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ACLU reveals FBI labeled peace, affirmative action group 'terrorist'

RAW STORY

The American Civil Liberties Union today released an FBI document that designates a Michigan-based peace group and an affirmative action advocacy group as potentially "involved in terrorist activities," RAW STORY has learned. The ACLU release follows.

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The file was obtained through an ongoing nationwide ACLU effort seeking information on the FBI's use of Joint Terrorism Task Forces to engage in political surveillance.

"This document confirms our fears that federal and state counterterrorism officers have turned their attention to groups and individuals engaged in peaceful protest activities," said Ben Wizner, an ACLU staff attorney and counsel in a lawsuit seeking the release of additional FBI records. "When the FBI and local law enforcement identify affirmative action advocates as potential terrorists, every American has cause for concern."

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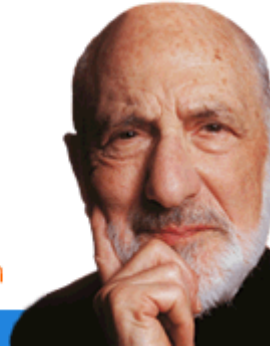
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The document released today is an FBI report labeled, "Domestic Terrorism Symposium," and describes a meeting that was intended to "keep the local, state and federal law enforcement agencies apprised of the activities of the various groups and individuals within the state of Michigan who are thought to be involved in terrorist activities."

Among the groups mentioned are Direct Action, an anti-war group, and BAMN (By Any Means Necessary), a national organization dedicated to defending affirmative action, integration, and other gains of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. The FBI acknowledges in the report that the Michigan State Police has information that BAMN has been peaceful in the past.

"Labeling political advocacy as 'terrorist activity' is a threat to legitimate dissent which has never been considered a crime in this country," said Kary Moss, Executive Director of the ACLU of Michigan. "Spying on people who simply disagree with our government's policies is a tremendous waste of police resources."

The FBI report was obtained through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request filed by the ACLU of Michigan on behalf of nine local organizations and individuals, including Direct Action. ACLU affiliates in 15 additional states have filed similar requests on behalf of more than 100 groups and individuals.

"We're disturbed and dismayed that the FBI is misusing its power by spying on anti-war groups and monitoring political dissent to target activist groups," said 23-year-old

Sarah McDonald, a member of Direct Action and recent graduate of Michigan State University. "We've protested the war, racial discrimination and the military recruitment of the high school students, but we're certainly not a terrorist group."

In addition to the state FOIAs, the ACLU filed a lawsuit in federal court to expedite its request for FBI surveillance files on its own organization as well as other national groups including Greenpeace, United for Peace and Justice, Code Pink, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee and the Muslim Public Affairs Council. In response to the lawsuit, the FBI has revealed that it has thousands of pages of documents that mention those groups.

The ACLU launched its nationwide effort last year in response to widespread complaints from students and political activists who said they were questioned by FBI agents in the months leading up to the 2004 political conventions. The FOIAs seek two kinds of information: 1) the actual FBI files of groups and individuals targeted for speaking out or practicing their faith; and, 2) information about how the practices and funding structure of the task forces, known as JTTFs, may be encouraging rampant and unwarranted spying.

Documents previously obtained by the ACLU in response to the FOIAs include an FBI memo on Food Not Bombs, a Colorado group that provides free vegetarian food to hungry people and protests war and poverty, and a report on United for Peace and Justice, a national peace organization that coordinates non-violent protests.

For more information on the national lawsuit and the FOIA requests, go to www.aclu.org/spyfiles.

For a copy of the document released today, [go here](#).

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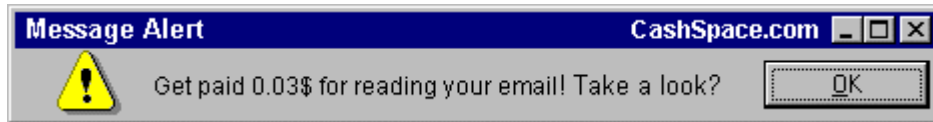
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