



Submission of Input Regarding 2023 Report
on combating glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices

Since 1990, the Southern Poverty Law Center has published its annual [Year in Hate and Extremism](#) report providing analysis of the nature and magnitude of extremist threats in the U.S. and forward-looking policy recommendations designed to confront violent extremism and protect democratic institutions. The new report of findings for 2022 is due to be published within the next few weeks. We will supplement this submission with a copy of the report upon publication.

For 2021, which began with the deadly January 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, SPLC's report documented a disturbing mainstreaming of hate and an empowered hard-right movement working to undermine democracy. Followers and supporters of this movement shared a willingness to engage in political violence and deny legally established rights, including voter suppression targeting people of color and attacks on inclusive education and LGBTQ+ people. Sadly, the presence and acceptance of hard-right extremism in mainstream U.S. life and culture have only deepened over the ensuing year.

In 2021, SPLC tracked 733 hate groups and 488 anti-government groups. We anticipate documenting a continued decline in the number of hate groups. The subject matter experts in our Intelligence Project have documented the consistent influence of racist, antisemitic, and anti-LGBTQ tropes and conspiracy theories in U.S. society, now elevated by the fact that many extremists operate openly in the mainstream, reducing the need to join organized groups. Too many Republican politicians now [openly associate](#) with members of the white nationalist movement and freely employ their rhetoric, including [language promoting violence](#).

Hate in the Mainstream.

The frenzy of new state laws targeting inclusive education and LGBTQ youth that began to dominate state legislatures in 2021 accelerated in 2022. Across the U.S, states adopted laws that forced schools to [alter lessons](#) in ways that dramatically reduced student access to inclusive and accurate education about the history of racism and the contributions of people of color. A historic number of bills [attacked transgender students](#). Local hard-right activism has increasingly resulted in school board meetings being taken over by reactionaries who use [“parents’ rights” as a rallying cry](#) to target curricula, teachers, and administrators, for making any mention of issues of race, sexual orientation or gender identity. Anti-student inclusion groups have adopted the rhetoric and tactics of predecessors who attacked students, teachers, school officials and politicians in their

fight against school desegregation decades earlier. Teachers and librarians are being intimidated into complying with demands to [ban books](#) or pushed out of their jobs for refusing.

State legislatures and officials have adopted the “parents’ rights” rallying cry in proposing and advancing anti-inclusion laws. Texas Gov. Abbott’s “Parental Bill of Rights” would give parents unprecedented control over school curricula and the content of school libraries. Florida Gov. DeSantis in 2022 signed the “Parental Rights in Education Act,” which built upon the 2021 “Parents’ Bill of Rights” to sharply curtail access to inclusive education for children of color and LGBTQ students. By the end of 2022, at least 84 anti-inclusion bills were under consideration in 26 states.

One major impact of increased mainstream acceptance of extreme views has been the uptick in public performances of hate and circulations of hate group messaging. What began with spectacles in protest of COVID-19 public health measures later expanded to attacks on inclusive education and efforts to impede public events. Most recently, these have been largely focused on LGBTQ inclusive events. The incidence of far-right leaflet distribution has also generally been on the rise over the last several years. In 2022, the [ADL Center on Extremism \(COE\)](#) tracked a [significant increase](#) in white supremacist propaganda efforts.

Virulent forms of hate and extremism that were once the online province of underground, fringe websites are [increasingly easily accessed](#) through mainstream social networks. For a relatively brief period following the January 6th insurrection, some mainstream social media platforms banned Donald Trump and others associated with the violence, but that trend has been reversed. At the same time, an increasing number of “alt-tech” sites continue to provide the far-right with opportunities to raise funds, organize, and spread disinformation and propaganda. Many rank among the most frequently visited sites in the U.S.

Hate and Extremism in Law Enforcement and the Military.

