

Leaders: Hate listing of Nation of Islam wrong

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Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON, D.C. (NNPA) — Civil rights leaders criticized the listing of the Nation of Islam as a "hate group" by the Southern Poverty Law Center, a prominent anti-hate watchdog organization that has won praise and support by the civil rights community.

Equating the NOI, a religious-based Black nationalist group, with the Ku Klux Klan and other organizations who have violently attacked people of color and others "demonstrates an unhealthy deficit in its understanding of the Black community," said Dr. Joseph Lowery, chairperson of the Black Leadership Forum, a federation of national civil rights groups.

"By our definition, hate groups are domestic terrorists who translate their bias and hatred in violent acts against innocent victims," said the former president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in a statement to the NNPA. "I am not aware of any such behavior on the part of the Nation of Islam."

The Alabama-based

center, which has targeted race hate and race crimes over the last 25 years, recently listed the NOI among 457 hate groups on its 1999 list of active racist organizations. It is the second consecutive year the Nation made its list.

The full list, available at the center's website, lists the NOI and the House of David under the category of "Black Separatist" hate groups. Information about the House of David was not available at press time.

The vast majority of the "hate group" list features white groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, the German American Nationalist PAC and the Knights of Freedom.

Mark Potok, editor of the center's Intelligence Report, which released the study, explained its rationale for determining an organization's hate status is ideology based.

Its criteria for calling an organization a hate group is the belief "that by virtue of membership in a [different racial or other] class, you are somehow less [than them]," he said.

NOI Minister Benjamin Chavis Muhammad, in an interview with NNPA editors last Thursday as part of the

Nation's outreach in preparing for the Million Family March on Oct. 16, called the center's listing factually unsubstantiated, unfounded and irrelevant.

"In order to have any status as a hate group one would think that there would be some hate-based action from members within that group," he said.

"No member of the Nation of Islam has ever been arrested or detained for any act of hate," said the former executive director of the NAACP. "In fact, the SPLC never contacted the Nation of Islam with any mention of this or any inquiry or for an interview with us."

Lowery praised the center's longtime work in spotlighting race hate by white organizations, but called it "shamefully off the mark in this labeling."

Dr. Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich, executive director and CEO of the forum, also questioned the criteria the center used.

"I am very concerned to learn that the NOI is listed as a hate group by the SPLC or anyone else," she said. "To my knowledge there is not sufficient evidence of incident or actions to justify

the inclusion of the NOI simply because it is a black separatist group.

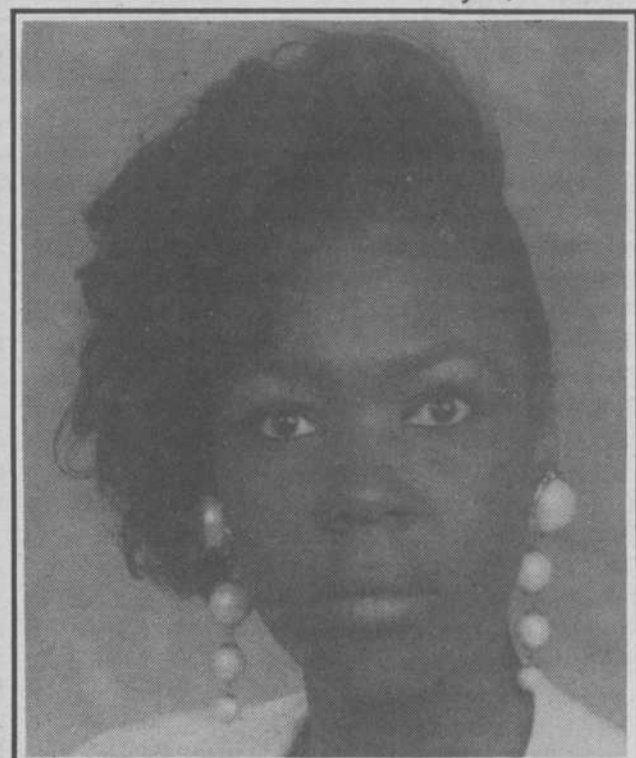
"I certainly believe that this revelation requires serious deliberations and investigation before the issue escalates onto an intractable confrontation," she said.

Muhammad said the center's move may actually bolster NOI support among Black communities.

"Their listing of us as a hate group is ridiculous," Muhammad said. "The impact of their study will have no bearing—especially with the communities that we have a responsibility to. Who is the SPLC anyway? Where do they get their support?"

Potok said the "the final straw" came after both an internal debate by center staff over whether to include Black groups on its lists and a 1997 Farrakhan appearance on NBC's "Meet The Press." Farrakhan refused to repudiate NOI founder Elijah Muhammad's teachings on the program, according to the center spokesman.

Potok said there was little response last year to its decision. "I don't think it surprised many people at all," he said.



Brooks remembered for her commitment

Sentinel-Voice

Jannet E. Brooks, a 21-year Las Vegas resident and former member of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Committee, was laid to rest this week. She died April 26.

Brooks was born Feb. 4, 1954, in Pontiac, Mich. A graduate of Stockton State College, she moved to Las Vegas in 1979 and was employed by the City of Las Vegas. She excelled at her job and was promoted to court counselor with the city's Municipal Court, Alternative Sentencing and Education Division.

Those who knew Brooks best say she loved jazz, travelling, decorating, and had a strong sense of community commitment.

Media bias charged in hate case

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (AP) — Outside the courthouse where two black men charged in the beating death of a disabled white man are to go on trial this month, David Duke accused the media Monday of not saying enough about black-on-white hate crimes.

"I'm here to call attention to the massive epidemic of hate crimes being committed against white Americans across the United States and to expose the lack of coverage that exists on this issue in both America and locally," said Duke, a former Ku Klux Klan leader in Louisiana and president of the National Organization of European American Rights.

The trial, which was scheduled to start

Monday, was delayed until May 22 because of problems with a witness.

The two defendants and three other men are charged with second-degree murder, with a hate crime enhancement, in the Aug. 13 beating and stomping of Gregory Griffith, 50. Griffith, who was mentally disabled, died 13 days later from blunt head trauma.

Police said one of the defendants told them the group planned to attack the first white man who walked down the street.

If convicted, Ledell Lawrence, 21, and Terrence McCray, 19, face up to life in prison. Three other men, Marvin Jones, Mario Leathers and LaFreddy Manns, will be tried later.

Bike Rodeo focuses on fun, safety

Sentinel-Voice

The Regional Transportation Commission is kicking off Bike Awareness Month Friday with a Bike Rodeo from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Agassi Boys and Girls Club, 800 N. Martin Luther King Blvd.

Young participants will get the chance to test their bicycle skills on an obstacle course.

The transportation commission is encouraging more locals to bike to work. It's also discussing bike safety through the Share the Road program.

More than 1,200 bright yellow signs have been placed

throughout Clark County to educate cyclists and motorists about how each uses the streets.

Drivers are asked to slow down and give cyclists adequate space. In turn, cyclists should ride in the flow of traffic and obey road rules.

"Educating our community is very important in bringing about change," RTC general manager Jacob Snow said. "This Bike Rodeo is just one way we can help our youth enjoy the change they are making in southern Nevada."

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When it comes time for funding government services, if you have not been counted, then we will miss out on the "goodies."

If you have received your form and completed it "that's great!" If you have not returned it, please do so today. If you have not received a form, call the Census Bureau and have them mail you one.

If you have any questions,
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