HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2019:
THE YEAR OF THE STUDENT JOURNALIST

Declaring the Year of the Student Journalist — Together with the Freedom Forum Institute and Newseum, SPLC celebrated 2019 as the Year of the Student Journalist. We amplified the accomplishments of student journalists, highlighted the challenges they face, and broadened the understanding of their impact. Beginning on Student Press Freedom Day in January, nearly 70 student media outlets published editorials to highlight the need to protect student press freedom. Over the course of the year, the Newseum in Washington, D.C. featured student newspapers in their Front Pages exhibit as part of the celebration. In addition, students ran awareness programs around the country, and SPLC distributed 7,500 Year of the Student Journalist posters to newsrooms across the country with information about how to reach the SPLC Legal Hotline.

Fighting Censorship at Every Turn — When students broke the news that a senior administrator at Burlington High School in Vermont had been charged with six counts of misconduct by the state Agency for Education, their school censored the paper. They turned to SPLC for help and the prior review policy was ended. After school officials at Bear Creek High School in California demanded prior review on a story about overcoming adversity which profiled an 18-year-old student working in the adult entertainment industry, they called SPLC. When staff at The Tartan were told that they would be subject to prior review at Radford University in Virginia, just a day after more than 1,000 copies of their newspaper were stolen from newsstands, they reached out to SPLC. Through direct assistance, help from volunteer pro bono attorneys from the SPLC Attorney Referral Network, and news stories calling attention to these censorship issues, SPLC was able to help in each case – as we do with thousands of cases each year.

Opening a New Era for New Voices — In 2019, a record number of states (11) introduced New Voices bills designed to protect the First Amendment rights of student journalists. This led to unprecedented organizing momentum among advocates, with national organizing calls, resource sharing and statewide lobby days held in several states. SPLC deepened its efforts to support the nonpartisan, grassroots New Voices movement by hiring Hillary Davis as the New Voices Advocacy and Campaign Organizer. Hillary is providing strategic coordination and advocacy training for state-based New Voices groups. In October, SPLC held the first New Voices Training Institute – a two day deep-dive into skills development, strategic planning and advocacy training for activists from seven target states (from Hawaii to New York.) As the new legislative season approaches, SPLC will support the movement with new tools, tactics and resources.
**Meeting Student Journalists Where They Live and Work** — In addition to the dozens of workshops SPLC attorneys conduct at high school and college journalism conventions each year, this summer SPLC launched the Virtual Speakers Bureau to enable us to “meet” you in your newsroom. SPLC experts “visited” more 40 classrooms in the first three month of the program via videoconference. The VSB enables more students to benefit directly from SPLC trainings on specific topics like Law of the Student Press, Copyright, Libel or Freedom of Information Act requests. More than 600 students accessed the training within weeks of the program’s launch.

**Bringing the Law to Life** — SPLC designed and led sold-out tours for student journalists to the U.S. Supreme Court this fall for the national high school and college journalism conventions in Washington, D.C. The visits showed the students where the First Amendment is interpreted and legal decisions are made that affect their work as journalists. Afterward, the groups visited the Newseum where lucky high schoolers had a surprise visit with Mary Beth Tinker, who helped celebrate the 50th anniversary of her groundbreaking student free speech case, Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District (1969).

**Helping to Shape the Law** — The SPLC pro-actively improves the legal landscape for student journalists and their advisers. In addition to providing information through the legal hotline and trainings, the SPLC regularly files amicus or “friend of the court” briefs to represent the concerns of student journalists. In 2019 we joined briefs on issues that included campus police records, transparency in university foundation finances, criminalizing “disruptive” speech, the limits of social media monitoring, and access to campus disciplinary records for violent crimes.

**Reporting on and Amplifying What's Happening in Student Journalism** — Thanks to our reporting interns, SPLC is dedicated to breaking news and covering trends in student journalism on a daily basis. This year, our original reporting highlighted newspaper thefts, blatant censorship, attempts to defund, advisers at risk, New Voices legislative efforts and more. SPLC’s podcasts, weekly newsletter and daily social media keep thousands of followers up to date on important news and developments in the world of student journalism.

**Most Importantly, We Continue to Answer Every Inquiry** — SPLC’s free Legal Hotline continues to provide technical assistance and support to thousands of student journalists and advisers each year. Whether it is questions about copyright, how to report controversial stories, access to public records or instances of censorship or retaliation, SPLC attorneys work with journalists at no charge to resolve questions or disputes. Where necessary, we have more than 200 top media lawyers standing by in our Attorney Referral Network to take on more complicated or contentious cases.

We are proud of our long history of supporting, promoting and defending the First Amendment rights of student journalists.

**WRITE THE STORY, WE’VE GOT YOUR BACK.**