

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH MORRIS DEES

SUBJECT: RACE IN AMERICA

MODERATOR: THERESA WERNER, NATIONAL PRESS CLUB BOARD OF GOVERNORS

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THERESA WERNER: (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon and welcome to the National Press Club for our Speakers Luncheon. My name is Theresa Werner of Associated Press Broadcast, and a member of the National Press Club Board of Governors. We're the world's leading professional organization for journalists and are committed to the future of journalism by providing informative programming and journalism education, and fostering a free press worldwide. For more information about the National Press Club, please visit our website at www.press.org.

On behalf of our 3,500 members worldwide, I'd like to welcome our speaker and our guests in the audience today. I'd also like to welcome those of you who are watching on C-SPAN. We're looking forward to today's speech, and afterwards I will ask as many questions from the audience as time permits. Please hold your applause during the speech so that we have time for as many questions as possible. For our broadcast audience, I'd like to explain that if you hear applause, it may be from guests and members of the general public who attend our luncheons, and not necessarily from the working press.

I'd now like to introduce our head table guests and ask them to stand briefly from when their names are called. From your right, Craig Gilbert, Washington Bureau Chief, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*; Corrina Zarek, Freedom of Information Director, the Reporter's Committee for Freedom of the Press; Austin Kiplinger, Chairman, *Kiplinger Washington Editors*; Susan Starr, Mr. Dees' wife; Jamila Bey, freelancer and co-chair of the Freelance Committee; Julian Bond, Chairman of the NAACP and first president of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

To my right is Melissa Charbonneau, independent producer, Newshook Media and Vice Chair of the NPC Speaker's Committee. I'm going to skip over the speaker and be back to him. Andrew Schneider, Associate Editor of *Kiplinger Washington* and the Speaker Committee member who arranged for today's luncheon; the Honorable Lorraine Miller, Clerk of the House of Representatives and President of the Washington, D.C. NAACP chapter; Cheryl Hampton, Director of Journalism Recruiting for NPR; Peggy Roberson, retired from the Hearst Washington Bureau; and Joe Winski, Managing Editor of America's *Bloomberg News*. (Applause)

Just off of the Mall between 14th Street and Raul Wallenberg Place, stands the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Its mission is to preserve the memory of six million Jews, and millions of other minorities murdered by Nazi Germany and its collaborators. It serves not just as a monument to an unprecedented tragedy, but is a warning of the dangers of unchecked hatred and of the violence that such hatred invariably inspires.

One month ago today, an 88 year-old man named James Whitaker Von Brunn walked up to the museum. Officer Steven Tyrone Johns, a museum guard for the past six years, held open the door for this elderly man. Von Brunn responded by allegedly shooting Johns in the face with a rifle. It was only the fast action of his fellow guards that kept Johns' murder from becoming the first death in what could have been a planned massacre.

A subsequent search of Von Brunn's car turned up a listing of other places including the White House, the Capitol, the National Cathedral and the *Washington Post* along with a note calling the Holocaust a lie and an anti-Semitic rant. We are right to be shocked by the shooting at the Holocaust Museum, but we should not be surprised. Prior to 9/11, the deadliest terror attack on U.S. soil was the 1995 bombing by right wing extremist of the Alpha P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City; 168 people were killed including 19 children and another 500 were injured. Since that time, there have been no fewer than 75 attacks and planned attacks within the U.S. motivated by radical ideology.

There have been ten such cases within the past year alone, including eleven murders and three assassination plots against candidate and then-President Elect Obama. Our speaker has made it his life's work to hold those who would commit such acts accountable. Morris Dees has been a leader in the fields of civil rights and civil liberty litigation for more than 40 years. As founder and chief trial counsel of the Southern Poverty Law Center, Dees pioneered the strategy of holding hate groups responsible for violent acts by their members, filing civil suits that bankrupted almost a dozen major white supremacist organizations. His work has earned him praise from the American Bar Association, the National Education Association, the American Civil Liberties Union, the NAACP, and the Anti Defamation League.

But it has also resulted in a series of attempts on his life and those of his colleagues. He joins us to discuss a report released today by SPLC analyzing the upsurge in domestic terrorism and the documenting of the presence of white supremacists in the

U.S. military. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in giving a warm National Press Club welcome to Morris Dees. (Applause)

MR. DEES: Thank you. Thank you very much for the opportunity to address the National Press Club and those media people who are sitting here now. Feel free to applaud. (Laughter) I want to thank the supporters of the Southern Poverty Law Center who also come. And I won't try to recognize those in the audience who we invite as special guests. But I would like to recognize Congressman Artur Davis, who is a candidate for governor of Alabama and is a very wonderful spokesperson for our state.

