Sixteen political cartoons on the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s appear on the following pages. They were published between 1921 and 1928 in general circulation (white-owned) and African American newspapers, and in publications that supported the Klan.

To analyze a political cartoon, consider its:

- **CONTENT.** First, basically describe what is drawn in the cartoon (without referring to the labels). What is depicted? What is happening?
- **CONTEXT.** Consider the timing. What is happening in national events at the time of the cartoon? Check the date: what occurred in the days and weeks before the cartoon appeared?
- **LABELS.** Read each label; look for labels that are not apparent at first, and for other written content in the cartoon.
- **SYMBOLS.** Name the symbols in the cartoons. What do they mean? How do they convey the cartoon’s meaning?
- **TITLE.** Study the title. Is it a statement, question, exclamation? Does it employ a well-known phrase, e.g., slang, song lyric, movie title, radio show, political or product slogan? How does it encapsulate and enhance the cartoonist’s point?
- **TONE.** Identify the tone of the cartoon. Is it satirical, comic, tragic, ironic, condemning, quizzical, imploring? What adjective describes the feeling of the cartoon? How do the visual elements in the drawing align with its tone?
- **POINT.** Put it all together. What is the cartoonist’s point?

**QUESTIONS**

- How is the Klan portrayed differently in the pro- and anti-Klan cartoons? in the general circulation and the African American newspapers?
- Which symbols are used most effectively in the cartoons? What makes them effective?
- Which cartoon would you select as the most successful in delivering its point? Why?
“The Answer”

*Public Ledger*, Philadelphia [n.d.]
as reprinted in the *Los Angeles Times*, October 9, 1921
Cartoonist: Charles Henry "Bill" Sykes

The Klansman carries a whip and a bucket of tar labeled “Terrorism” (to tar-and-feather victims).

Permission pending identification of copyright holder. Digital image courtesy of ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
“The Auxiliary Government”

The Courier-Journal, Louisville, Kentucky [n.d.]
as reprinted in the Los Angeles Times, October 16, 1921

Permission request in process. Digital image courtesy of ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
“That Missing Sheet and Pillowcase Have Turned Up!”

_(Los Angeles Times, June 9, 1922)_

Cartoonist: Edmund Gale

Reproduced by permission of the Los Angeles Times. Digital image courtesy of ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
“Their Christmas Tree”

Judge, Dec. 16, 1922
as reprinted in The Afro-American, Baltimore, Dec. 29, 1922

Permission pending identification of copyright holder. Digital image courtesy of ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
The Afro-American, Baltimore, February 23, 1923

The depiction satirizes the prevalent racist portrayal of the “negro brute” as a lurking threat to white “American womanhood.”

Reproduced by permission of The Afro-American Newspapers Archives & Research Center. Digital image courtesy of ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
“One Must Be Extinguished”

The Chicago Defender, March 31, 1923

Permission request in process. Digital image courtesy of ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
“Sooner or Later”

The Chicago Defender, September 22, 1923


Permission request in process. Digital image courtesy of ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
"This Is Going to Be Good!"

Los Angeles Times, June 24, 1924
Cartoonist: Edmund Gale

Reproduced by permission of the Los Angeles Times. Digital image courtesy of ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
“On the Fence”

The Atlanta Constitution, August 31, 1924
Cartoonist: Lewis Crumley Gregg

John W. Davis: Democratic candidate for president in 1924, running against the incumbent president Calvin Coolidge.

Permission request in process. Digital image courtesy of ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
“The Creeping Shadow”

*The Afro-American*, Baltimore, October 3, 1925

African American newspaper. Cartoonist: Fred B. Watson

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Illustrations by Rev. Brantford Clarke in Klansmen: Guardians of Liberty, 1926, by Bishop Alma White, founder of the Pillar of Fire Church in Denver, Colorado, which promoted the Klan’s positions in support of Prohibition and against Catholic (“Rome”) political influence.

"Uncle Sam: We Don't Need You in the U.S."

"The Defender of the 18th Amendment"

Klansmen: Guardians of Liberty, 1926, by Bishop Alma White, founder of the Pillar of Fire Church in Denver, Colorado, which promoted the Klan’s positions in support of Prohibition and against Catholic (“Rome”) political influence.
Illustrations by Rev. Branford Clarke in Heroes of the Fiery Cross, 1928, by Bishop Alma White, founder of the Pillar of Fire Church in Denver, Colorado, which promoted the Klan's opposition to Catholic ("Rome" and "Rum"), Jewish, and immigrant ("Red") influences in American politics and culture.

"Liberty Found under the Hood of the K.K.K."

“Not Wanted”
“Of All the Wrongs You’ve Done to Me”

*The Pittsburgh Courier, March 12, 1927*


“Of All the Wrongs You’ve Done to Me” was a popular jazz band number with the lines: “Of all the wrongs you’ve done to me / They’re bound to come back to you.”

Sign at upper right: “To Oblivion.”
Signs at left: “Supreme Court rules against Klan.” “Kansas outlaws Klan. North Carolina outlaws Klan.”

In late February 1927, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal from Kansas Klan members to overturn the state supreme court’s decision upholding the governor’s ouster of the Klan from the state.
“The G. O. P. Convention”

*Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 13, 1928

Cartoonist: Carey Orr


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