
CONSTITUTION AND LAWS OF THE MASKED ORDER

Ideological tenets and political action of the KKK in the 1920s

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Introduction

This thesis examines the ideology and actions of the Ku Klux Klan in the early 20th century. The Klan was first formed in 1865 during the Reconstruction Period, but the group did not remain active for long disbanding in 1872. These few years left an important impression of the Klan as a group that protected law and order and even in the early 20th century the Klan's tale was a cherished part of Southern heritage. The Klan was then later revived by Joseph William Simmons in 1915.¹ To differentiate these two separate periods in the Klan's history from each other, the original Klan of the Reconstruction Era will be referred to as The First Klan and the Klan of the early 20th century as The Second Klan.

Understanding the motives and ideology of historically radical groups or groups that might be deemed radical through modern eyes is important. While the Second Klan has been researched quite thoroughly, the constitution of the Second Klan is rarely brought up. Therefore, this thesis will analyze the ideology put forward in the *Constitution and laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan* published in 1921. While the constitution does not go deep into ideological details, the text does set a wide selection of values and ideals. This selection of different values and themes will then be contrasted to the Klan's actions which are analyzed in research literature. The method used in this thesis is content analysis and the research questions of the thesis are: What kind of values did the Klan claim to stand for in the constitution and how can these values be seen in the Klan's actions? While the ideology expressed in the primary source is broad and somewhat superficial, it works as a framework for certain values that can be examined when put into action. While the second Klan began and ended its operation in 1915 and 1944 respectively, the thesis focuses on the early years up until the end of the 1920s. This is because the Klan's relevance and political power had taken a downturn in the late 1920s.²

There are some difficulties in researching the Klan that should be remarked upon. Many historians utilize local newspapers and national publications in addition to the Klan's own newspapers and pamphlets due to the scarcity of the Klan's own documentation. The lack of vast membership documentation makes researching the Klan on a social level difficult.³ Also few of the sources used in this thesis are case studies focusing on a single state for their analysis. Could case studies like *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928* by Leonard J. Moore and *Behind the*

¹ Chalmers 1976, 19–21, 23.

² MacLean 1995, 4.

³ Moore 1991, 5.

Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan by Nancy McLean be used in a general way, or would the Klan's actions differ too much from state to state? Even between states there was vast agreement in the values and principles amongst the Klan and the possible disagreements were mostly in focus or tactics rather than ideology itself.⁴ While the Klan had broad agreement from state to state, the few notable difference like for example in violent action between Moore's and MacLean's writings will be examined more thoroughly.

The structure of the thesis will firstly start with the historical context and the history of the Klan. Even though the research focuses on the second Klan, the birth of the Klan in the late 19th century will be covered briefly as that part of the Klan's history had impact on their revival. Contextualizing historical research is always relevant, but when looking at the Klan's ideology, it is important to understand the world from which the Klan rose and what factors motivated the white protestants of the United States into action. The other major part of the text is the actual comparison with the ideology of the Klan from the Constitution and the actions taken by its members. The comparative part will also be broken down into specific themes rather than looking at the Constitution and the actions separately. The thematic breakdown focuses more so on their importance in the Klan's actions and then compared to the Constitution. The themes covered in the latter half of the thesis are communality, gender relations, race and vigilante violence.

⁴ MacLean 1995, xv.

1. History of the Klan

1.1. Klan during the Reconstruction Era

*The image of the robed and hooded Ku Klux Klansman is one of the most vivid and frightening in American history. It is the image of the southern racial terrorist, the midnight raider with the lash or club in hand and the hangman's noose or shotgun within easy reach – the image, in other words, of the Reconstruction-era Klansman and his descendants who emerged during the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.*⁵

In December 1865, only months after the end of the American Civil War, former army officers formed a club in Pulaski, Tennessee. This group was to become the Ku Klux Klan. The roots of a secretive organization were already set during this time as the club members met in secret places and wore disguises as they rode horses during the night. In the beginning this was done for amusement, but this soon changed as their nightly activities disturbed the local black population. Their new purpose was to control the former slaves. The Klan then grew and spread and in 1867 the first Imperial Wizard i.e., national leader was elected, and a prescript was made.⁶

The methods for controlling the black populace quickly turned into violence. The goal was to keep black people away from political power by compelling them to vote Conservative or to not vote at all. Members of black militia and black suffrage movements also fell victim to Klan violence. As ineffective as the black militia was at stopping the Klan's activity, it still concerned the local white population. This fear in turn made the Klan more active and the best course of action for black people was to hide themselves. During the winter of 1870-1871 most of the black people in some regions of South Carolina slept in the woods. The Klan also targeted white judges, jury members and officers who were sympathetic towards black people. Some schools that allowed the teaching of both white and black people were also burned and its teachers assaulted or driven out of the state. Educating black people would only lead to political resistance. Another concern was that the Radical government would undermine white supremacy using the black vote. At times the Klan's violence drove people to join the Klan in fear of becoming its victim.⁷

⁵ Moore 1991, 1.

⁶ Chalmers 1976, 8–9.

⁷ Chalmers 1976, 10, 13–15, 18.

