

The Importance of Understanding These Symbols

It is important for community groups, schools, parents, religious institutions and law enforcement agencies to recognize these symbols and what they mean. Through knowledge of hate symbols, teachers and community leaders may be able to identify the presence of hate groups in their neighborhoods that might try to recruit young people to their cause. Teachers and community leaders may also be able to identify individuals involved in perpetrating racist and anti-Semitic incidents. Similarly, law enforcement officers may use an understanding of hate symbols to identify potential hate crimes, to determine the motives underlying various crimes, or to identify the group affiliations of suspects or prisoners.

Being able to identify and understand these symbols also allows teachers, law enforcement officers, and others in the community to be vigilant against people who use hate symbols to intimidate and frighten others.

Few symbols ever represent just one idea or are used exclusively by only one group. It is essential to keep in mind when reviewing these symbols that the descriptions here point out significant multiple meanings, including non-racist ones, but cannot relay every possible meaning of a particular symbol. For this reason, all the symbols depicted here must be evaluated in the context in which they are used. For more information on these and other symbols, visit the ADL Web site at www.adl.org.

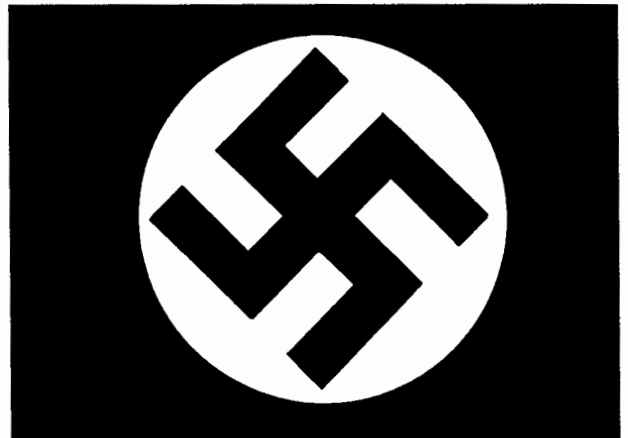


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HATE ON DISPLAY

Extremist Symbols Logos and Tattoos

REVISED AND UPDATED



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Neo-Nazi Symbols

The groups that use neo-Nazi symbols generally idolize Adolf Hitler and idealize the Nazi Party ideology that dominated Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. Symbols that were employed in Nazi Germany, such as the swastika or the SS symbol, feature prominently in the current neo-Nazi repertoire.



NAZI PARTY FLAG The swastika was adopted by Germany's Nazi Party and became its foremost symbol. Prior to the Nazi co-opting of the swastika, it was known as a good luck symbol and used by a variety of religions around the world, particularly in Asia. It is still sometimes used in this context (usually, but not always, the "reverse" swastika). But it is widely used, in various incarnations, by neo-Nazis, racist skinheads, and other white supremacist groups.



EAGLE ATOP SWASTIKA The Nazi Party began using this symbol in the 1930s to represent the power and strength of the party. Neo-Nazi groups, particularly those without a unique logo of their own, often use this symbol.



SS LIGHTNING BOLTS The Nazi symbol signifying the Schutzstaffel (SS), Heinrich Himmler's police forces and private army, is frequently seen in neo-Nazi tattoos and graffiti and characterizes the beliefs of Nazis and racist skinheads — violence, anti-Semitism, and white supremacy — as well as their admiration for the Third Reich.



TOTENKOPF (DEATH'S HEAD) The skull and crossbones "Death's Head" image was the symbol of the SS Totenkopfverbände, a branch of the SS whose purpose was to guard the concentration camps. Most of the original members of this organization were later transferred into and became the core of a Waffen SS division, the Totenkopf Division.