I want to talk a bit about U.S. domestic terrorists, the threat posed by extremists of the radical right in this country. We know that James Von Brunn walked in and shot the security guard, Mr. Johns, in the face and killed him. It's a shocking thing to happen. Mr. Von Brunn had a website called The Holy Western Empire, and he had written a book called, *Kill the Best Gentiles*. I'll just read you a paragraph out of his book. "And today, on the world stage, a tragedy of enormous proportions, the calculated destruction of the white race and incomparable culture it represents. Europe, former fortress of the west, is now overrun by hordes of non-whites and mongrels." This man had a long history in the Holocaust Denial Movement. He blamed Jews for the destruction of the white race in America and the world. And there was a note that was found in his car. He said, "Obama was created by the Jews. Obama does what his Jew owners say."

And he almost ended his life targeting the object of his hate. Now, was he just one lone nut, somebody we shouldn't take serious because we have lone nuts who've done these kind of things throughout the history of our country. You just heard about Timothy McVeigh, his bombing of the Oklahoma Murrah Federal Building, killing 168 people. You could also consider him a lone nut. That was the largest number of people killed in the United States in any terrorist act until the World Trade Center, and the second largest since.

But there have been numerous plots since Oklahoma City. Some 75, if you check the website of the Southern Poverty Law Center, its hate watch blog, you'll see a listing of these incidences involving bombings, plots to blow up federal buildings, plots to assassinate federal judges and many, many more. Fortunately, through the very good work of the FBI, the Justice Department, the local and state and federal police, that most of these plots have been stopped.

Since the election of President Obama, we've seen a rash of serious incidences that have been caused by domestic terrorists. On October 24th, two skinheads were charged in a serious plot to assassinate Obama. They were members of a group called the Supreme White Alliance. Right before this murder took place, we were taking the head of that group, Ron Edwards of the Imperial Clans of American to court, this group, the Supreme White Alliance was a splinter group of that group. And I can tell you from the testimony we brought out in court, and from the dealing with these people, that they were dead serious. They would have killed President Obama if they could.

On December the 16th, before President Obama was inaugurated, a Marine from Camp Lejeune was indicted for threatening Obama and that was based on writings in his journal. It was full of neo-Nazi and anti-Semitic hate material. The very day that Obama was sworn in, January 21st, a white man shot and killed two black immigrants in Brockton, Massachusetts, and planned to kill as many Jews as possible. He said, "Fighting for the dying white race, whites facing genocide," he told police.

And we know not far from here in Pittsburgh, three police officers were killed by a white man who said when he was arrested that Obama, he was sure, intended to confiscate our guns. The incidents go on and on and on, not just involving the threats to kill African-Americans and Jews, but also Latinos. On June 12th recently, the executive director of the Minuteman American Defense went into a home, a home invasion, you might say, down in Arizona and shot a Latino man and his nine year old son. The whole thing was a plot to supposedly rob this family who they thought were drug dealers, and take whatever money they could get. Very serious.

But the threat from right wing terrorist extremists in this country is real. And I guess you might say the flames are being fanned by many people in the news media. Glenn Beck, Fox News, said that fascism is coming. FEMA is setting up concentration camps. Rush Limbaugh, who has 600 regular stations that hear his program, and he claims several million viewers said that, "Fascism, we must not be afraid to use that word." And he's talking about the government of Barak Obama.

And then Michael Savage, who's on 400 radio stations, says, "There's going to be a wholesale firing of white men in the U.S. government. Your guns will be seized and your free speech is gone." And Dick Morris on Fox News said that, "Those crazies in Montana who say we're going to kill the ATF agents because of the U.N., is going to take over," well, they're beginning to make a good case.

And similar words have come from members of Congress of the United States, and I won't go through all of them, just only mention one: Congressman Paul Brown of Georgia, which has suggested that, "Obama might establish that a Gestapo security force." And then he says, "I'm not comparing Obama to Hitler, what I'm saying is there's just potential." And, you know, these comments, when unstable extremists stewing in their own hate and rage, when they keep hearing their paranoia and their fringe world view validated and reinforced by mainstream figures, is it any wonder that they take up arms and do things like Von Brunn did, or these other individuals?

Hate groups are on the rise in the United States. A perfect storm is brewing for the buildup of these hate groups. There are 926 hate groups that we've documented at the Southern Poverty Law Center's intelligence project. And I can't say that we've been able to identify everyone, every hate group, because they don't register down at the Chamber of Commerce. But we know that there's 926 that was documented do exist. And you can pick up a copy of our "Year in Hate" which is outside here, or you can go on our website and you can see all these hate groups and they're scattered all over the United States. That 926 hate groups is a 54 percent increase since the year 2000. Just to run off a few groups

there, there are 186 groups that are affiliated with the Ku Klux Klan, 196 neo-Nazi groups, the biggest one being the National Socialist Movement. And it goes on and on. And there are 113 black separatist groups, groups like the Nation of Islam whose language is really no different than some of the hate groups that we track on the far right who say that Jews are children of the devil and that Judaism is a gutter religion. Obviously, that doesn't reflect the view of Muslims in this country, the several million fine citizens of this country who are Muslims, but it does reflect the views of those extremist groups that I mentioned.

