HATE SYMBOL

What is a Hate Symbol?
Are They Illegal?
What are the Rights of Students?

BY DIANA DUDENHOEFFER

Some American citizens have demonstrated a formidable amount of hate in recent developments. From the current political environment to the intolerance of certain radical groups, hate has become something that Americans cannot ignore.

With a surplus of hate comes an increasingly popular assortment of hate symbols. A hate symbol is a design used to represent the ideals of a certain group.

A swastika is an example of a hate symbol. German Nazis during the second world war used it as a symbol for their party, and they promoted their agenda of a master race and the extermination of several million

"I think [students are] immature and don't particularly care about the consequences . . . they see it as a joke," junior Anna Weiner said.

Jewish people, gypsies, homosexuals, and other minorities.

Since this is the land of the free, hate speech is entirely legal, and so are hate symbols. Acts like discrimination, harassment and violence are indeed criminalized, but hate speech is not. According to Peter Tatchell from the New Internationalist magazine, declaring hateful words and being prejudiced is not a crime, unless it directly leads to unlawful discrimination.

The result of the 1969 Supreme Court case Tinker v. Des Moines makes questions arise when it comes to a student's First Amendment rights.

First Freedoms textbook explains that the supreme court ruled students still have their First Amendment rights even when they enter a public school building. They still have the freedom of expression, so long as they do not disrupt the educational process.

If Mary Beth and John Tinker could wear black armbands to protest the Vietnam war, can somebody else wear an inverted cross to protest Christianity?

"If your actions are causing somebody else to feel uncomfortable while at school, it could fall under disorderly conduct or harassment," Principal Kelly Allison said.

According to the Springfield Public Schools (SPS) handbook, the rights of an American citizen differ from the rights of a student in a public institution. Students are limited in what they can say and what they can wear.

The SPS handbook says: "T-shirts and/or other apparel will not contain profanity, obscenities, suggestive, or provocative statements, statements that cause disruption and uncivil conduct in school, drug, alcohol symbols, advertisements, or gang dress symbols are not to be worn."

According to Principal Kelly Allison, students are also not allowed to wear hate symbols at school because it can create a hostile environment and harassment.

Although hate symbols are not directly addressed in the dress code guidelines, students are still unable to wear hate symbols—but for another reason entirely.

"If your actions are causing somebody else to feel uncomfortable while at school, it could fall under disorderly conduct or harassment," Allison said.

Allison is sure that the current policy is applicable for any situation administration may come across, even considering the increasing tension and growing hate in these United States.

Allison explained that the consequences for this type of handbook violation are subject to the type of disruption the student has caused. Allison said that he is prepared to start out with a conversation with the student. Typically, he said, a conversation is enough to make the student understand why they can't do what they are doing.

"If it gets to where somebody refuses to comply to our requests to find something else to wear, then it



Citizens across the nation express their opposition to hate symbols. In September, President Trump visited Springfield, and hundreds of protesters gathered on Glenstone street to voice their opinions. Photo by Tony Madden.

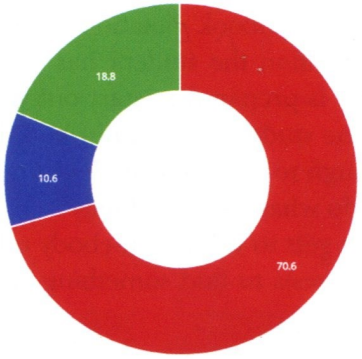
WHAT COUNTS AS A HATE SYMBOL?

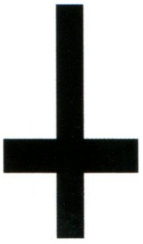
It's difficult to define a hate symbol because of its subjectivity. What is offensive to some may not be offensive to others. The following results are from a survey that students filled out when prompted: What is your reaction to the following symbols?

