



Morris Dees was born in 1936 at Shorter, Alabama, the son of cotton farmers. As a young boy he worked the fields with blacks, witnessing first-hand social and economic depravation and Jim Crow treatment at its worse.

While at the University of Alabama Law School, he met Millard Fuller. The two formed a highly successful publishing company during their time in law school. After graduation, they moved the business to Montgomery, Alabama. Fuller left the company in 1965 and later founded Habitat for Humanity. Mr. Dees continued the business and also began taking controversial civil rights cases.

Mr. Dees sold his publishing company to a major national firm in 1970 and formed the Southern Poverty Law Center, along with Julian Bond and Joseph Levin. Early Center cases included integrating the Alabama State Troopers and desegregating the Montgomery YMCA. The Center, funded by donations from over 300,000 citizens across the nation, quickly grew into one of America's most successful and innovative public interest law firms.

In 1980, the Center founded the Intelligence Project in response to resurgence in organized racist activity. The project monitors hate groups and develops legal strategies for protecting citizens from violence-prone groups. A made-for-television movie about Mr. Dees aired on NBC. "Line of Fire" describes his successful fight against the Ku Klux Klan. It included the \$7 million precedent-setting judgment against the United Klans of America on behalf of the mother of Michael Donald, a young black man lynched by the Klan in Mobile, Alabama. Wayne Rogers portrayed him in the feature film, "Ghosts of Mississippi," about the murder of civil rights worker Medgar Evers.

Other victories against hate groups include a \$6 million judgment that bankrupted the Aryan Nations, a \$12.5 million jury verdict against the California-based White Aryan Resistance for the death of a black student and a \$26 million verdict against the Carolina Klan for burning black churches.

Klansmen burned the Center offices in 1983. The arsonists were convicted but not before their leader plotted to kill Mr. Dees. More than thirty men have since been imprisoned for plots to harm him or destroy Center property. This threat requires a high degree of security during public appearances.

To promote acceptance and tolerance, the Center founded Teaching Tolerance in 1990. Over 80,000 schools use the project's free videos and teaching materials and over 400,000 teachers receive the award winning *Teaching Tolerance* magazine. The Center has won two Oscars for its tolerance education films and received five Oscar nominations. Mr. Dees believes that it is important to teach tolerance in the classroom as well as fight hate in the courtroom.

Mr. Dees has received numerous awards in conjunction with his work. The U.S. Jaycees chose him as one of the Ten Outstanding Young Men of America for his early business success. Trial Lawyers for Public Justice named him Trial Lawyer of the Year in 1987. In 2009, he was inducted into the Trial Lawyers' Hall of Fame by the American Trial Lawyers' Association. The American Bar Association honored him this year (2012) with the ABA Medal, the ABA's highest honor.

Mr. Dees is the author of three books, *A Lawyers Journey*, his autobiography, *Hate on Trial* and *Gathering Storm, America's Militia Threat*. He remains actively engaged litigation. He and his wife live in Montgomery, Alabama.