

THE TWENTIES IN CONTEMPORARY COMMENTARY



— The Ku Klux Klan —

Spreading far beyond its southern Reconstruction roots, the resurgent Klan of the 1920s was a short-lived but potent phenomenon. By equating white Anglo-Saxon Protestantism with “true Americanism,” it fueled intolerance for blacks, Catholics, Jews, immigrants, and those it deemed immoral and lawless. Under the guise of patriotism and Christianity, it justified acts of intimidation and vigilante justice. As the Klan grew nationally, many “klaverns” eschewed violence while fostering suspicion and prejudice toward “the other” in their communities. The following selections from commentary on and by the Klan offer an overview of this pivotal movement of the 1920s.

BACK TO LIFE AND VERY ACTIVE AFTER FORTY YEARS!

This is the thrilling story that one hears today in various parts of the South. The old Klan with its white-robed citizens going out to maintain the supremacy of the white race, as depicted by Thomas Dixon and his satellite, D. W. Griffith,¹ has again come to life. Read this article printed in a daily in Montgomery, Ala.:

W. E. B. Du Bois
 “The Ku Klux Are Riding Again!”
The Crisis, March 1919

__ KU KLUX KLANSMEN SUGGEST SILENT PARADE! __

The city of Montgomery was visited last night by a Ku Klux Klan that bore all the earmarks of the ancient honorable order that placed white supremacy back in the saddle after a reign of terror for several years by Negroes and scalawags.

About one hundred white-robed figures silently paraded through the town and, as the paper specially mentioned, went into that section where the Negroes lived. The Klan, according to the paper from which we quote, is the only authorized organization of its kind in existence, having a charter from the state and the governor. . . .

. . . the Ku Klux will not succeed because they have a new Negro to threaten and terrify. When the white-robed figures went through the woods and the back places of the South shortly after the Civil War, they found a recently emancipated people, unlettered [uneducated] for the most part, without organization. Today the “Majestic Viceroy,” or whatever they may call themselves, will fail to terrify men who have trained at camp, who have stood sentinel in the French forests, who have met and battled with a magnificently trained and relentless foe. And they will not be able to terrify those who have followed the exploits of their men at the front. It is a new Negro who inhabits the South today, especially it is a new Negro youth—a youth that will not be cowed by silly superstition or fear.

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¹ Thomas Dixon: author of the 1905 novel *The Clansman*, adapted by film director D. W. Griffith as the 1915 silent film *The Birth of a Nation*.

The Forum, a magazine published in New York City, regularly published invited essays on controversial issues of the day. In September 1925 it published two defining essays on the Klan by the Klan's national leaders and by a Maine anti-Klan statesman.

“Is the Ku Klux Un-American?”

WILLIAM ROBINSON PATTANGALL
former legislator & attorney general (Dem.), Maine
The Forum, September 1925



The fundamental wrong is in the Klan idea of what makes Americanism. It assumes that this quality can only be born in a man or woman who happens to see the light first on American soil, that it is born in all such, and that no one else can achieve it. It adds the charge that no Catholic or Jew can consistently be a good American, because his religious loyalties come first and are hostile.

This hardly needs more than to be stated to be proved false. Test it by the teachings of Washington, of Jefferson, of Lincoln, of Roosevelt, or Wilson, and it fails. Test it by the words of our Savior, and it fails still more completely. The whole idea is not only opposed to our traditional national spirit, but to the whole spirit of true Christianity. It is a reversion to the old, cruel, religious hatreds.

Americanism, of course, is really an ideal and a spirit—a faith in freedom, tolerance, humanity. It cannot discriminate because of color, birthplace, or creed; nor can it tolerate caste, class, or religious distinctions in politics, social life, or legal standing; especially it cannot for a moment endure the breeding and exploitation of hatred and prejudice as a means to sway public opinion and win political power.

The Klan, on its own statement, does just these things, and *makes a virtue of doing them*. . . .

Equally un-American is its practice of attempting secret and threatening influence on the Government. No one has shown how great this evil is more clearly than the Klan speakers themselves; then they turn about and try to do the same thing, not merely as a reprisal, but as a permanent method in American politics. The Klan seeks a secret hold on legislators, judges, and other officials. It uses that hold to enforce its own demands, abandoning completely the American principle of rule by and for all. It maintains expensive lobbies, it acts secretly in both parties, it tries constantly for control—secret control—of elections, legislatures, and government. And again it has the effrontery to advertise all this as a great principle.

