

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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RELEASE: July 16, 1998

GOVERNOR OFFERS \$5,000 REWARD TO HELP SOLVE MERCER COUNTY SWASTIKA INCIDENT

Gov. Christie Whitman today matched the \$5,000 reward being offered by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) for information leading to the apprehension of those responsible for the recent bias crime incident in Washington Township, Mercer County, where a swastika was carved into a cornfield. The Governor joined members of the ADL and religious and community leaders for a State House news conference in Trenton.

"More than 60 years ago Adolf Hitler and the Nazis began an unparalleled reign of hate and terror that resulted in the systematic slaughter of six million Jews. And the swastika was their symbol," said Gov. Whitman. "Whoever carved the swastika here in Mercer County must know that the swastika will not be tolerated anywhere, anymore."

"Today, I am announcing that the State of New Jersey will match the \$5,000 reward offered by the Anti-Defamation League for information leading to the apprehension of those responsible for this hateful crime," said the Governor. "We will be giving this case the same priority that we give to every bias crime: Top Priority. The Attorney General's Office is working closely with the Mercer County Prosecutor and the Washington Township Police to find and arrest the perpetrators."

"Racist acts strike at the heart of our society and injure every community they touch. Hate crimes affect not only the community where they occur, but the state as a whole," said the Governor. "They bring out the worst in society and diminish us as human beings."

Throughout her administration, Gov. Whitman has shown a strong commitment to ending bigotry and racism in New Jersey.

"New Jersey will not tolerate racism and bigotry" she said. "That's why we passed tough legislation to extend the definition of bias crime to include illegal acts intended to intimidate people because of gender or handicap. That's why we have more than doubled the staff in our Office of Bias Crimes, which investigates all incidents and helps to train local police and officials. We've been singled out by the U.S. Department of Justice for our strong prosecution of bias crimes as well as our strong measures to prevent these crimes from happening."

Gov. Whitman made New Jersey one of the first states in the nation to require public schools to teach students about the Holocaust and genocide.

"In New Jersey we are many faces, but one family. And we must stand up for every member of our family. We must tell racists that there is no place in New Jersey for their hurt, no place for their harassment, and no place for their hate," said the Governor.