

Symbolism is in the Mind of the Beholder

A few weeks ago a political storm erupted in El Sobrante, a small town north of Oakland, California, when one of the residents designed a cement swastika on the surface of his driveway.[1] Soon after, a group of offended neighbors started a group, called it "Not in Our Town," and wrote a petition to the city asking to forcefully remove what they considered an offensive, widely known symbol of hate. After a few days they had gathered 3,450 signatures, most from California, but others from around the world as well.

"The presence of a swastika in our community makes many people feel unsafe to live in a community that tolerates visible expressions of hate and bigotry," a statement from the group said. The wording of the statement clearly indicates the political persuasion of most of the signatories: bleeding-heart progressive (I call them "regressive") liberals.

But the El Sobrante neighbor defended his decision to have the cement swastika in his front yard, saying that he interpreted it as a symbol of "peace, tranquility and harmony." He dismissed the widely-accepted associations the image has to Nazi Germany and said he will not erase it.

Well, actually he is right on two counts.

In the first place, it is true that for many centuries the swastika has been a symbol of peace.

Farmers in Tibet frequently place a swastika on their home doors, as a talisman, so that no evil can enter the place. Irish farmers follow a similar custom, where the swastika placed in their doors is called a Brigit's Cross. Cuna Indians in Panama design their blouses with colorful swastikas. Navajo medicine men use colored sand to draw swastikas on the floor

while performing their curative rites. As a form of benediction boys in India paint a swastika on their shaved heads. The swastika is, without a doubt, an ever-present symbol.



There are swastikas in museums all around the world, from Zürich to New York and from Moscow to London, San Francisco and Mexico City. A frieze of swastikas decorates the floor at the entrance of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The huge lanterns of the Senso-ji Buddhist temple in Tokyo's Asakusa district, made famous to Westerners through the prints by Hiroshige, show several swastikas.

But you don't need to go far away to see swastikas. Many pieces in the collections at the Metropolitan Museum in New York City show them. A close look at the Capitol building in Washington D.C. and other federal buildings will reveal friezes formed out of swastikas. The fabric of the seats at the U. S. Congress chamber depicts swastikas. It is difficult, in fact, to find an old book on art, mythology, or archaeology, without seeing swastikas profusely represented.

Moreover, the swastika had a long life before Hitler and the Nazis misappropriated it. It has been for centuries a symbol of peace, laughter, joy and good luck. It is one of the oldest symbols of mankind. It appears in wall paintings in Christian Roman catacombs as well as carved in rock lintel, side by side to the Menorah, in an ancient synagogue in Cafarnaum. Its Nazi links are only a minor speck in its very long existence. It is a symbol that deserves a better treatment from history.

Also, leaving the swastika in Nazi hands is the worst disservice we can do to the Indians of North, Central and South America such as the Tlingit of Alaska, the Aztec and the Maya in Mexico, the Cuna in Panama, the Muisca in Colombia and

the Inca in Peru. It is also a disservice to the Navajo, the Zuni, the Anazasi, the Cherokee, the Hopi, the Apache, the Pima, the Wolpi and other tribes in the United States. Even the Pomo Indians, who habited in the Bay Area, used the swastika as a symbol to decorate their baskets. It is a disservice to the peoples of Tibet, India and China. It is a disservice to the Basque, to the French, to the Greeks, to the Swiss, to the Japanese and to the Irish. It is a disservice to the Ashanti of Africa.[2]

Secondly, even if the El Sobrante neighbor actually made his swastika to honor the Nazis, he is lucky to live in the United States of America, where the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights protects his freedom of expression, even if it is offensive to others. Moreover, he is lucky to live in a Republic guided by laws, not in a Democracy controlled by mobs of ignorants with a nefarious, secret political agenda.

But this ignorant group of detractors[3] who allegedly "feel unsafe to live in a community that tolerates visible expressions of hate and bigotry," are also lucky to live in the United States of America, where a Bill of Rights protects their freedom of expression. And it was conceived to protect the freedom to express ideas that are offensive to others.

To me it is very offensive to see people wearing T-shirts depicting the image of Che Guevara, a cruel assassin who sent hundreds of innocent Cubans to be shot at the wall. Even more, his image is even more offensive to thousands of Cuban homosexuals who escaped to the U.S, during the 1980 Mariel boatlift. They were escaping from the concentration camps for homosexuals created by Guevara with the support of Raúl Castro and his brother Fidel. Nevertheless, I would never try to deprive the right of those idiots to depict Guevara as their symbol of love, which for many Cubans is actually a symbol of hate and bigotry.

There are many theories about why Hitler chose the Swastika as a symbol of the Nazi movement and displayed it proudly in their parades celebrating Nazi pride. Soon after, displaying the Nazi flag in your home or business acted as a sort of talisman protecting you from attacks by Nazi thugs. Once the Nazis took power, the swastika began appearing side-by-side to the German flag in government buildings and German embassies abroad, until the swastika flag finally displaced it and became the official flag of Nazi Germany.

© 2019 NWV – All Rights Reserved

E-Mail Servando Gonzales: servandoglez05@yahoo.com

FootNotes:

1. Liza Amin Guilezian, "[Swastika Symbol in El Sobrante Man's Front Yard has Some Neighbors Upset](#)," ABC7, June 5, 2019.
2. For a profusely illustrated, detailed analysis of the many theories about why Hitler adopted the Swastika as the Nazi symbol, see Servando Gonzalez, *The Swastika and the Nazis: A Study of the Misuse of the Swastika by the Nazis*, available at Amazon.com
3. The ignorant lefties are always talking about multiculturalism while ignoring even the most elementary information about other cultures.