“The Klan: Defender of Americanism”

HIRAM WESLEY EVANS
Imperial Wizard, Ku Klux Klan
The Forum, December 1925



We of the Klan believe that we can prove our case to all who will agree with us on one fundamental thing. It is this:

We believe that the pioneers who built America bequeathed to their own children a priority right to it, the control of it and of its future, and that no one on earth can claim any part of this inheritance except through our generosity. We believe, too, that the mission of America under Almighty God is to perpetuate and develop just the kind of nation and just the kind of civilization which our forefathers created. This is said without offense to other civilizations, but we do believe that ours, through all possible growth and expansion, should remain *the same kind* that was “brought forth upon this continent.” Also, we believe that races of men are as distinct as breeds of animals; that any mixture between races of any great divergence is evil; that the American stock, which was bred under highly selective surroundings, has proved its value and should not be mongrelized; . . . Finally, we believe that all foreigners were admitted with the idea, and on the basis of at least an implied understanding, that they would become a part of us, adopt our ideas and ideals, and help in fulfilling our destiny along those lines, but never that they should be permitted to force us to change into anything else.

This is the basic idea of the Klan. There is, perhaps, much to be said for the liberal idea of making America a mongrel nation, but that involves the two points which, as I have pointed out, the Klan will not debate. We hold firmly that America belongs to Americans, and should be kept American. . . . The whole purpose of the Klan is to bring this belief to fulfillment. We make many mistakes, but we are doing this one thing, and no one else is even trying to do it. Within a few years the America of our fathers will either be saved or lost, and unless some other way is found, all who wish to see it saved must work with us.

Photos (details of originals): Pattangall, Maine Historical Society; Evans, Library of Congress.

The Ku Klux Klan: Citizens' League of Dallas, Texas, Takes Action Against the Activities of the Klan Denver, 1922(?)

The Dallas County Citizens League was organized April 4, 1922, by a mass meeting of five thousand citizens held in the Municipal Auditorium on the street on which it faces. It was organized to oppose the Ku Klux Klan. Its opposition is based on the broad ground that the Klan is unlawful in that it cannot exist and function without violating the Constitution and certain statutes of the State, and that it is un-American because it cannot exist and function without destroying that political and religious freedom that is the glory of our institutions. . . .

. . . In the popular mind the Ku Klux Klan has been convicted many times of denying to American citizens the right of trial by jury. We understand, of course, the Klan denies that it has officially ordered the punishment of any man. It is not yet strong enough to openly operate its government. But the evidence is overwhelming in many instances that members of the Klan have conducted whipping parties that have violated the sacred guarantees of the Bill of Rights and the laws of the State enacted thereunder. . . .

The growth of the Ku Klux Klan in Texas has been marked by lawlessness and violence. Mob rule has supplanted action by legally constituted law enforcement agencies, the police, sheriffs, and the courts. In some cities and counties, this has been made possible through the cooperation with the Klan of some law enforcement officers who have disregarded their solemn oaths to the State of Texas and remembered only their obligation to the "Imperial Wizard" at Atlanta and his "Invisible Empire."

There can be no question in the minds of unprejudiced citizens that the Ku Klux Klan is solely responsible for this condition.



Henry P. Fry
The Modern Ku Klux Klan
1922

[In his expose of the Ku Klux Klan (initially published in the *New York World*), white journalist Fry listed forty-eight "published cases of lawlessness in the South, indicating the methods of Ku Kluxism"—incidents that occurred February through July 1921. A representative sample follows.]

March 3, 1921.—At Houston, Texas, J. La Fayette Cockrell, a negro dentist, was mutilated by masked men for alleged association with white women. A race riot nearly resulted from this attack.

April 1, 1921.—Alexander Johnson, a negro bell boy, of Dallas, Texas, was taken out by masked men, whipped, and the letters "K. K. K." burned on his forehead with acid. He was said to have associated with white women.

May 4, 1921.—Sam King, Marshal at Brenham, Texas, was tarred and feathered. He then resigned his office.

May 20, 1921.—One thousand men marched through the streets of Dallas, Texas, at night, mounted and unmounted, all of them attired in the Ku Klux regalia. They carried a fiery cross, and several banners bearing these words: "The Invisible Empire," "White Supremacy," "Pure Womanhood," "Dallas Must Be Clean," "Our Little Girls Must Be Protected," "All Native Born," "The Guilty Must Pay." They rode and marched through the streets silently and without interference from the authorities. Announcements of the purposes and objects of the Klan had previously been accepted and printed by the Dallas papers.

June 8, 1921.—Dr. R. H. Lenert, at Brenham, Texas, was whipped, tarred, and feathered by eight masked men. He was charged with "disloyalty during the war" and with "speaking German."

July 4, 1921.—At Austin, Texas, Governor Neff, chief executive of the State in an address before the Rotary Club said that a crime wave had struck the State and that "the entire administration of the criminal code had broken down." On the same day warnings of the Ku Klux Klan were posted on the State Capitol grounds.