And one of the most troubling things that we're seeing now is the-- I guess you might call it the reemergence of the so-called patriot or militia groups. Back in the time of Timothy McVeigh, there were several hundred of these groups and they kind of wanted. Back then, their focus was anti-government, against the various policies of our government, high interest rates, unemployment, you name it. But now we're seeing a reemergence of the militia groups and their focus is becoming racist because the face of our government is black, they see it, an African-American president. So these groups are now becoming-- Kind of merging, in many ways, with the neo-Nazi and the other hate groups.

And hate websites are feeding this frenzy. Also on our website at the Southern Poverty Law Center, you can find a listing of the 630 or so hate websites. And when they began to investigate Von Brunn, they found not only did he have his own hate website, but he was a frequent visitor of the other hate websites.

David Duke, who we all know, picks up on this anxiety and frustration and distrust. And on his website, he put "Obama's victory will serve as a visual aid to whites, provoking backlash that will result in dramatic increase in our ranks." And on the National Socialist Movement website, there was a picture of President Obama with the crosshairs from the scope from a rifle and under that picture it said, "Kill the NIG--" And you figure the rest.

Hal Turner, a neo-Nazi leader who credit to the U.S. Justice Department and others who's just been arrested says, "We need to start shooting Mexicans as they cross the border." This type language is out there.

Now, what's going on in America today? What's happening? Well, I think it doesn't take a sociologist or expert on demographics to tell you that America is changing. America is drastically changing. In 1970 when I was just getting started in the legal professional world, only 20 percent of our population was non-white. When I say non-white, I mean also non-Latino. Now, it's 34 percent. And by the year 2040, the population will be approximately close to 50 percent non-white in the United States. Diversity is a great thing. I've said many times when I speak to college students that America is great because of our diversity and not in spite of it. But diversity also brings with it serious issues of people getting along with each other. Recent polls show that in a population where you have, say it's South Dakota and Wyoming where you have 85, 95 percent Anglo whites, the people trust their neighbors. Polls, though, show that when you

have a very diverse population, a third of each of several different ethnic groups, the trust of one's neighbors falls substantially and for no real basic reason.

So with diversity and its values also comes the problems that we're facing. And that's what we're seeing with these things. And another thing that clearly speaks for itself, is that America has a black president. We had 250 years of slavery, 100 years of Jim Crow, and probably you might say, 30, 40, 50 years when Brown v. Board really meant nothing, it was just being implemented. And all the conflicts in the civil rights movement. And now we have a black president. And this is extremely unsettling to a large percentage of the population in this country.

Another thing that's happening our country, and I don't need to tell you because I'm sure most of your 401s, 201s by now (Laughter), we're suffering a serious economic decline. It's not just the decline in this country, but it's the decline in the whole world. And this creates a lot of issues: fear, paranoia, and it creates those who are looking for a scapegoat.

Probably along with this issue of our economy comes the fact that the United States is losing its place among the, as an economic, at least, leader, of the world. We have serious competitors like China, India, Brazil and others whose gross national product will probably increase, increase, this year and ours won't. That's a good thing, not a bad thing because it'll be a place that we can sell our products. I think the world is a bit frustrated and tired of financing the deficit spending habits of the American consumer. Those serious issues all come together to make a problem not just in this country, but a problem in the whole world.

Homeland Security, headed by Janet Napolitano, issued a report recently. It was entitled, "Right Wing Extremists, Current Economic and Political Climates Fueling Resurgence in Radicalism and Recruitment." And they cited in this report the current economic crisis as being one of the problems, exploiting the economic downturn, historical presidential election, revisiting of the 1990s of the militia movement, and illegal immigration. And under illegal immigration, they gave some examples. One was, "six militia members arrested for weapons and explosives violations planned to machinegun immigrants."

And then the last thing mentioned in this report, and a very significant thing, and that was disgruntled military veterans. They mention McVeigh. And then the report went on to state that, "Large numbers of potentially violent neo-Nazi skinheads, and others, are now learning the art of warfare in the United States military." Well, this report was roundly ridiculed. Pat Robertson said, "It shows somebody in that organization is either a left-winger or is gay." And you know the other criticisms. And mostly criticisms coming from the political right, and it wasn't just the Pat Robertsons of the world, it was some of our Congress people, was that they were attacking the good men and women of the United States military. Well no, that's not the report was doing. Those were disingenuous criticisms.