[Testimony](#) before a House Oversight Committee in July 2020 detailed numerous instances of white supremacist affiliation and overt conduct in police departments around the country. Earlier this year, the SPLC [wrote](#) to the mayor and chief of police in Chicago, Illinois (population 29% Black and 28% Latino), to protest the failure to terminate employment of an officer tied to the [Proud Boys](#), one of the most active and violent hate groups in the U.S. The officer was an active participant in the Proud Boys’ extremist activities and lied about his participation yet was given only a 120-day suspension. A recent [investigative report](#) revealed that members of the [Oathkeepers](#), a far-right paramilitary organization, are active-duty police officers in many major metropolitan police departments. Some far-right organizations, including [Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association](#) and [Protect America Now](#) organization, are pro-militia, antigovernment membership organizations created expressly for law enforcement officers and current or former military soldiers. Members of these groups sometime [take the law into their own hands](#), either through improper policing or by refusing to enforce laws they deem unconstitutional. Some have formed “citizen posses” or threatened to deputize local gun owners.

The crisis of police violence against Black, Brown and Indigenous people is worsened by [militarization of U.S. police forces](#). Since 1996, a U.S. federal program has transferred [more than \\$7 billion in surplus military equipment](#) to law enforcement agencies across the nation. This equipment, including grenades, bayonets, fortified vehicles and weaponized drones, has been used to devastating effect against protestors on many occasions.

Law enforcement agencies are aware of extremists within their ranks, but few have undertaken meaningful measures. In 2019, a report identified officers in agencies across the country who belonged to closed Facebook groups of a racist, Islamophobic, misogynistic, or antigovernment militia nature. [“More than 50 departments promised investigations,”](#) but few concrete steps were taken. According to the [Anti-Defamation League](#), one-third of officers it identified as associated with an extremist group were involved in white supremacist groups. 40% were allowed to remain on active duty, and several who were dismissed for extremist links were hired by another police department. In states where legislators have proposed laws to give police departments more authority to remove extremists, [police officer organizations have pushed back hard](#).

In 2021, SPLC submitted Congressional [testimony](#), and the SPLC Action Fund made a [statement for the record](#) to Congress, providing detailed analysis of white supremacy and other forms of extremism in the military. The infiltration of the military by white supremacists and other extremists is highly relevant to law enforcement-related violence because state governments can, and sometimes do, call for National Guard assistance with law enforcement activities, particularly in the context of events like anti-racism demonstrations. Thousands of National Guard members were [deployed to Washington DC](#) and [across the country](#) for Black Lives Matter protests in June 2020. The ordered [“crackdown” on protestors](#) was so excessive that it resulted in an internal investigation. Similar deployments to anti-racist demonstrations happened [across the country](#) in anticipation of the verdict in the trial of George Floyd’s killer.

Hate Crime Reporting and Data Collection.

The [Hate Crime Statistics Act](#) (HCSA) requires the FBI 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 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. It includes data from all police agencies that either report one or more hate crimes or affirmatively report zero hate crimes.

Unfortunately, hate crime reporting is voluntary for state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies, and many agencies do not provide information. Underreporting has been a persistent issue, obscuring the scale and scope of hate crimes in the US. The problem was dramatically worsened in 2021, the first year the FBI required reporting through a new system. Problems with implementing the system resulted in 3,300 fewer agencies participating than in 2020, including very large cities and the entire states of Florida and California.

On March 13, 2023, in large part due to a vehement response from the SPLC and other civil rights organizations, the FBI released a [supplemental report](#) based on summary data that added about

3,600 additional hate crimes to those shown in the original report, resulting in the highest figure since reporting began in 1991. The additional data also included about 3,000 more agencies, but still the fewest since 2012. Race-based hate crimes, most against Black victims, were the most numerous (64.5%), as they always have been. SPLC and our allies confronting hate violence are advocating mandatory hate crime reporting, or conditioning federal funding on credible reporting or meaningful community-based outreach and prevention initiatives.

Enactment of the [COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act](#) in May 2021 was an important step forward. Sparked in part by thousands of incidents of violence, harassment, and intimidation against Asian American and Pacific Islander community members, the law authorizes grants to stimulate improved local and state hate crime training, prevention, best practices, and data collection initiatives, and for state hate crime reporting hotlines to direct individuals to local law enforcement and support services. On the first anniversary of its enactment, the Department of Justice announced a [series of initiatives](#) to address hate violence, including guidance prepared jointly by DOJ and the Department of Health and Human Services to raise awareness and describe resources to address [hate violence in AAPI communities](#).

U.S. Government Responses.