July 12, 1921.—At Enid, Okla., Walter Billings, a motion-picture operator, was given a coating of cotton and crude oil, after being whipped by masked men.

July 14, 1921.—One hundred masked men gathered at the jail at Greenville, Texas, and unsuccessfully attempted to lynch Matt Olizen, negro, charged with killing Orbie Standlee.

July 17, 1921.—At Miami, Fla. At the close of his evening services, eight masked men waylaid the Rev. Philip S. Irwin, archdeacon of the English Episcopal Church, and head of the work of that church among South Florida negroes, carried him into the woods, whipped him, and then applied a coat of tar and feathers to his body. He was placed in a sack and taken in an automobile to a spot in the center of the town and dumped into the street. . . .

July 16, 1921.—At Bay City, Tex., W. M. Hoopengartner, a banker, was tarred and feathered and beaten. The reason alleged was domestic infidelity.

July 19, 1921.—Declaring that he had information that fifty per cent of the members of the Oklahoma City police department belonged to the Ku Klux Klan, Mayor John C. Welton directed Chief Glitsch to investigate and to discharge every police officer who did not resign immediately from the Klan. On July 24, Mayor Welton was called on the telephone, and was told: "We warn you to lay off the Ku Klux Klan, or we will have to wait on you." The mayor paid no attention to the warning.

July 26, 1921.—At Topeka, Kan., a warning was sent to Senator Capper's newspaper to "leave the Ku Klux Klan alone."



Indiana Historical Society

Indianapolis, Indiana, 1924

____ QUESTIONS ANSWERED ____

OFFICIAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS GIVEN AS A BASIS FOR AN INTERVIEW TO A CERTAIN NATIONAL MAGAZINE

Klan publication, n.d. [ca. 1922], excerpts

6. *Have not a large number of men joined the Klan for reasons different from those which the Klan avow? Blatherskites, religious fanatics, cheap politicians and meddlers like the so-called vigilance committee?*
... There is a general and common phrase within the Klan that the front door of the organization must be small and carefully guarded, but that the back door is wide and deep. During the propagating period, Kleagles are vested with arbitrary authority to expel any undesirable individual, and this is promptly carried out.
8. *Has not the Klan gathered much strength by catering to distinctly anti-social, race, and religious prejudices, by “selling hate?”*
The Klan does not cultivate nor deal in hatred or division between the races and religion. . . I believe that some people have joined this movement with unworthy motives, because such an institution will seem to them to give opportunity for the gratification of selfish purposes.
10. *Cannot a Jew, Roman Catholic, or Negro be a good citizen?*
According to their capabilities, they could. The Klan has no bitterness toward any one of these people. The Klan is simply standing for certain principles and they think that these principles can best be exemplified and carried out by people possessing certain qualifications and beliefs. They feel that a man born and reared on American soil, under the American flag, is more likely to be true to American principles if he is educated in the public schools.
11. *What is the basis, then, for the distinction which the Klan draws against members of these races and religions?*
Simply this,* that one places a limitation on his citizenship on a religious principle that precludes possibility of a separation of Church and State, while the other for two thousand years has rigidly adhered to a racial limitation of intermarriage which prevents their assimilation into an American life, wholly and unreservedly. Americans must face the fact that God Almighty never intended for social equality of the negro and the white man. The Negro is America’s problem, and it should give him all of the privileges of citizenship that it can give, but face squarely the issue that intermarriage and social equality is impossible. . . America owes it to the Negro to give him every privilege, protection, and every opportunity consistent with national safety, but dare not risk the destruction of our civilization that might come if its control should ever fall into his hands.
13. *Secrecy is a part of the Klan method. What is its justification?*
... A force which is in the open, and can be seen and calculated, is far less feared by a corrupt official or an anti-American propagandist than one which he cannot see. It is far more difficult and far less comfortable to undertake a conspiracy against good government or against Americanism if the conspirator

* The first sentence refers to Roman Catholics and to Jews, i.e., that Catholics’ allegiance to the Pope would supersede allegiance to the U.S., and that Jews’ historic cultural homogeneity makes them unassimilable.

has no means of knowing that the first man in whom he confides may not be a Klansman. These advantages are real, and assist in carrying out the Klan's ideals. In an open Democracy, they would not be necessary. In the present condition of the country, when it is necessary to combat organizations, using these methods, it would be folly to surrender any advantage.

21. *What is the idea of "bedsheets and pillow cases" if it is not to create terror?*

"Bedsheets and pillow cases" referred to by the general public and held in the public mind are certainly not "bedsheets and pillow cases" to a Klansman. They are "regalia," and carry to him important significance and typifies certain deals that are as old as the ages themselves, and are just as sacred to him as the fez and plume to the Masons and other religious regalia to church and government functions . . .