IRON CROSS WITH SWASTIKA The Iron Cross is a German military medal. Adolf Hitler renewed its use in 1939, superimposing the Nazi swastika in its center. Following the end of the Third Reich, the symbol was prohibited in postwar Germany. Today, the Nazi Iron Cross is often displayed by neo-Nazi groups. The Iron Cross without the swastika is also frequently used as a hate symbol in the same manner, often for shock effect, as it conjures up images of Nazi Germany and its military without being explicitly Nazi itself.



TRISKELE The triskele is an ancient symbol used widely in pre-Christian Europe. White supremacists in South Africa, Europe, and the United States have adopted it as a variation of the swastika. Racist triskeles usually, but not always, appear as three interlocking 7s. This symbol is also used by nonracists and can frequently be seen in Celtic jewelry and art-work.



STURMABTEILUNG This symbol was used by Hitler's Brownshirts, the Sturmabteilung (SA), which were paramilitary formations used by Hitler to intimidate political opponents. Neo-Nazis and other white supremacists began using the symbol as European governments banned the display of more well-known Nazi symbology such as the swastika.



SWASTIKA VARIANTS Neo-Nazis around the world have created many variations on the flag of Nazi Germany, often because Nazi flags themselves are banned in a number of countries. These variations usually involve modifying the swastika or replacing it with an alternative white supremacist symbol.

General Racist Symbols

A wide spectrum of racist groups, from neo-Nazis to the Klan to white power skinheads, uses these symbols interchangeably. They are instantly recognizable by those who employ them and serve as a common symbolic language with which to communicate ideas and concepts. Most represent some aspect of what extremists consider "Aryan" culture or "white pride."



CELTIC CROSS This is one of the most popular white supremacist symbols. First popularized by the Ku Klux Klan, the symbol was later adopted by the far right National Front in England and racists such as Don Black, creator of the white supremacist Stormfront Web site, and the white power music band Skrewdriver to represent international "white pride." It is also known as "Odin's Cross."

(The Celtic Cross is also used widely in many mainstream, non-racist cultural and religious contexts. No one should assume that a Celtic Cross, divorced from other symbols or trappings of extremism, represents a hate symbol.)



OTHALA RUNE While not by definition a racist religion, Odinism is popular among white supremacists because its Old Norse origins are seen as representative of Aryan heritage and cultural pride and because it is perceived as a "warrior" religion. The Othala Rune was a rune commonly used by ancient European cultures and was later adopted by the Nazis for this reason. There are numerous variations of this symbol.



ARYAN FIST The Aryan Fist is a symbol of militant white pride commonly used by hate groups that promote their racist agenda as white pride activism.



WOLFSANGEL The Wolfsangel (or Wolf's Hook) is an ancient runic symbol that was believed to ward off wolves. Along with many other runic symbols, it was adopted by the Nazis and appeared as part of the divisional insignia of several Waffen SS units. As a result, it became a popular symbol for neo-Nazis in Europe and the United States.

14/88

14/88 The numeric symbols 14 and 88, used separately or in combination, are among the most commonly used white supremacist symbols. The number 88 is used to represent "Heil Hitler" ("H" being the eighth letter of the alphabet), while the number 14 is shorthand for the racist "Fourteen Words" slogan: "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children."

311

311 The numeric symbol 311 is a common Klan symbol ("K," the eleventh letter of the alphabet, times three; thus "KKK"). A variation uses the number 33 (3 times 11, also signifying "KKK"), sometimes accompanied by a slash and another number (33/5 or 33/6), the second number representing the current "era" of Klan history.

RAHOWA

RAHOWA This racist acronym, popularized by the racist and anti-Semitic Creativity Movement (formerly World Church of the Creator), stands for "racial holy war." It signifies the battle that white supremacists believe will pit whites against Jews and racial/ethnic minorities and lead to Aryan world domination.

Skinhead Symbols

Both racist and non-racist skinheads use specific symbols to identify themselves with the skinhead subculture and to help them feel that they are part of a community. Some of the symbols focus on the traditional "look" of skinheads, while others glorify the violent culture often associated with skinheads. Some of these symbols may be used by non-racist or even anti-racist skinheads, so close attention to the context in which these symbols appear is necessary.