This report said that, “There are many people who are going to be coming back from the military, from Iraq, Iran and others, being”-- When it’s over, coming back home, not finding jobs, being frustrated and being very disgruntled. And those people, for many of those, not all of them, but a few, are prime targets for recruitment by the radical right and the organizations that I mentioned.

The second point this report made was that we are training in the United States military, we are training individuals who already involved in neo-Nazi and white supremacist activity. We see on hate websites suggestions that their members join the military and learn how to use three or four plastic explosives and other things. And why not let the government train you? You can’t buy these explosives anywhere else, it’s illegal.

Today, the Southern Poverty Law Center issued a letter. We asked the Chairman of the Senate Homeland Security, Mr. Lieberman, the Chair of the House Committee on Homeland Security, Honorable Bennie Thompson, the letter was directed to Carl Lett (?) and also the Senate Armed Services Committee Chair and Honorable Ike Skelton, the Chair of the House Armed Services Committee.

I’ll just read you a couple of paragraphs from this letter, and accompanying this letter was about a 400-page bound report backing what we said is happening up. It said, “In the wake of several high profile murders by extremists of the radical right, we urge your committee to investigate the threat posed by racial extremists who might be serving in the military to insure that our armed forces are not inadvertently training future domestic terrorists.”

A couple more things, and I won’t read you the whole letter because you can pick one up outside of this room, it says, “We’re not alone in our concerns. In July 2008, the FBI issued a report indicating that the problem of extremists in the military may have worsened. According to the report, sensitive and reliable sources reporting indicates supremacist leaders encouraging followers who lack documented histories of neo-Nazi activity and who don’t have swastikas on their bodies and tattoos, to infiltrate the military as ghost skins in order to recruit and receive training for the benefit of the extremists.

And we go on and lay out what the Homeland Security report says. And just to indicate some of the things that we found, we gave the postings on a neo-Nazi Facebook page, it’s called Newsaxon.org, 40 postings of different individuals who claimed that they’re in the military, active duty, Air Force, Navy, Army. And one lists Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* as one of his favorite books. Another posted that they serve in Afghanistan, his favorite book is *The Turner Diaries*, which was written by neo-Nazi leader, William Pierce and was Timothy McVeigh’s blueprint for the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building.

It was found in the back seat of his car, underlined using 4,000 pounds ammonia nitrate soaked with diesel fuel, and that was exhibit one at his trial. These individuals go on and on on their websites posting, these soldiers posting, their views. One of them said

he looked forward to killing as many bloody sand n-i-g-e-r-s as he could find. Clearly, the overwhelming majority of the U.S. service members reject this extremism. But this is an issue that we hoped the United States military will take seriously.

You know, America is changing. But with this continuing furor over the changing demographics of our country and the collapse of our economy and the backlash against the election of the first black country (sic), our nation is in a fragile state. But we're not alone. As NPR reported last week, the global economic crisis is also fueling far right politicians in European countries. Still, there are signs of great hope. Our latest election saw the shattering of glass ceilings, whether defined by race or by gender. Millions of Americans crossed the color line at the ballot box.

For the first time in our history, a poll taken in May 2009 showed that both black and white people believe that race relations are generally good in our country. And that is a major change. But because before that, and before the election of President Obama, about 75 percent of Anglo whites in this country said that race relations were good. And about 25 percent of blacks thought they were good. So that's a great change and a hopeful sign.

You know, Americans of all stripes are very optimistic about President Obama and what he can mean to this country. There undoubtedly are going to be more acts of violence that we're going to have to put up with. But I'm convinced that we're not going to go back to the days, the days that this country was when I grew up in segregated Alabama, the days that Martin Luther King founded the civil rights movement with the help of Rosa Parks and Julian Bond and so many more people who put their lives at risk.

But as Dr. Martin Luther King said in 1963 from the Mall here in Washington, he says, "The arc of the universe may be long, but it bends towards justice." Thank you very much. (Applause)

MS. WERNER: Could you comment on the incident two days ago in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania, where 68 minority children were asked to leave a swimming pool and where white parents pulled their children out of the pool? Is racism alive and well, even in suburban Philadelphia?

MR. DEES: I'm not familiar with that incident, but it sounds like Montgomery, Alabama in 1955. Certainly bears looking into. Can't say who's right or wrong in that case, but I know that if white parents pulled their children out of a pool because black students are in that pool, it's a tragedy.

In 1968, or '67, I can't remember the date now, I'm getting old, I filed a lawsuit against the Montgomery YMCA to integrate it, because the city closed its pools and parks and pushed concrete and dirt in them, some 20-something pools. And a federal court ruled that the YMCA, who had built a large number of pools and facilities, could not do it as a private organization, but the city couldn't do legally as a public entity. So, clearly that bears looking into and I hope the facts are different than you report.