28. *Will not the Klan become extremely dangerous to America if it is ever perverted from its present purposes?*

It would. It would be frightful. But the very organization of the plan is such that if the attempt were ever made to pervert it, it would automatically destroy itself as an organization. The strength of the Klan is in the idealism of the Klansmen. And that strength cannot be used apart from those ideals.

33. *I do not find in your literature any definition of the following officials: Genii, Hydras, Furies, and Terrors.*

Give me ten dollars as your donation to Klankraft, sign the questionnaire, and if found acceptable, you will be given the oath and taken into the Klavern, and I will then tell you all about it. That is some of the Klan secrecy.



Library of Congress

Virginia, near Washington, DC, 1922

CREED OF KLANSWOMEN

*America for Americans,
As Interpreted by the Women of the Ku Klux Klan
Little Rock, Arkansas (?), 19—*

WE BELIEVE in the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of Jesus Christ, and the eternal tenets of the Christian religion as practiced by enlightened Protestant churches.

WE BELIEVE that church and state should continue separate in administration and organization, although united in their mission and purpose to serve mankind unselfishly.

WE BELIEVE in the American home as the foundation upon which rests secure the American Republic, the future of its institutions, and the liberties of its citizens.

WE BELIEVE in the mission of emancipated womanhood, freed from the shackles of old-world traditions, and standing unafraid in the full effulgence of equality and enlightenment.

WE BELIEVE in the equality of men and women in political, religious, fraternal, civic, and social affairs, wherein there should be no distinction of sex.

WE BELIEVE in the free public schools where our children are trained in the principles and ideals that make America the greatest of all nations.

WE BELIEVE the Stars and Stripe the most beautiful flag on the earth, symbolizing the purity of race, the blood of martyrs, and the fidelity of patriots.

WE BELIEVE in the supremacy of the Constitution of the United States and the several states, and consecrate ourselves to its preservation against all enemies at home and abroad.

WE BELIEVE that the freedom of speech, of press, and of worship is an inalienable right of all citizens whose allegiance and loyalty to our country are unquestioned.

WE BELIEVE that principle comes before party, that justice should be firm but impartial, and that partisanship must yield to intelligent cooperation.

WE BELIEVE that the current of pure American blood must be kept uncontaminated by mongrel strains and protected from racial pollution.


WE BELIEVE that the government of the United States must be kept inviolate from the control or domination or alien races and the baleful influence of inferior peoples.

WE BELIEVE that the people are greater than any foreign power or potentate, prince, or prelate, and that no other allegiance in America should be tolerated.

WE BELIEVE that the perpetuity of our nation rests upon the solidarity and purity of our native-born, white, Gentile, Protestant men and women.

WE BELIEVE that under God, the Women of the Ku Klux Klan is a militant body of American free-women by whom these principles shall be maintained, our racial purity preserved, our homes and children protected, our happiness insured, and the prosperity of our community, our state, and our nation guaranteed against usurpation, disloyalty, and selfish exploitation.


FORM K-113



APPLICATION FOR CITIZENSHIP
IN THE
INVISIBLE EMPIRE

Knights of the Ku Klux Klan

(INCORPORATED)



To His Majesty the Imperial Wizard, Emperor of the Invisible Empire, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan:

I, the undersigned, a native born, true and loyal citizen of the United States of America, being a white male Gentile person of temperate habits, sound in mind and a believer in the tenets of the Christian religion, the maintenance of White Supremacy and the principles of a "pure Americanism," do most respectfully apply for membership in the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan through Klan No. _____, Realm of _____

I guarantee on my honor to conform strictly to all rules and requirements regulating my "naturalization" and the continuance of my membership, and at all times a strict and loyal obedience to your constitutional authority and the constitution and laws of the fraternity, not in conflict with the constitution and constitutional laws of the United States of America and the states thereof. If I prove untrue as a Klansman I will willingly accept as my portion whatever penalty your authority may impose.

The required "klectokon" accompanies this application.

Signed _____ Applicant

Endorsed by _____ Residence Address _____
 Kl _____ Business Address _____
 Kl _____ Date _____, 192_____

The person securing this application must sign on top line above. NOTICE—Check the address to which mail may be sent.

NOTICE

The sum of this donation MUST accompany application, if possible. Upon payment of same by applicant this certificate is made out and signed by person securing application, then detached and given to applicant, who will keep same and bring it with him when he is called, and then turn it in on demand in lieu of the cash.

DO NOT detach if donation is not paid in advance.