NEGATIVE NEUTRAL POSITIVE

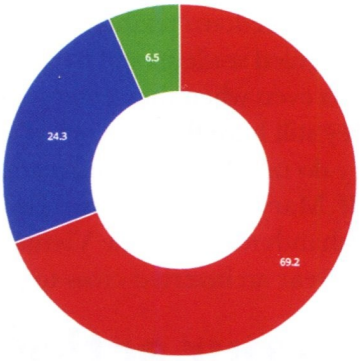


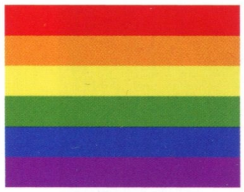
SWASTIKA



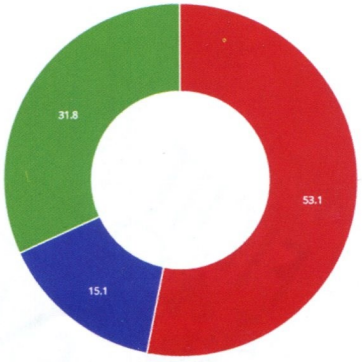


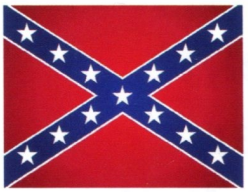
INVERTED CROSS



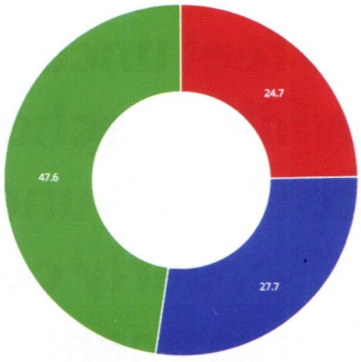


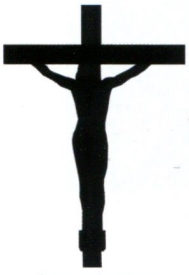
GAY PRIDE FLAG



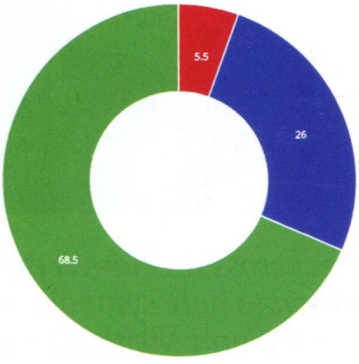


CONFEDERATE FLAG



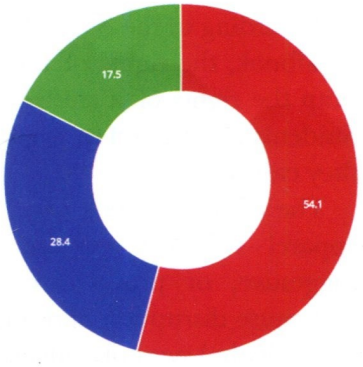


CRUCIFIX



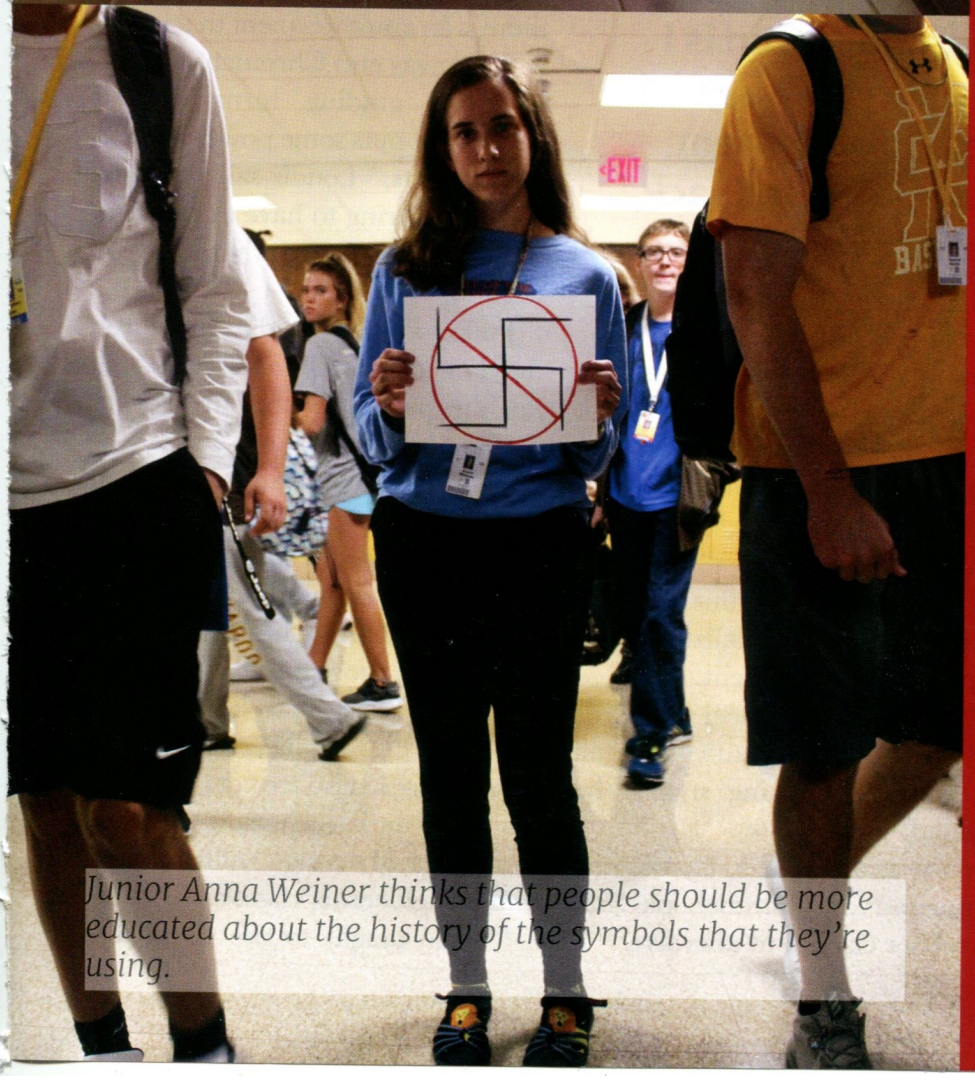


RAISED FIST





Senior Victoria Marshall doesn't view the confederate flag as a racist symbol. She thinks students should be allowed to wear it because the racial connotation is outdated.



Junior Anna Weiner thinks that people should be more educated about the history of the symbols that they're using.

goes into defiance, and we will have to go into further disciplinary action," he said.

Allison is optimistic, though, and he said that he has had to address very few instances of students wearing hate symbols.

He said, "it's one of the things that I love about Kickapoo . . . the kids are very respectful to one another. I think kids are very conscious of how other kids' feelings are."

Allison recognizes that hate symbols are incredibly prevalent in today's news, but he's also confident that all the policies and procedures that the board has in place are adequate, even with growing tensions across the nation.

Senior Victoria Marshall does not see the confederate flag, something some would consider offensive, as a problem.

"I don't consider the flag as hateful . . . Some people are trying to bring back what the flag used to mean," Marshall said.

According to her, the flag doesn't have the same racial connotation that it did in the Civil War. Today, the flag represents southern pride and her rebellious lifestyle. To her, the flag has no racist connotation. "Some people try to claim that I'm being disrespectful, but I'm not trying to upset anyone . . . because the flag isn't a hate symbol to me," Marshall said.

Junior Anna Weiner thinks that hate symbols are still a major issue within school doors. She's seen swastikas several times in the school building.

"I think [students are] immature and don't particularly care about the consequences. They don't see it as doing something that offends someone . . . they see it as a joke," Weiner said.

When people are able to see what they're supporting, she said, it's a pretty good motivation not to draw a symbol like a swastika.

"If there's space in the curriculum to focus more on the Holocaust, I think, whenever people are able to empathize with what other people have experienced, and then they're are able to really comprehend . . . how that has affected people," Weiner said.