BOOT SYMBOLS A common item of skinhead clothing consists of Doc Martens boots with colored shoelaces (the colors sometimes conveying a certain message). Although many skinheads wear other kinds of footwear, this brand of boots, popularized years ago, is still the most typical and traditional. The term "boot party" was coined to refer to a group act of skinhead violence, often against an outnumbered opponent. Steel-tipped boots have sometimes been used as kicking weapons.

HFFH

HFFH The acronym HFFH is used by Hammerskin skinheads and stands for "Hammerskins Forever, Forever Hammerskins."



CRUCIFIED SKINHEAD This symbol is one of the older, more traditional skinhead symbols, used by both racist and non-racist skinheads to symbolize the plight of the working class. It is also used to suggest persecution of skinheads by society. Commonly, the skinhead in the symbol is depicted as being crucified on a cross, but sometimes, as in the image here, white supremacists use the "tiwaz" or warrior rune.



CHELSEA "Chelsea" is a term used to refer to a hairstyle commonly worn by female skinheads or skinhead associates — short on top with long fringes. From the hairstyle, the term was used to refer to the girlfriend of a skinhead, but has since come to refer to female skinheads in their own right. Both racist and non-racist skinheads use this symbol, but racist skinheads often modify it to convey a more explicit message of white supremacy.



"SKIN" FIST The letters "S-K-I-N" tattooed on the fingers is a popular skinhead tattoo; the image of such a tattoo has become a symbol in its own right. Racist skinheads use it as another version of the white power fist.



SKREWDRIVER Skrewdriver was a British white power music band, led by the now deceased Ian Stuart (Donaldson), which has become legendary among racist skinheads and white supremacists generally. Although the band no longer exists, Skrewdriver logos and symbols are commonly seen as tattoos and on clothing, jewelry, and patches.



RAC (ROCK AGAINST COMMUNISM) RAC, used as a stand-alone acronym or with an accompanying graphic, stands for "Rock Against Communism," a term used by many white supremacists to describe the genre of white power/neo-Nazi music popular among racist skinheads and others in Europe and North America. Despite its name, more often than not, RAC contains no references to Communism, but focuses on racism and anti-Semitism.



POSSE COMITATUS The Posse Comitatus was an anti-government movement active in the 1970s and 1980s, many of whose leaders were Christian Identity adherents, and whose ideology formed the basis of later groups such as the Montana Freeman. The Posse died away in the late 1980s, but former Posse leader James Wickstrom restarted it in the 1990s as a white supremacist group, shedding most of the original Posse's pseudolegal theories.



STORMFRONT Stormfront is a Web site created by Don Black, a Florida white supremacist. One of the first hate sites to appear on the World Wide Web, it is still widely accessed and has links to hate groups all over the world.



W.A.R. (WHITE ARYAN RESISTANCE) WAR is a white supremacist organization based in California and led by long-time racist Tom Metzger. It is looked up to by many extremists as being one of the most virulently racist and anti-Semitic groups, but WAR has been relatively inactive in recent years beyond the publishing of its newspaper of the same name.



CREATIVITY MOVEMENT (FORMERLY WORLD CHURCH OF THE CREATOR, WCOTC) This white supremacist organization, led by Matthew Hale and headquartered in Illinois, claims to be a religion for white people, established for the "survival, expansion, and advancement of [the] White Race exclusively."



ARYAN BROTHERHOOD The Aryan Brotherhood is the largest and most well-organized white racist prison gang. Heavily involved in organized crime activities ranging from narcotics to protection rackets, it has a long record of violence.



NAZI LOW RIDERS This gang, active both on the streets and in the prison system, is based primarily in California. Heavily active in the drug trade, members have been responsible for a large number of very violent hate crimes in the 1990s and 2000s.