MS. WERNER: Has the dire economic climate contributed to the recruitment of hate groups?

MR. DEES: Well, I probably answered that question in my talk the best I could, but clearly we've seen a resurgence in the number of hate groups. Not always you can say that dire economic climate, but it's those who people perceive as causing the problem. The Latino migration in this country, documented or otherwise, is the biggest engine generating increase in hate groups, creating hate crimes at the same time. There was a 40 percent increase in crimes against Latinos in 2008 alone.

MS. WERNER: America has a long history of domestic terrorism and today has close to 1,000 homegrown terrorist groups. Why is the public interest and seemingly government interest in international terrorist groups many times greater than it is in our own terrorists?

MR. DEES: While I think the World Trade Center was quite a tragic event to take place, and it led us into the war in Afghanistan, and unfortunately a move into Iraq, that's where we're devoting billions of dollars and lives of young people. But during the same time, there are agencies in our government that are tracking domestic terrorists and doing a good job. They're not really ignoring them.

We have here today, and I won't indicate who these people are, but there are some officials of the United States Justice Department and they're on top of this on a regular and daily basis. I don't think there's going to be a serious problem of lack of interest. We do hope that the United States Department of Defense will deal with some of these issues where the United States government is using our taxpayer dollars to train future Timothy McVeighs. Because, you know, Timothy McVeigh got his training in the United States Army.

MS. WERNER: Do you think that the Obama administration should establish an Office of Tolerance in the White House and federal agencies like President Bush's Office of Faith Based Initiatives because the nation is faced with an increase in white supremacist activity?

MR. DEES: I don't think that President Obama should have an Office of Acceptance and Tolerance because of hate groups and their activities, I think that the whole focus of our government from state, national and federal levels, should be acceptance and tolerance. I don't know that a particular cabinet position is necessary because all aspects of the government deal with the subject, whether it be the Department of Housing, HUD, whether it be the Justice Department. We simply need a focus. We need a national mix it up day. We have one at the Southern Poverty Law Center where we ask students in school to sit at a different table at lunch. Sometimes, as you know, black students sit together, white students, jocks, whatever. And this is the first time a lot of people have a chance to cross a barrier, take a step forward. Whether it be good if

President Obama would go down into the-- He may do this-- The cafeteria at the White House and just hang around and sit down and talk to the other people that's sitting there?

But it shouldn't be just a one-day fair. It has to be something that we deal with. Back when I was a boy, we would throw trash out the window of a car without thinking about it. In fact, when we were driving home from the cotton fields, I'd throw bottles and try to hit signs. If I rolled the car window down now to throw some trash out, Susan would stop me. But, my grandchildren would, too, because we spent a long time trying to get people to clean up the trash along the byways of America.

You remember the Indian that was standing there and the trash hit his foot and you see a tear come down his eye? Well, it took a lot of dripping water on the rock to help us clean up this trash in America, this littering our country. I believe if we had that same campaign for acceptance and tolerance like we have at the Southern Poverty Law Center, our teaching tolerance program that some 80,000 schools use, that one day we'll clean up some of this hate that we have in this country.

MS. WERNER: Can you tell us a little bit more about the teaching tolerance program and why you don't think it's become mandatory curriculum in public education?

MR. DEES: Well, there are enough, I guess, fish to fry in our public education with No Child Left Behind and other things, not to have another mandatory thing. But just like we shouldn't necessarily have to have an acceptance and tolerance part of our government, that should be a thing that schools should work with, an all-inclusive school community. A culture in a school that fosters acceptance and tolerance, along lines of not just race, gender, but along lines of sexual orientation, those that are handicapped, and so many other things.

Our teaching tolerance program is funded by the supporters of the Southern Poverty Law Center. We have approximately a half million teachers in our magazine teaching tolerance. And some people say, "Why do you use the word tolerance?" Well, we picked tolerance from the United Nations Declaration of Tolerance, accepting the differences between people and building on those differences for a better world. And that program has been an extremely successful program. We have videos and text and teachers guides, and most of it's online. It's available to anybody who might be watching or listening today.

MS. WERNER: Since Obama, many say that racism is an obsolete issue. How do we counter this slide toward passivity as hate increases? And what can the media do?

MR. DEES: Well, you know as Julian, I'm sure, and others know that when Obama was elected, they say, "Woo, you got a black president now. Who's got an excuse?" Well, that's easy to say, but it belies a lot of the truth in our country. We still live in a world of us's and them's. Applications for jobs went out, a college sent them recently, several thousand. Half of them had an African-American sounding name, Lakicia Washington, and the others had an Anglo sounding name as the applicant, Emily

Brandon. Well, the applications were identical, but Lakicia's got 50 percent fewer calls for interviews because simply the name on the application.