- Following the arrests of several military veterans and at least one active-duty service member for their roles in the violent assault on the U.S. Capitol, the Secretary of Defense ordered a one day “stand down” across military branches to address extremism within the ranks, and the Pentagon undertook a review. A new Senior Advisor position to provide oversight on the issue of extremism in the military, reporting to the Secretary of Defense, was established but then eliminated a year later. The Pentagon later [produced a report](#) and [published new regulations](#) intended to help prevent extremist activities by active-duty military personnel. The Department of Defense revised [Instruction 1325.06](#), on Handling Protest, Extremist, and Criminal Gang Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces, to prohibit “active participation” in extremist activities, but the new rules [don’t prohibit membership](#) in white supremacist or other extremist organizations. The rules also fail to address racially disparate treatment of service members in the military justice system and contain no explicit definitions or prohibitions of hate crimes, hindering investigations into such crimes.
- In May 2021, the [U.S. endorsed the Christchurch Call](#) to Eliminate Terrorist and Violent Extremist Content Online.
- In June 2021, the Biden administration published its [National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism](#). It focuses on racial and ethnic hatred as substantial underlying causes of domestic extremism and broadly outlines approaches to addressing the threat of domestic terrorism – including focus on the need to develop and fund long-term anti-racism initiatives – but gives insufficient attention to the threat posed by infiltration of law enforcement agencies. One of its stated goals is to improve vetting and screening processes to better scrutinize backgrounds for potential ties to or tendencies toward domestic terrorism.

- In May 2022, President Biden issued his [*Executive Order on Advancing Effective, Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices to Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety*](#), which requires that the Office of Personnel Management to develop practices to:

“help avoid the hiring and retention of law enforcement officers who promote unlawful violence, white supremacy, or other bias against persons based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), or disability.”

This new mandate covers all federal law enforcement officials.

- In May 2022, the House of Representatives passed [H.R. 350](#), the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act. If adopted, the bill would have required that anti-terrorism training and resources provided to federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies include assistance in identifying, investigating and deterring white supremacist and neo-Nazi infiltration of law enforcement and corrections agencies. It would also have established an interagency task force to analyze and combat such infiltration in federal law enforcement and military agencies, and to produce an annual report assessing the threat posed by such infiltration. Unfortunately, Republicans in the Senate blocked passage of the bill, and have opposed providing any funding to federal agencies to address white supremacy and other extremism, contending it is unnecessary.
- In September 2022, the White House convened the “[United We Stand Summit](#),” bringing together policymakers, civil rights groups, community, faith and business leaders, law enforcement, and survivors of hate-fueled violence with the goal of countering such violence and creating a shared vision for a more united nation. The [administration announced](#) a list of federal agency commitments and community-based programs to fight against hate. Following the Summit, the White House formed an inter-agency group to counter antisemitism. No similar inter-agency mechanism has been announced to address hate directed at other groups.

Prevention Initiatives.

In March 2022, the SPLC Action Fund submitted to the Senate Judiciary Committee a [statement](#) outlining critical steps the U.S. must take to combat the rise in hate and extremism, including more funding and support for building community resistance, and expanding rather than curtailing anti-racism education and prevention initiatives. The U.S., and many other governments around the world, focus their resources on hardening facilities and enforcing hate crime laws without a concomitant commitment to efforts to prevent the hateful ideologies that underpin extremist violence from taking hold in the first place and to support investment in community resilience. The best prevention lies in addressing the root causes of radicalization and inoculating people, especially youth, against it.

As right-wing extremism is increasingly mainstreamed and adherents continue to attain public offices, the need to find innovative ways to enable the public – especially young people, parents, and educators – to recognize and resist disinformation and radicalization are more

urgent than ever. SPLC, in partnership with American University’s Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL), is working to [develop and disseminate tools](#) to inoculate youth against radicalization and build community resilience through early prevention and non-carceral solutions.

In the Spring of 2020, SPLC and PERIL released the first of these resources, “[Building Resilience and Confronting Risk: A Parents & Caregivers Guide to Online Radicalization](#),” followed by a number of [complementary tools](#). In November 2022, we released a new resource, “[Building Networks & Addressing Harm: A Community Guide to Online Youth Radicalization](#),” which builds on the earlier guide to help equip and empower a wider network of adults to identify and effectively intervene in the process of radicalization, and to help build resilience. It is possible to bridge partisan divides and to unite communities to push back against the rising tide of hate and extremism, but much more support for these efforts must come from government.