

## Sources—Skokie, Illinois, 1977

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In 1977, a group of Nazis from the National Socialist Party of America proposed to march in uniform through Skokie, Illinois, a small city with many Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. Below are excerpts from local newspapers expressing contrasting views on whether the Nazis had a right to march according to the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which protects U.S. citizens' right to free speech.

### Source A

June 23, 1977 in *The Skokie Life*

#### **"Boy begs: Stop Nazis"**

By Diane Dubey, Correspondent

SKOKIE-A 12-year-old resident joined other Skokians on Monday, June 20, in asking the village board to do everything possible to avert a July 4 march by members of the National Socialist (Nazi) party....

"The First Amendment may say freedom of speech, but not the freedom to spread hatred," said Jack Israel, 12, of 8709 East Prairie. "This country was built of immigrants—let's not blow everything away by having people spread hatred of minorities," he added.

Reading from a prepared text, Ruth Schaffner, 9515 Leamington, thanked the board for preventing any previous Nazi activities in the village, then called the proposed July 4 march "an exhibition by a few, desiring publicity and inciting trouble."

"Since when is the killing of six million people to be considered 'free speech'? Do we not abhor pornography and other obscenities?" Schaffner asked.

She went on to say that "allowing the Nazi party to march through Skokie..." is only permitting them to curb the very fine traditions of our country....

### Source B

August 16, 1977 in *The Chicago Sun-Times*

#### **"Another side of the Nazi rights issue"**

Editorial by Roger Simon

...The level of sensitivity on the subject has never been captured better than by what is now happening in Chicago. Two very respectable civil rights groups are grappling with each other and public opinion over Nazis. They are on opposite sides of a gulf that has every indication of widening.

The controversy has reached a level where a scorecard is necessary:

1. The American Civil Liberties Union—The ACLU is defending a group of Chicago Nazis who want to march in Skokie. They are suing to allow the Nazis to march in full uniform, with swastika, through the suburb.

2. The Anti-Defamation League—The ADL is suing in court to keep the Nazis from marching in Skokie, saying that Nazi speech is not protected by free speech considerations....

In between the bickering—almost all of it unnecessary—a real issue is at stake: To what extent does the speech of Nazis fall under the protection of the First Amendment?...

The ACLU position is that even though Nazi programs, slogans and uniforms may cause severe discomfort and anguish to the citizens of Skokie, that is the price to pay for a free society.

The ADL position is that the "psychic assault" on the Jews of Skokie by the Nazis is not protected

by the First Amendment....

Here is the [ADL's] position as presented by Rosen [Abbot Rosen was the director of the ADL]:

"...We believe we are defending the First Amendment. We are trying to make sure the First Amendment does not receive a bad name among very concerned and good Americans.

"If I call you an s.o.b., that's not free speech. You can hit me in the jaw and be absolutely free from prosecution. There is improper and illegal speech.

"The same march may be perfectly legal in Daley Plaza [a plaza in Chicago], but an assault when you take it to the Village of Skokie. Even if the Nazis are silent, that can be an assault if they show up in brown shirts, jack boots and swastikas."

### Source C

September 4, 1977 in *The Skokie Life*

#### "Sixty Jewish leaders voice ACLU support"

SIXTY PROMINENT Jewish business and professional people have issued a statement in support of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

The ACLU has been experiencing serious disaffection among its membership because of its legal defense of the Nazi party's right to march in Skokie....

The text of the statement on behalf of the ACLU was the following: "No organization in the U.S. has fought more vigorously and consistently to protect our freedoms under the bill of rights than the ACLU, which is presently under attack for its representation of the Nazi party.

"We loathe the Nazis and are disgusted by all that they stand for. But as Americans, and especially as Jews, we recognize the paramount importance of preserving the rights of free expression—we recognize, as does the ACLU, that the rights of individuals are inextricably tied to the rights of all. The ACLU has fought and won many battles to protect the rights of Jews and other minorities...."

### Source D

September 29, 1977 in *The Skokie Life*

#### "Censure ACLU position"

By Diane Dubey, Correspondent

..."THE ACLU reconsiders this (Nazi) question about every 10 minutes," [David Hamlin, executive director of the ACLU] said....

Hamlin and the ACLU maintain that "the Village of Skokie engages in an act of censorship" in trying to prevent a public demonstration by the Nazis.

After a threatened May 1 Nazi march, Skokie trustees passed three ordinances prohibiting marchers from wearing military-style uniforms, distributing materials which incite group hatred and requiring those wishing to assemble in the village to post \$350,000 insurance bond.

"All ideas must be available for all to listen to...we citizens can then pick, choose, and reject," Hamlin said. "Removing an idea is unconstitutional and whatever the good intentions of the village of Skokie, they are withdrawing an idea."...