Racism and these cultural and religious and other biases are built in, and they're very difficult to overcome. The election of Obama is very important. We're living in a wide world where we recently had a Twitter revolution in Iran, almost. And I think we got a whole new generation that's changing, and I don't think we're going to go back. But it's going to be a long day before the color of a person's skin is not something that those who are not that same color don't look at.

I wake up every morning and I rarely ever look in the mirror. I got a feeling that people of color probably think about the color of their skin quite a bit, whether they're going in a store and people watching them, or they're going for a job application, or they're simply just meeting someone different. I think this nation, though, is going to overcome these problems and there are those who would not like us to do it. Rush Limbaugh said that he hoped Obama would fail. I hope that this nation wants Obama to succeed.

MS. WERNER: Is there an increase in women and girls becoming active in hate groups? And are they being overlooked as threats, or is there really a need because the problem is with disgruntled men and boys?

MR. DEES: We found that hate groups that we're dealing with are populated primarily by men and teenagers, but there are a large number of women in these hate groups. All you have to do is look on the websites. The group that we just sued, we got a \$2.1 million verdict against the Imperial Klans of America for the beating of what they perceived to be a Latino boy, he was not Latino, he was part Peruvian Indian or Panamanian Indian and his mother was Anglo. But they saw him at a county fair and beat him up and did severe, permanent injury to him. This group, this Imperial Klans of America and their four members who were there recruiting at that county fair in Brandenburg, Kentucky.

And what we found out, though, when we went back and looked behind this group, they have a Nordic Fest they hold on a piece of land down in Kentucky that we hope to be taken away from them soon to satisfy that judgment. But the case is on appeal now, so kind of hands are tied until that's over. But about a third of the people there were women, young women. And they had more neo-Nazi and other tattoos on them than some of the men.

MS. WERNER: What do we tell the working white poor, usually males, who do see the immigration depressing their wages? So that, for example, a skilled construction worker, like pile drivers, are making \$17 an hour instead of \$30 an hour and can no longer afford college for their kids or to buy a house? How can we teach them tolerance without dealing with their economic reality?

MR. DEES: You know, that's probably one of the best questions that we've gotten. It's a serious issue. We are in an economy that's obviously not growing, and we're in an economy that a lot of the jobs are being taken by people coming into this country. I think we have to separate these things. Most of the people involved in these hate groups don't have skills, they're not working, and they're looking for a handout. And they are disgruntled because maybe they hadn't succeeded and they want to blame it on somebody. But there are people in this country whose wage levels are falling.

First of all, the wage level in the United States has not kept up with inflation in the last 50 years. The minimum wage now is probably, in real dollars, less than it was 30 years ago. So, we got a problem with an economy that won't support it. The American automobile industry is a catastrophic learn. General Motors just came out of bankruptcy yesterday and countries all over this world are beating us at what was the American game of ingenuity and industrialization.

On the other hand, you have companies like Del Monte, fresh fruits and vegetable division, or whatever, and others who go to the Department of Labor and says, "We can't find American workers to pick our sweet onions in Georgia, and you name every other fruit and vegetable in this country. And so they bring guest workers in. And these guest workers by law have to get the prevailing wage for planting pine trees or picking these fruits and vegetables. They have to get time and a half and pay coming both ways. But what does Del Monte do? They don't say they hire these workers. Del Monte and their division say that they don't really work for us, they work for the labor boss who brought them in from El Salvador or Guatemala. And the labor boss cuts about 50 percent of their wages.

We just got a federal court with immigrant justice project at the Southern Poverty Law Center to make a ruling that Del Monte was the employer because they control every aspect of the work. So some of these American corporations are seriously responsible for the wage issues because they're not enforcing the federal Fair Labor Standards Act. And that's true with pine tree planting, chicken processing and even in the Silicon Valley, they're bringing in thousands of people because either we don't have the workers willing to do the work, are not trained to do the work, or are just not in the right place to get the jobs.

MS. WERNER: How do you think the internet has affected hate crimes and supremacist groups? And do you think that by having the adoption of social media has made it easier to track these groups?

MR. DEES: Well, the internet has changed America, as we all know. The biggest hate group in the United States is the virtual hate group, and that's on the web. A young person today could not find a Klan group to join, might not could find a neo-Nazi group. But all they have to do is get on the web, click into several websites and before you know it, somebody in Georgia is talking to somebody in Colorado and Maine and Montana and then they're emailing or electronics to communicate with each other and they created a family of people of like beliefs.

And these websites have one core and central message: that Jews are the enemy and that's the core and central message of most every one of these hate websites. And so you can download all the stuff you want to, and then some kid in the anonymity of their own bedroom is sitting there downloading this stuff. And sooner or later, through their own paranoia and communication with others, feel like, "Well, look, America is going to hell in a hand basket unless I go blow up this federal building." And that's exactly what Timothy McVeigh did. He's a poster child for that kind of communications.