OFFICIAL
CERTIFICATE OF DONATION

This certifies that

has donated the sum of TEN DOLLARS to the propagating fund of the
Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (Inc.)


and same is accepted as such and as full sum of "KLECTOKON" entitling him to be received, on the acceptance of his application, under the laws, regulations and requirements of the Order, duly naturalized and to have and to hold all the rights, titles, honors and protection as a citizen of the Invisible Empire. He enters through the portal of

Klan No. _____, Realm of _____

Date _____, 192_____

Received in trust for the
KNIGHTS OF THE KU KLUX KLAN, (INC.)

By Kl _____



Indiana Historical Society

Walter F. White
 "Reviving the Ku Klux Klan"
The Forum, April 1921

But what, many ask, is behind the attempt to establish this movement in the North? The answer is easy. Drawn on the one hand into the North during the war by industrial opportunity, and driven out of the South on the other hand by oppressive conditions there, between 750,000 and 1,000,000 Negroes have migrated since 1925. As a result, the South has felt keenly the losing of this labor and has suffered heavy financial losses. Among a small percentage of Southern employers there is a realization that the old order of Negro oppression has passed and definite steps are being taken to eradicate some of the evils. But, unfortunately, there is a larger element which still holds to the doctrine of "keeping the nigger in his place." The Ku Klux Klan, by spreading its propaganda in Northern industrial centers, seeks to oust Negroes from employment, thinking that they will be forced to return to the South. Having served America faithfully during the War, and with the prospect of a tide of immigration from Europe furnishing a great mass of cheap labor for Northern industries, Negroes are to be driven by unemployment and starvation back to the land of lynchings.

Henry Louis Mencken
 "Autopsy"
American Mercury, Sept. 1927

Ku Kluxry is the Southern poor white's answer to the progress of the emerging Negro, once his equal and now threatening to become his superior.

"The Klan and Its Propaganda Methods"

in *The Ku Klux Klan: Citizens League of Dallas, Texas, Takes Action Against the Activities of the Klan*, ca. 1922

The propaganda activities of the Ku Klux Klan might well be the envy of the German War Office when that organization was functioning at its best. Conceived by the Imperial Wizard and developed into a get-rich-quick scheme, the Ku Klux Klan has perfected a sales organization which is keenly alive to the effectiveness of advertising and propaganda.

In order for the Klan to live it must get members. The elaborate organization includes paid lecturers, "kleagles," membership salesmen, and hangers-on who are gaining a living from the proceeds of membership sales of \$10.00 each.

The simplest of the propaganda expedients is the masked parade. This is calculated to inspire curiosity on the part of those outside the Klan and makes them want to be inside.

As the parade scheme gradually becomes ineffective from too frequent use, the plan of sending masked delegates to churches, funerals, hospitals, and similar places was adopted.

The third step to secure newspaper mention was the "charity operations" of the Klan. This includes the giving of small sums of money to families who had suffered misfortunes; to evangelists and ministers, and to charitable institutions, such as Hope Cottage, a home for foundlings [orphans/abandoned children] in Dallas.

As the novelty of these various schemes wore off and the truth of "charity covers a multitude of sins" became impressed, and the legitimate press began to cease mention of them, it became necessary to stir up new "issues" which would create talk about the Klan and a desire to join it.

CHARACTER ASSASSINATION

And then the paid member solicitors began to preach their hymns of religious intolerance, racial hatred, political power, and economic warfare. Shrewdly adapting their selling talk to the prospect, the Klan representatives have preached a particular brand of hate to the man to whom that particular prejudice is expected to appeal. In communities where the Protestant belief prevails, as in most places in Texas, the appeal has been based upon anti-Catholic and anti-Jewish issues. In California where the Japanese problem presents itself, and in Southern communities where the Negro population is large, "white supremacy" has been the catchword. In the larger cities "political control" is used as a bait. To those of strictly orthodox religious beliefs, the plea has been for "law enforcement," while to the bootlegger and other criminals in the organization, "protection" has been held out as an inducement. And to the small merchant, an economic



ad in *The Badger American*, Milwaukee, Wis., June 1924



1924

boycott of those not in the Klan, with a resultant diversion of trade to those who are numbered in the fold of the “Invisible Empire” promise big financial returns as an inducement.

An utter and reckless disregard of truth characterizes all the Klan propaganda. Whipping parties appealing to the latent mob instinct of a certain type of brutal individual are instigated by whispered lies. When Klan officials decide a whipping is necessary to gather in new members, the victim is selected. Then the process of character assassination is deliberately set in motion. Whispered charges of immorality are circulated, enlarged upon until the whipping or the tarring and feathering is done.

After a man or woman is whipped, no matter how innocent the victim may be, the most atrocious and libelous stories are immediately circulated about the victim with a view to prejudicing public opinion and preventing investigation and punishment for the criminals who perpetrate the lawless act.

W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Shape of Fear”
The North American Review
June 1926

Until last year I was of those mildly amused at the K.K.K. It seemed to me incredible that in 1925 such a movement could attract any number of people or become really serious. And then at first hand and at

second I saw the Klan and its workings in widely different places.

