DECODING HATE

A short guide to extremist codes, symbols + images

Extremists have long utilized codes and symbols to spread their messages to followers. Often these codes are used in place of language and images that might draw more negative attention from mainstream audiences. The codes, symbols and images below have become popular on social media to promote extremist beliefs or ideologies. They can be found as images, emojis, usernames, profile pictures and more. Sometimes the codes and symbols are used by young people (and others) without full understanding the implication behind the content, or can be misinterpreted without the relevant context.

This short guide serves as a brief introduction to building better comprehension of the hateful origins and implications of this material.

14 WORDS

"We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children." This white supremacist mantra was coined by American neo-Nazi David Lane in the 1990s. It is often referred to as the "14 Words" or simply "14" in extremist circles.

HEIL HITLER

The Nazi greeting "Heil Hitler" is often abbreviated to "88". "H" is the 8th letter of the alphabet, so using "8" twice references this Nazi greeting.

14/88

These code is often used to promote white supremacy and neo-Nazism, referring to both the "14 words" and "Heil Hitler" at the same time. This code is a popular tattoo, but online is often used as a hashtag or in a username to highlight support for this far-right belief system.

CELTIC CROSS

The Celtic Cross is a symbol that dates back to ancient Europe, used often in Christianity and in Irish culture. Context for the use of this symbol is important, and often other hate symbols and codes are used in conjunction to indicate extremist usage. A simplified version seen below exists that is often used by white supremacists to express their loyalty to the movement.

GROYPER

After Pepe the Frog became recognized as a hate symbol, an alternative toad-like variation known as Groyper became popular. Followers of Nick Fuentes, an American far-right white nationalist figurehead, are sometimes referred to as "Groypers". This image is often used in memes, profile pictures and on forums.

HAPPY MERCHANT

Anti-Semitic caricatures have existed for centuries, but this particular version, known as "the Happy Merchant" is widely used online to spread anti-Semitism.
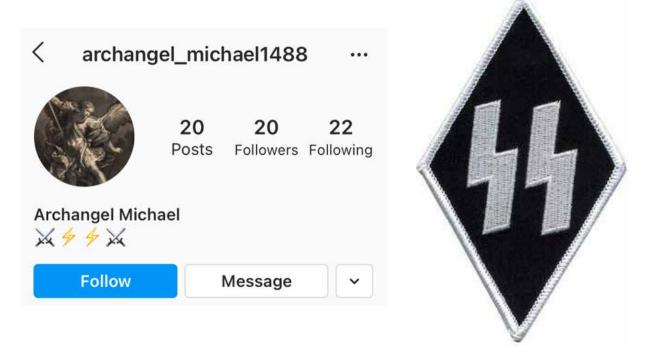

IRON CROSS

The Iron Cross is a historic German military medal dating back to the 19th century. The Nazis continued to use it but included a swastika in the center. Since the Second World War ended, neo-Nazis and white supremacists have continued to use both versions as a symbol of hate.
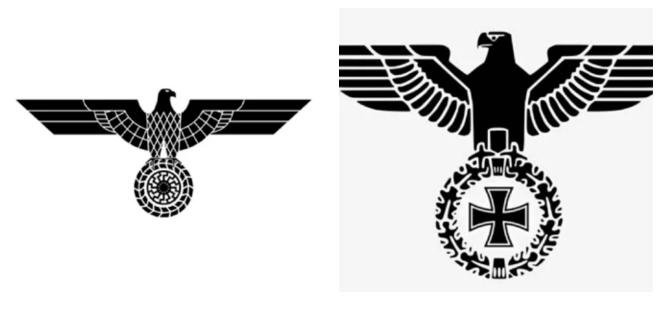
LIGHTNING BOLTS

The SS lightning bolts is a symbol often used by neo-Nazis and white supremacists. The lightning bolts were part of the uniform of Nazi SS soldiers. Often the SS lightning bolts are used to show support for hateful beliefs and ideologies. Extremists will sometimes use lightning bolt emojis (⚡⚡) to evade detection by moderation systems on social media platforms. This tactic is commonplace in extremist codes – for example, users will replace "88" with two pool 8-ball emojis (🎱 🎱) to reference "Heil Hitler".
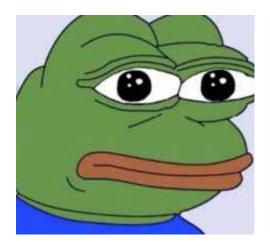

NAZI EAGLE

This symbol was adopted by the Nazis, based on traditional German coats of arms that featured eagles. The Nazi version often has a swastika clutched below in the eagle's talons, or other symbols such as the sunwheel and Iron Cross.

PEPE THE FROG

Pepe the Frog is a cartoon character created by Matt Furie that became a popular meme in the early 2000s. In 2016, the character was hijacked by the white supremacist alt-right movement and used as a mascot. Pepe's creator attempted to kill the character to stop it being misappropriated. Pepe remains a popular meme often used to spread hateful and bigoted beliefs, and comes in a multitude of different outfits. The noose can also be used as a hate symbol, as seen below.

RUNIC SYMBOLS

The Runic alphabet was common to the Norse, Teutonic and Celtic peoples. It has been embraced by white supremacists who believe that these ancient groups were the forbearers of the white race. The Runic alphabet was also utilized by the Nazis – life and death runes were found on the graves of SS members.

LIFE RUNE

ODAL RUNE

SKULL MASK

The skull mask was popularized by followers of IronMarch, a neo-Nazi forum that spawned the neo-Nazi group, Atomwaffen Division, responsible for at least five murders in the USA. The skull mask, sometimes referred to as a "siege" mask, is often used by individuals online and offline to disguise their identity. The skull mask can be an indicator of support for fascist, white supremacist and neo-Nazi ideologies.

@basedracist69

122	1510	4856
Following	Followers	Likes

SUNWHEEL

In countries such as Germany, where the swastika is banned, symbols such as the sunwheel (black sun/"sonnenrad") became a popular alternative to show support for white supremacy and neo-Nazism. The sunwheel is one of several ancient symbols misappropriated by the Nazis, alongside the swastika. The sunwheel is often used as an image for profiles across social media, as well as on the cover of the New Zealand mosque attacker's manifesto.

@europeanblood

319	540	3967
Following	Followers	Likes

@iplaysomegamesforfree

1620	1009	0
Following	Followers	Likes

SWASTIKA

The swastika is an ancient symbol, held sacred in many cultures including Hinduism and Buddhism. The word comes from the Sanskrit "svastika", meaning "good fortune". However, Hitler hijacked this symbol, utilizing it to represent the Nazi Party, connecting it to his belief in the racial purity of the Aryan race. Neo-Nazis continue to use the swastika to promote their belief in white supremacy and their support for Hitler.
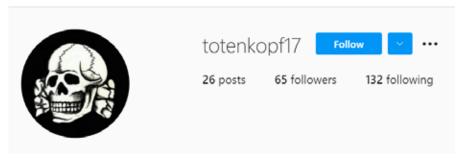

TOTENKOPF (DEATH'S HEAD)

This skull symbol was used by the Nazi Schutzstaffel (SS). The SS was a paramilitary organization that was responsible for running the Nazi concentration camp system. This symbol is often used as a profile image by neo-Nazis.

NOTES

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