So I think that the internet is great and good and we know it's here and we're not going to change it. It's exactly what the First Amendment meant by the-- That's why the founders had the First Amendment. They wasn't worried about a few newspapers, they was worried about somebody posting down there on the bulletin board at Boston Commons and posting all over the United States. And the internet's nothing but a posting bulletin board. Everybody has their own voice today, and I think that's good. We have to use the internet to educate and also to define the issues and to expose those people who would undermine the core values in this country.

I would never be, and neither would the Southern Poverty Law Center, for stifling or trying to monitor what's on the internet, no matter how hateful it might be. Because in America, we have the right to love and hate, but we don't have the right to cross that line and hurt people physically.

MS. WERNER: Going back, Rush Limbaugh and other right-wing commentators appeal to their audience of fears. Do broadcasters or publications that appeal to their audience's sense of humor such as Jon Stewart, The Onion and now Senator Al Franken, make a difference in fighting hatred?

MR. DEES: I'd be afraid to be on one of those shows. Gillian could handle it, and some of you others, but I'm just not quick enough. Naturally, I watch a lot of those shows and I think their humor and poking fun at those in power is important, and clearly they might have made a difference in this last election. But I think we can always use humor. And people like Mr. Limbaugh and these others, and Savage and the others, are a great, great disservice to this country. I just hope that maybe they'll find a way to see a different light. I noticed Fox News recently has had some positive things to say about the need to deal with domestic terrorists, thank you.

MS. WERNER: The American press has sometimes found itself in the position of attempting to report on the activities of extremists and wind up facilitating the spread of their views, most notoriously in the case of Senator Joseph McCarthy. When those reporting McCarthy's allegations wound up giving them extra weight.

MR. DEES: Well, as I remember, it was a courageous journalist who brought Joe McCarthy down. And I think that the old argument that don't report on a Klan rally-- And the Klansmen know it. Six of them can put on a sheet and there'll be 50 media people out there covering the event. That you shouldn't give them this publicity, I

disagree. I think that it's important that the role of the media is to explain what's out there. It's not out there because of the media, the media's reporting on what's out there. And if it had no reason to be, it wouldn't be in the first place in the eyes of those who are promoting those views.

So I'm for full coverage of the hate groups. The more you cover them, the more people watching them will see that they are far, far off the mainstream. All these groups are looking for is one third of one percent of those people in our country that join their groups. They want to get the bomb throwers. And they're going to get them one way or the other, and it won't be because C-SPAN or some television program is reporting on their views.

MS. WERNER: Is there any correlation between white supremacist groups and radical Christian sects? We hear almost nothing about non-Islamic religious terrorists in mass media.

MR. DEES: Well, I guess you could say that the Ku Klux Klan uses the Christian cross and I've taken depositions of a number of Klansmen. And I say, "Tell me when you were burning that cross?" And they say, "No, no, no, we don't burn the cross, we light the cross." You know, semantics like that, I don't think that there's any close connection between their religious right and hate groups themselves. Clearly, we've seen some people in the antiabortion movement, the murder of the doctor recently. You might call that religious right extremism involved there, the right to life-type groups. And some of this domestic terrorism doesn't involve killing those Jewish people of the Holocaust Museum shooting. So, I guess in that area, you could say that.

I have seen, quite honestly, when I watch some of the Pentecostal church services, some of those that are deeply involved in the religious right and their political views, then I look at the audience and the audience is a third African-American. So, you know, they're pretty open in that sense of the word in this United States. And so, I don't think it's a my religion, your religion kind of thing as much as it is ideological opinions. And I'm sure there are some people in more mainstream churches who have views that they may not express them as vocal as somebody in the Klan or the neo-Nazi group. And then the pinstripe suits and ties and others institute policies in this country that are detrimental to the poor and the hardworking people.

MS. WERNER: How are the hate groups funded, and are there any actions that can be taken to cut off their funding sources?

MR. DEES: Most of the hate groups that we've dealt with have little or no money. They have more passion than some of the groups that oppose them. We've been able to, through our lawsuits, to relieve them of some assets. The multi-million dollar verdicts we've gotten clearly represent what the jury thinks the Aryan nation should have paid when they beat up or shot some people in Idaho. The verdict was like \$6 million, but all we got was their 20-acre compound, several hundred thousand dollars and we relieved them of that. And the same with most of the cases that we have.

People ask me, "How many members are there in the 'hate groups,' Klan?" Well, they don't have membership like we think of. If you don't pay your members of your garden club, you might feel you shouldn't come down there the next time they have a meeting. These people really are affiliated and associated with the groups. And the leaders try to pick up money for their own lifestyle and we found there's a lot of that going on. But, I like to instead of saying how many members do they have, I like to say how many people are influenced and associated with them?