I was lecturing in Akron, Ohio. Now Ohio is one of those States upon whose essential Americanism and devotion to the finer ideals of democracy I have long banked. There in the Middle West that finer flower of democracy, born in New England, and later choked by the industrialism of the East, had, to my mind, gone for replanting and renewal. I looked for sanity in the United States to come from a democratic appeal to the Middle West. And yet, there in Akron, in the land of Joshua R. Giddings,* in the Western Reserve, I found the Klan calmly and openly in the saddle. The leader of the local Klan was president of the Board of Education and had just been tremendously busied in driving a Jew out of the public schools. The Mayor, the secretary of the Y.M.C.A., prominent men in many walks of life, were either open Klansmen or secret sympathizers. I was too astonished to talk. Throughout parts of Ohio, Illinois and Indiana I found a similar state of affairs. . . .

What is the cause of all this? There can be little doubt but that the Klan in its present form is a legacy of the World War. Whatever there was of it before that great catastrophe was negligible and of little moment. The wages of War is Hate; and the End, and indeed the Beginning, of Hate is Fear. The civilized world today and the world half-civilized and uncivilized are desperately afraid. The Shape of Fear looms over them. Germany fears the Jew, England fears the Indian; America fears the Negro, the Christian fears the Moslem, Europe fears Asia, Protestant fears Catholic, Religion fears Science. Above all, Wealth fears Democracy. These fears and others are ancient or at least longstanding fears. But they are renewed and revived today because the world has at present a severe case of nerves; it feels it necessary to be nervous because the Unexpected has happened.



Indiana Historical Society

Women of the Ku Klux Klan, ca.1923

Will Rogers
Humor monologue
New York City, 1923

Concluding comment in a recording entitled “Timely Topics”—topics include crime, Prohibition, divorce, radio, city parking, and foreign relations.†

I hear where the Klu Klux is comin’ into New York. Yes, sir, they’re here. I’m no fool—you ain’t gonna get me tellin’ no jokes about them!

* Joshua Reed Giddings: anti-slavery Ohio representative in the U.S. House, 1838-1859.

† Listen to the monologue in National Jukebox, Library of Congress, at www.loc.gov/jukebox/recordings/detail/id/9195.

Edward S. Martin
 "The War Against Prejudice"
Harper's, September 1924

The world has enormous prejudices to get over. We need so much—almost all peoples need so much—to see other folks as they are and not as we traditionally expect them to be. Think of the row about the Ku Klux in the Democratic Convention. What extraordinary prejudices and credulities are behind it. What can you think of people who suppose it is true that the Roman Catholics bury a gun under a church whenever a boy child is born? Perhaps something will be done in the campaign now proceeding to let the light into dark places like that. That is what presidential campaigns should be for—to let light into dark places, scare bugaboos out of their lairs, make the truth evident even in politics. Not all campaigners will contribute to that, but some will, and discussion in general will contribute to it. Part of the business of campaigning is to nail lies, and if that is done with due energy it may accomplish something.



"This Is Going to Be Good!" *Los Angeles Times*, June 24, 1924

Sinclair Lewis
Elmer Gantry
 1927

In Lewis's novel of a hypocritical Protestant minister in the Midwest, Rev. Gantry must deal with the Klan's presence and power in his town.

The new Ku Klux Klan, an organization of the fathers, younger brothers, and employees of the men who had succeeded and become Rotarians, had just become a political difficulty. Many of the most worthy Methodist and Baptist clergymen supported it and were supported by it; and personally Elmer admired its principle—to keep all foreigners, Jews, Catholics, and negroes in their place, which was no place at all, and let the country be led by native Protestants, like Elmer Gantry.

But he perceived that in the cities there were prominent people, nice people, rich people, even among the Methodists and Baptists, who felt that a man could be a Jew and still an American citizen. It seemed to him more truly American, also a lot safer, to avoid the problem. So everywhere he took a message of reconciliation to the effect:

"Regarding religious, political, and social organizations, I defend the right of every man in our free America to organize with his fellows when and as he pleases, for any purpose he pleases, but I also defend the right of any other free American citizen to demand that such an organization shall not dictate his mode of thought or, so long as it be moral, his mode of conduct."

That pleased both the K.K.K. and the opponents of the K.K.K., and everybody admired Elmer's powers of thought.



"Sooner or Later," *The Chicago Defender* [African American newspaper], September 22, 1923

Rev. W. C. Wright WACO, TEXAS
The Ku Klux Klan Unmasked
ca. 1924

The Purpose of This Little Folder Is to REMOVE THE MASK OF WEIRD SECRECY and LIFT THE DARK VEIL OF MYSTERY from THE KU KLUX KLAN and permit the reader to look into the most secret chambers of the Invisible Empire and learn for himself the inside facts about WHAT IT IS, WHAT IT STANDS FOR, WHO ARE ITS MEMBERS, AND WHO ARE ITS ENEMIES.