PHINEAS PRIESTHOOD The Phineas Priesthood, invented by Richard Kelly Hoskins, represents the extreme end of the racist and anti-Semitic Christian Identity religious sect. Inspired by the biblical Phinehas, who killed an Israelite who had slept with a non-Israelite, Phineas Priests commit themselves to conduct attacks on perceived enemies such as mixed-race couples, abortionists, and Jews. Not a membership organization but rather a status that one can appoint oneself to, the Phineas Priest concept is promoted by hard-core Christian Identity adherents.



NEW BLACK PANTHER PARTY The New Black Panther Party, which takes its name from the original Black Panther Party, a radical left-wing group active in the 1960s and 1970s, is a splinter group from the Nation of Islam. Its ideology is a mix of black nationalism, pan-Africanism, and anti-white and anti-Semitic bigotry.



FIVE PERCENTERS The Five Percenters are an offshoot splinter group from the Nation of Islam. Their beliefs center around the notion that only 5% of the population are righteous, that blacks are the Earth's original people and founded all civilization, and that the "Blackman" is god. Five Percenters follow nontraditional variants of Islam and have penetrated the rap/hip-hop scene to a significant degree.

Group Symbols

Many extremist organizations spreading racist and anti-Semitic propaganda want to distinguish their individual group from others with similar ideologies. They create their own logos to give their group a distinctive look.



ARYAN NATIONS Also known as the Church of Jesus Christ Christian, Aryan Nations is a neo-Nazi, Christian Identity organization led by Richard Butler and Ray Redfeairn in Idaho. Christian Identity, a racist and anti-Semitic religious sect, teaches that whites are descended from the Lost Tribes of Israel and are thus God's chosen people, while Jews are descendants of Satan, and non-whites are soulless "mud peoples."



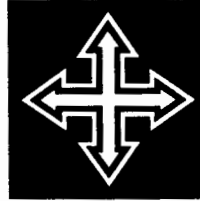
HAMMERSKINS A racist skinhead group with chapters scattered worldwide, Hammerskins claim to represent the working class of the white supremacist movement. They often advocate using violence to achieve their goals. Prominent on the "white power" music scene, the Hammerskins are one of the most organized racist skinhead groups.



KU KLUX KLAN (KKK) The Ku Klux Klan, America's oldest terrorist organization, organized in the South after the Civil War as a secret society whose aims were to reassert white supremacy through terrorism and intimidation. Today there are many different Klan factions. The main symbol of the Klan is the "blood cross." According to the Klan, the blood drop represents the blood shed by Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for the white race.



NATIONAL ALLIANCE The National Alliance is the largest neo-Nazi organization in the United States. Headquartered in West Virginia, it was founded by William Pierce, who led it until his death in 2002. The "life rune" in its logo is intended to signify the renewal of the Aryan race.



NATIONALIST MOVEMENT The Crosstar is the official symbol of the racist, anti-immigrant, anti-gay Nationalist Movement, whose members claim to assert allegiance to democratic, pro-government ideals. Based in Mississippi and led by Richard Barrett, it borrowed its logo from the "arrowcross" symbol of Hungarian fascists in the 1930s and 1940s.



NATIONAL SOCIALIST MOVEMENT With chapters scattered around the United States, the National Socialist Movement, led by Jeff Schoep in Minneapolis, is a neo-Nazi organization with extreme racist and anti-Semitic sentiments.



THE ORDER (ALSO KNOWN AS THE BRUDER SCHWEIGEN OR SILENT BROTHERHOOD) The Order was a white supremacist terrorist organization founded by Robert Mathews in 1983. Before law enforcement caught up with it, members committed armed robberies, the bombing of a synagogue, counterfeiting, and the murder of a radio talk show host. Its surviving members, still serving lengthy prison sentences, generally continue to propagandize from their cells and influence the white supremacist movement, which considers them martyrs to the cause and "political prisoners."