There's a website called Storm Front that claims 150,000 registered members. Storm Front is the bulletin board posting place for hate in America, operated by Don Black, formerly associated with David Duke. And are those 150,000, except for the FBI agents and people like us who are down there getting on their site, are those people all members of hate groups? Probably not, but I'll promise you they're close fellow travelers because you just have to look at what they post.

MS. WERNER: Do you think that existing laws are sufficient to address these violations of civil rights? And if not, what needs to be done?

MR. DEES: I guess we're talking about federal hate legislation. Some states have it, some states don't. We at the Southern Poverty Law Center are in favor of the pending bill, hate crime laws in the United States. It's an important piece of legislation and I hope it's enacted. Federal prosecutors rarely double dip, so to speak. And that is if you have somebody who's committed a crime and he's prosecuted at the state level, they don't really go after him again. But now, the federal government's hamstrung. When Rodney King beating took place and a jury out there, a state jury, found the perpetrators, these officers, not guilty, the federal government went in under some very limited and restricted criminal statutes and got convictions of those individuals.

So, I think that we just need to understand that a hate crime is a serious crime in itself. If you rob a bank, and you take a gun, you get five years extra because we in America are trying to say we don't want guns used in this country because it adds to violence. If somebody slashes the tires on your car down the street, that's nothing but a simple malicious destruction of property. But if you moved in that house, an interracial couple, and they slashed the car a bunch of times, the tires and put a sign on there, "Move out," then that person's whole livelihood, their whole being is frustrated. They can't sleep, they don't know what's going to happen. So it's not just slashing the tires here, it's a serious crime, deserves an enhanced punishment.

And those are the type of crimes that ought to come under the umbrella of a uniform federal hate crime statute that also should include the whole issue of gays and lesbians and crimes against people because they're racial-- Pardon me, their sexual orientation.

MS. WERNER: Do you think it's time to take a focus off of skin color and focus on the ignorance that goes to separate people?

MR. DEES: Well, clearly skin color is, I guess race, is a social construct because we're all the same human beings. But I don't know that you can change that because we talk about having the first African-American president. Clearly, he's a human being like the rest of us. That would be one of the end results, I think, of a policy of inclusion. But I think the worst thing a person can say is, "I want to be colorblind," because people can tell you that may sound like a good statement, but in reality it's not a good statement. Because sometimes, color does play a part and being blind to that causes some additional and painful discrimination.

MS. WERNER: We are almost out of time, but before asking the last question, we have a couple of important matters to take care of. First of all, I want to remind you of our future speakers. On July 20th, Michael Steel, Chair of the Republican National Committee will join us for a morning speaker's newsmaker. On July 21st, Gail McGovern, President and CEO of the American Red Cross, will join us. And on July 24th, Congressman John Conyers and the Chair of the House Judiciary Committee, will be here.

Second, I'd like to present our guest with the National Press Club mug. (Applause) I'd like to thank you all for coming today, and I'd also like to thank the National Press Club staff members Melinda Cooke, Pat Nelson, JoAnn Booz, Howard Rothman, for organizing today's lunch. And also, thank you to the NPC Library for its research. The video archive of today's luncheon is provided by the National Press Club Broadcast Operation Center. Our events are available for free download on iTunes as well as our website. Nonmembers may purchase transcripts, audio and videotapes, by calling 202-662-7598, or by emailing archives@press.org. For more information about the Press Club, please go to our website, press.org.

And for our last question, what is your feeling about the prospects of America in the next 30 years regarding resolutions of the problems you have discussed today?

MR. DEES: I'm very hopeful and very positive that we are going to continue bending that arc of justice to the pot of gold that's at its end. I feel positive that this nation is not going to go back, we're going to go forward. They're going to take three steps forward to maybe two steps back, but I believe if Dr. King was here today with us, and he was making that famous "I Have a Dream" speech today, when he said that "I have a dream that one day in the red clay hills of Georgia that the sons of slaves and sons of former slave owners will sit down around the table of brotherhood," and we know he's been gone for a while, but if he's making that speech today and if I could put words in this great man's mouth, he might say that, "I have a dream that one day in the red clay hills of Georgia."

And today he might add, "In the barrios, in the ghettos, and in the seats of economic and political power, that the sons and daughters of former slaves and the sons and daughters of former slave owners," and I think today he might add "the homeless and the powerless and those who hold the keys to the economic and political and judicial

power of this nation, will sit down around the table of personhood and truly learn to love one another.” Thank you so much. (Applause)

MS. WERNER: Again, thank you all for joining us, we're adjourned.

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