What do you really KNOW about the Ku Klux Klan? Have you heard both sides and carefully considered the facts with impartial fairness and without prejudice? Have you made an HONEST effort to learn the truth? Have you given the Klan a just, fair, and impartial trial? Are you “PLAYING THE GAME FAIR?” or have you condemned the Klan on the testimony of its enemies without hearing the other side? . . .

Enemies have tried every conceivable method to suppress the activities and growth of the Klan. They have tried mob violence, brickbats, clubs, and guns; they have tried frame-ups, courts, and investigations; they have tried lawsuits, injunctions, and false witnesses; they have tried crooks, liars, and traitors; they have tried wine, women, and graft; they have tried lawyers, judges, and governors;—in fact, they have tried all the hellish means, diabolical methods, and devilish schemes that the spirits of demons and fiendish minds of men, aided by his Satanic Majesty, could conceive and invent to wreck and destroy the Klan; but they have all miserably failed. In spite of the fiendish desire and hellborn efforts to check its growth, disrupt its membership, and destroy its influence, the Klan marches steadily onward and upward toward the successful defeat of wrong, and a triumphant victory for the right.

Surely the hand of God is leading and the Spirit of God is hovering over this great movement. Nothing short of Divine Providence could ever have saved the Klan from wreck and ruin as it has passed through such trying ordeals and dangerous experiences. If this work be of men it will come to naught; but if it be of God you cannot stop it. The right will always prevail, and the wrong will fail.

“Vain Effort to Discredit Klan Record”
The Gratiot County Night Hawk MICHIGAN
August 1928

From the local Klan newspaper of Alma, Michigan, this article was published during the presidential campaign of Herbert Hoover (Rep.) and Al Smith (Dem.), the Catholic anti-Prohibition New York governor.

It is natural during a campaign in which the Ku Klux Klan is standing against the forces of alienism, Romanism [Roman Catholicism], and booze, the period just before the primaries has seen wild efforts on the part of these powerful interests to discredit it, and to fasten upon it unfounded charges of crime and violence. No reputable person has come forward to give any testimony in this direction, but others have, and their so-called evidence has been given wide publicity before any court has had a chance to decide whether they are even entitled to be heard as witnesses. And, it can be said, no respectable and truthful man will be found to say the things the propagandists want said.

The enemies of the Klan have brought various [law]suits—to oust it from Indiana, Pennsylvania, and so forth. In support of these suits they have taken depositions hither and yon. Depositions are not evidence till they have been accepted by a court; a witness may say almost anything he wishes in them with little danger to himself. They offer a splendid chance to spread false accusations, or to work off grievance, or to earn the good will of someone with an axe to grind.

Aroostook County [Maine] Historical and Art Museum



East Hodgdon, Maine, 1927

Library of Congress



Washington, DC, 1926

Walter F. White
The Fire in the Flint
1924

In his first of two novels on race in America, Walter White, an NAACP official who investi-

gated race riots and lynchings, characterized the Klan of the fictional "Central City" in his native Georgia.

They had been duped so long by demagogues, deluded generation after generation into believing their sole hope of existence depended on oppression and suppression of the Negro, that the chains of the ignorance and suppression they sought to fasten on their Negro neighbors had subtly bound them in unbreakable fashion. They opposed every move for better educational facilities for their children, for improvement of their health or economic status or welfare in general, if such improvement meant better advantages for negroes. Creatures of the fear they sought to inspire in others, their lives are lived in constant dread of the things of evil and terror they preached. It is a system based on stark, abject fear—fear that he whom they termed inferior might, with opportunity, prove himself not inferior. This unenlightened viewpoint rules men throughout the South like those who formed the Central City Klan—dominates their every action or thought—keeps the whites back while the Negro—in spite of what he suffers—always keeps his face towards the sun of achievement.

Houston Chronicle
Editorial
September 1921

Boys, you'd better disband. You'd better take your sheets, your banners, your masks, your regalia, and make one fine bonfire. Without pausing to argue over objects you have in mind, it is sufficient to say that your methods are hopelessly wrong. Every tradition of social progress is against them. They are opposed to every principle on which this Government is founded. They are out of keeping with civilized life.

as quoted in *The Literary Digest*, Sept. 24, 1921

KANSAS MAYOR LASHED AFTER ASSAILING KLAN

15 Men Whip Theodore Schierlman of Liberty and Warn Him of a Worse Fate.

The New York Times, October 17, 1922

COFFEYVILLE, Kan., Oct. 16 – A statement was given to the Sheriff's office today by Harold F. McGugin, attorney for Theodore Schierlman, Mayor of the village of Liberty, near here, saying that Mayor Schierlman had been called out of his office late Saturday night, taken into the country by fifteen men in three motor cars, and lashed with blacksnake whips.

