

Mr. Hormann,

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify the tweet that the Lucas County Democratic Party sent out on August 16th.

The photo we used was chosen intentionally. While numerous photos exist of Rich Iott wearing Nazi uniforms, this photo is from Reenactor Fest 2006 in Chicago, Illinois(1). At this hotel in suburban Chicago, Rich Iott and others dressed in the uniforms of the Waffen SS, an organization found during the Nuremberg trials to be a criminal organization(2) that was engaging in a War of Extermination (*Vernichtungskrieg*). Mr. Iott was photographed smiling standing with 'Herr Schneider,' the man with his hand resting on the buttstock of a WWII German MG-42 Machine Gun, who was identified on the Wiking website as well as in the media as a Waffen SS veteran from the unit that Iott reenacts.

Reenactment is not at issue here. Mr. Iott's group, according to one historian, "portrayed a sanitized, romanticized view of what occurred.(3)" and makes other reenactors uncomfortable(4). Mr. Iott wears Nazi uniforms alongside his friends in rented hotel conference rooms where they mingle and take photographs with a Waffen SS member who took up arms and fought for Nazi Germany. Not incidentally, Wiking was a volunteer force whose members have been found to have engaged in war crimes(5). Something that we were unable to find through research but you are in a position to ask, Mr. Hormann, is to Mr. Iott, the question is if any dues or donations he has given have gone to pay for lodging, travel expenses, or speaking fees to

Waffen SS members. Mr. Schneider arrived in Chicago, did Mr. Iott or did any organization he belonged or belongs to contribute money to get him there?

Your call was predicated on a caption on the photo referring to Mr. Iott as a 'Nazi fan club president;' however, the fact that he is dressed up like a Nazi, a former enemy of the U.S. and smiling standing with a former Waffen SS soldier who personally fought for genocide, and that he now strongly supports Tom Waniewski's candidacy for Mayor of the City of Toledo is what should be alarming and newsworthy.

Mr. Waniewski defended Mr. Iott in 2010 (6) and attacked those who rightly pointed out the issues with Mr. Iott's secret hobby. Mr Waniewski and Mr. Iott have what appears to be a close relationship, including a fundraiser just this month hosted by Mr. Iott for Mr. Waniewski and over a thousand dollars in donations from Mr. Iott to Mr. Waniewski - though the full amount won't be known due to some records sunsetting out of the campaign finance system.

Mr. Waniewski has made public statements that are damning on their own(7). Statements that he has clarified that he meant, were accurately reported, and were simply being used as political talking points by his opponents(8). His statements in response to his 'flowerpot' comment have alarming echoes of his defense of Mr. Iott in 2010.

While it is uncomfortable to see any of what is outlined above as anything more than isolated events strung together to form a partisan narrative, something Mr. Waniewski and his supporters

will ask people to do, we must ask ourselves when to believe people when they are telling you who they are. White supremacy is not a binary, it takes many forms. There are many ways that people can turn a blind eye to outrageous acts when performed by their allies and donors, there are many ways that something that is obvious on its face is clouded by preconceived notions. We have to look at all of the facts and challenge ourselves to see them as facts. When a candidate for the Mayor of Toledo, of the same political party as Donald Trump, equates the shooting of “people in the Central City” - long a code word for African Americans - to the misdemeanor theft of a flowerpot in West Toledo that is a disrespectful and racist statement. When that candidate also has a years’ long association with a substantial donor and supporter who socializes with Waffen SS members who personally fought for the extermination of an entire race of people, we can rightly see these events as connected, rather than isolated.

With the rise of neonazism and white supremacy in the United States and across the world we have to be vigilant and call out those who give comfort to fascism in any way, especially when that comfort and support occurs where we live. Again, we appreciate the opportunity to bring this to light.

Joshua M. Hughes, Chairman

Lucas County Democratic Party

(1a) <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/atlantic-ohio-gop-candidate-for-congress-dresses-as-nazi/>

(1b) <http://web.archive.org/web/20070707090447/www.wiking.org/topics/reenactorfest.htm>

(2) <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/waffen-ss>

(3)

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2010/10/why-is-this-gop-house-candidate-dressed-as-a-nazi/64319/>

(4a) <http://www.historynet.com/on-being-a-wiking.htm>

(4b) <https://deadconfederates.com/tag/rich-iott/>

(5) <http://www.wiesenthal.com/atf/cf/%7B54d385e6-f1b9-4e9f-8e94-890c3e6dd277%7D/LANDSER-FINAL-2.PDF>

(6) <http://archive.is/FiKB#selection-417.2-417.618>

(7) <http://www.toledoblade.com/local/2017/07/11/Waniewski-stumps-on-Secor-Rd.html>

(8a)

<http://www.13abc.com/content/news/Mayoral-candidate-responds-to-comparing-a-flowerpot-to-people-in-the-central-city-433959913.html>

(8b)

<https://www.iheart.com/podcast/139-The-Scott-Show-27091419/episode/councilman-and-mayoral-candidate-tom-wainewski-28306874/>