urgent need for this current administration to aggressively address the high rates of violence targeting protected classes based on race, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender, and gender identity. Yet, this administration continues to dismantle tools essential to the fight against hate.

On August 5, 2025, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) released the 2024 hate crimes data from the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program, which reflects data reported by law enforcement agencies nationwide.²⁹ The statistics show that the number of known offenders reported has risen from 9,739 in 2023 to 10,096 in 2024.³⁰ Race, ethnicity, or ancestry accounted for approximately 53.4% of the bias-motivation for hate crimes from February 2024 to May 2026.³¹ Sexual orientation accounted for 15.84%, and religion accounted for 23.62%.³² Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) estimated an average of almost 250,000 hate crime victimizations each year between 2005 and 2019.³³

Current statistics also make clear that Black, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and LGBTQ+ Americans continue to be the most targeted groups, and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander

²⁵ 18 U.S.C. § 249

²⁶ <https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/legislative-milestones/dyer-anti-lynching-bill>

²⁷ <https://eji.org/news/antilynching-act-signed-into-law/>

²⁸ <https://www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ107/PLAW-117publ107.pdf>

²⁹ <https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/hate-crime-statistics>

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/explorer/crime/hate-crime>

³² *Id.*

³³ https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/hcv0519_1.pdf

communities faced a 93 percent increase in reported hate crimes from 2023 to 2024.³⁴ These statistics present an alarming picture about hate in America today.

In addition to the federal government's own statistics regarding hate crimes across America, the Department of Justice cancelled grants totaling an estimated \$500 million from the Office of Justice Programs that supported efforts such as local law enforcement agencies, victims' services organizations, research and evaluation, and public safety initiatives.³⁵ Furthermore, in their FY26 budget, the Administration cut grants "authorized under the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act, and other Bureau of Justice Assistance programs that would combat and prevent hate crimes."³⁶ The elimination of funding and resources does nothing to help confront the crisis of hate.

The NAACP is also alarmed at this Justice Department's decision to eliminate the Community Relations Services (CRS), a statutorily mandated agency within the DOJ established under Title X of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and expanded by the Church Arson Prevention Act of 1996 and the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009.³⁷ CRS staff have long been known as America's peacekeepers and have been deployed across the country to help diffuse tensions and mediate dialogue following hate-fueled crises that otherwise stand to divide communities. The CRS office was a go-to hub that provided important resources to state and local partners, advocacy groups and faith organizations committed to fighting hate. Today, the CRS website is nothing more than a shell of its former self. The CRS unit was reduced to one staff member.³⁸ This Committee should focus on the dismantling of the Community Relations Service and the role that this stands to play in leaving communities more vulnerable to hate violence.

IV. Hate Crimes Today

In the wake of this administration's retreat, we know that hate crimes are still present and ongoing.

- In August 2019, a white shooter walked into an El Paso Walmart and killed 23 Latinos and injured 22 more. The defendant is now serving 90 consecutive life sentences for multiple crimes, including 22 hate crime acts.
- In November 2022, a Colorado resident killed five and injured nineteen people and attempted to murder twenty-six more when he opened fire at Club Q, an LGBTQI+ establishment in Colorado Springs, Colorado. An investigation revealed that the perpetrator ran a website that posted a "neo-Nazi white supremacist" training video. The investigation also revealed that the perpetrator had "expressed hatred for police, LGBTQ+ people and minorities, and used racist and homophobic slurs" to people they interacted with online in the gaming community.³⁹ The Department of Justice charged the perpetrator

³⁴ <https://equality.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/equality.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/letter-to-bondi-hate-crime-prevention-and-enforcement-compressed.pdf>

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/departments-of-justice-decides-against-seeking-federal-death-penalty-in-colorado-club-q-mass-shooting>

with seventy-four federal hate crimes and a court imposed fifty-five life sentences in 2024.⁴⁰

- In May 2022, in Buffalo, New York, a perpetrator shot and killed 10 Black people at the Tops supermarket. The perpetrator livestreamed the attack.⁴¹ The shooter was inspired by prior shootings committed by white supremacists and plotted to “kill as many blacks as possible.”⁴² The Justice Department investigated and prosecuted the defendant for carrying out “racially motivated violent extremism.”⁴³ The federal prosecution is ongoing.
- In March 2026, the Temple Isreal Synagogue in West Bloomfield, Michigan faced what the Federal Bureau of Investigations described as an act of terrorism. The perpetrator plowed his truck into the synagogue of the largest Jewish temple in Michigan. With more than 100 students and teachers inside, the perpetrator began opening fire. Further investigation by local law enforcement units revealed that three days before the attack the perpetrator searched web pages for local synagogues, searching phrases including “largest gathering of Israelis in Michigan” and “Israelis near me.”
- In May 2026, two perpetrators opened fire at the front entrance of the Islamic Center of San Diego, the largest mosque in San Diego, California.⁴⁴ The attack killed three men, including a security guard. At the time of the attack, over 140 children were attending classes at the center’s pre-K to 3rd-grade school.⁴⁵ Law enforcement recovered writings in the suspects’ vehicle describing hatred based on race and religion.⁴⁶ The incident is currently under investigation.⁴⁷

The matters outlined above are just some of the horrific acts of hate violence that we have seen across the country that make clear that hate is alive and well across the country. Violent assaults, mass shootings inside stores, bombings and attacks on houses of worship – these acts should be the focus of this hearing today.

V. Conclusion

The NAACP has faced down racially motivated violence directed at the Black community, including efforts carried out in silent complicity of the federal government. We didn’t back down then and we won’t back down now. Non-profit organizations remain needed on the frontlines of the fight against hate in our country.

⁴⁰ <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/former-colorado-resident-sentenced-life-prison-federal-hate-crimes-and-firearm-offenses>

⁴¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/14/us/buffalo-ny-supermarket-multiple-shooting>

⁴² <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/15/buffalo-shooting-white-replacement-theory-inspires-mass>

⁴³ <https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/14/us/buffalo-ny-supermarket-multiple-shooting>

⁴⁴ <https://www.sandiego.gov/activeshooter#briefings>

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ *Id.*

⁴⁷ *Id.*

The year 2026 calls for robust, and bold solutions to prevent hate crimes and promote justice for those who have been affected by hate crime violence. The NAACP urges Congress to turn attention to real issues when it comes to hate: studying and examining the need for comprehensive legislation that further addresses ongoing hate crimes and the ways in which perpetrators are radicalized online; the growing tide of “white towns” across America; the spiraling network of organized hate groups that target, threaten and dox Black Americans, Latinos, Muslim and Jewish Americans, and others, with impunity; the need to strengthen state and local law enforcement’s ability to confront hate; the need for funding for advocacy organizations and faith groups that are working to confront hate and meet the needs of impacted communities and victims; the need for better data collection and data reporting; and much more.

As the nation’s oldest and largest civil rights organization, founded in part to confront hate violence, we will continue to demand and advocate that our government and this Congress proactively work to combat and eradicate hate. In the interim, the NAACP will continue its legal, advocacy and policy work to help eliminate the scourge of hate in our country.