Schierlman has been Mayor of Liberty eighteen months and has lived there forty years. The statement said he would sue the town for \$100,000 under the Kansas mob law.

"The three cars drove out in the country about four miles," said the statement. "The men tied his hands to a post, tore his upper clothing off and laid about thirty stripes on his bare back.

"They told him 'We are unknown to you. You have never seen us. Your neighbors have had us do this to you. You are one of those fellows that has denounced the Klan.'

"After about twenty stripes had been laid on, he said: 'Men, if this is 100 per cent. American, I don't like it.' One of the men said, 'You don't, eh?' and they gave him ten more stripes, saying, 'Maybe you will like it better.'

"In the whipping two men did it, one on each side, alternating. They took him back two miles and turned him out, saying, 'Now, keep your mouth shut. If you don't we will have this to do again, and the next time we will use the tar and feathers.'

Schierlman, who is 42, has a wife and three children. He was able to be out of his home today.

HERRIN FREED OF GALLIGAN

News agency dispatch, Feb. 5, 1921

After long and bitter strife in Herrin, Illinois, where his deputies clashed constantly with the local ku klux klan faction, Sheriff George Galligan, anti-klansman, has agreed to give up his duties in "bloody" Williamson county and to quit the district.

Galligan has almost two years more to serve, but he has promised to turn over his duties to his deputy, Randal G. Parks, giving him full and absolute control for the discharge of the duties of the office. He will still remain nominal sheriff of the county and will draw salary as such, but has agreed not to return to Williamson county until, after a conference with Governor Small, it is agreed that conditions there permit his return.

as printed in *The Palm Beach [Florida] Daily News*, Feb. 6, 1925

Robert S. Lynd & Helen Merrell Lynd
Middletown: A Study in American Culture
1929

Selected in 1924 as typical town of "middle America," Muncie, Indiana, was the focus of two sociologists' research into the changes wrought in modernizing America since the late 1890s.

Coming upon Middletown like a tornado, catching up many of these latent [class and ethnic] differences into a frenzy of activity, the Ku Klux Klan has emphasized during its brief career in Middletown, potential factors of disintegration. . . . Tales against the Catholics ran like wildfire through the city. In a sermon on "The Godliness of America," the minister of a thriving working class church earnestly passed on to his flock this story:

"They say the Pope isn't wanted in Italy. France has been approached and she doesn't want him. The Balkans say no. Russia— 'Not on your life!' England, Germany, Switzerland, Japan—all refuse; and they say the Catholics are building a great cathedral in our national capital at Washington which is to become his home." Then, as though half-ashamed at relaying this gossip, the minister added, "I don't know this; it's just talk, but that's what they say."

. . . .
To this Catholic hatred was added Negro and Jewish hatred led by stories that the Negroes have a powder which they put on their arms which turns their bodies white, and that the Jews have all the money, but when the Klan gets into power, it will make a new kind of money, so that the Jews' money will be no good.

"We are charged with being against the Jew," thundered a lawyer from the state capital at a Klan rally. "We are against no man. Jesus Christ is the leader of the Ku Klux Klan, and we are for Him. The Jew is not for Him, and therefore the Jew has shut himself out of the Klan. We are not against the Negro. Rome fell because she mixed her blood. God Almighty has commanded us, 'Thou shalt not mix thy blood.' The *Outlook*—or some other periodical—reported the other day 113 marriages last year in Boston between whites and blacks, and I'm sorry to say it was white women marrying black men. We must protect American womanhood."

. . . .
Klan feeling was fanned to white heat by constant insistence in season and out that "every method known to man has been used and is being used by the alien-minded and foreign influence to halt our growth." Social clubs were broken up and church groups rocked to their foundations by the tense feelings all this engendered. The secret of this eruption of strife within the group probably lies in the fact that it blew off the cylinder head of the humdrum. It afforded an outlet for many of the constant frustrations of life, economic tensions and social insecurity, by providing a wealth of scapegoats against whom wrath might be vented; and two of the most powerful latent emotional storm centers of Middletown—religion and patriotism—were adroitly maneuvered out of their habitual uneventful status into a wild enthusiasm of utter devotion to a persecuted but noble cause. The high tide of bitterness was reached in 1923, and by 1925 the energy was mainly spent and the Klan disappeared as a local power, leaving in its wake wide areas of local bitterness.



Ball State University Libraries

The Post-Democrat, Muncie, Indiana, July 18, 1924