The Klan was most active in states and regions where economic distinctions between white and black civilians were less profound. Black farmworkers brought new economic competition which concerned poor, white farmers. In addition to economical competition, the southern states feared a possible black insurrection. Even though the ideology of the first Klan was focused on race and keeping the black population in control, the Klan's activity was mostly anarchic with methods and disciplines varying from state to state. The Klan then proved impossible to control and became perverted according to the Imperial Wizard. Some members were also leaving the Klan. Dissolution was ordered in 1869 and the Klan's records were to be burned. Some Klan members continued for some time, but the first Klan ended its activity in 1872.⁸

After the American Civil War, the abolition of slavery created major changes in hierarchies between black and white people. For southern states this also meant great economical changes as slavery was no longer a viable way of income. Additionally, poor workers were now in competition with the former slaves. The upset created by the ending of slavery and the changes that were brought with it explain the first Klan's ideological focus on the race relations of the time. This would also make the Klan a reactionary group as it was formed as an answer to the changing landscape of America at the time. The first Klan ending its operations due to lack of control and perversion points to a weak hierarchical structure. Some Klan members continuing their work for a few years after the dissolution also point to internal disagreements.

1.2. William J. Simmons and Rebirth of the Klan

William Joseph Simmons was born in Harpersville, a small Alabaman town, in 1880. As a son of a former Klan member, he often heard fascinating stories of the first Klan. Before he could revive the order, Simmons had a varied early adulthood. At the age of 18 he enlisted to the army to serve in the Spanish-American War. Too poor to pursue a career in medicine after the war, Simmons started working for the Methodist Church giving lectures. His time as a lecturer improved his skills as a speaker, but Simmons never got to speak in bigger churches as he had hoped. In 1912 he was suspended by the church due to his inefficiency and moral failings. Working for the church did not pay and Simmons was deep in debt. After unsuccessfully attempting to make ends meet as a salesman, Simmons turned to fraternal organizing.⁹

⁸ Chalmers 1976, 10, 17–19.

⁹ Chalmers 1976, 28–29.

Simmons had long dreamed of forming a fraternal order in the image of the Ku Klux Klan. He had time to detail his plans for the order when he was bedridden after an automobile accident. In 1915 a silent film, called *The Birth of a Nation*, was released depicting the First Klan and Simmons took it as the right time to execute his plans. The film was an important factor in the second Klan's early history. Based on the book *Clansman*, by Thomas Dixon Jr. and adapted to film by D. W. Griffith, *Birth of a Nation* was a sold-out film sensation. While the film was a fair representation of events to someone like Griffith and Dixon, who were from Kentucky and North Carolina respectively, it met protests and difficulties with censorship in the Northern states and nearly got banned in Massachusetts. The movie nonetheless packed theaters full and was met with great reception in the South. To curtail the incoming opposition, Dixon got into contact with his old friend Woodrow Wilson, who was now the president of the United States. They planned a showing in the White House and President Wilson was moved by the film. The film went on to be massively successful.¹⁰

Simmons was not the only one who was speaking about reviving the Klan. Tom Watson, a leader of Georgia's Populist Movement, spoke of a Klan revival to re-establish Home Rule. This was as a reaction to Georgia's governor showing mercy to Leo Frank, a Jewish factory supervisor, who was convicted of murdering a white woman, who was his employee. While Frank was spared from a death sentence, he was later kidnapped from prison by men, who believed he was guilty, and hanged from a tree.¹¹ Because of the success of both the *Clansman* and *Birth of a Nation*, Thomas Dixon was suggested to be part of a Klan revival, but Dixon was hesitant thinking the suggestion was premature.¹²

In the latter half of the 1910s the United States were going through changes. The Women's rights movement secured a victory in 1919 as women were granted their right to vote. Wealth inequality was expanding, and race riots were a nationwide problem.¹³ In the South more and more white workers had to either work on someone else's farm or do monotonous and dangerous factory work in the city in the hopes of buying their own farm which had become an insurmountable task for many. While white men's life opportunities and economic status was in decline, black peoples' was improving. This closing economic gap was evident in Clarke County, Georgia where in 1920 the amount of farm owners between the black and white population was almost equal. Also, for the first time more Americans lived and voted in cities. The family structure was also in flux as women and

¹⁰ Chalmers 1976, 23–27, 29.

¹¹ MacLean 1995, 12.

¹² Chalmers 1976, 27.

¹³ MacLean 1995, 23.

even sometimes children were earning money and as less men were owning their own capital, the significance of an inheritance was diminishing.¹⁴ In short, white rural men were losing their previous privileged status in multiple aspects.

As Simmons was a member of 15 fraternal organizations, he knew how they operated and used networking to spread his message. He would later find support in organizations such as The Fellowship Forum and The Junior Order of United American Mechanics (JOUAM) both touting the values of anti-Catholicism and populism. Simmons' experience with the inner workings of fraternities also pushed the Klan towards success. Earning degrees and advancing in one's organization was a notable quality and Simmons had planned detailed rituals for these degrees. In 1915, when Simmons was first sharing his vision to others, "unrivaled degree work" was a clear selling point. Networking with groups such as these were a fertile ground for growth as it is estimated that in mid-1920s there were 600 secret societies with over 30 million members in North America.¹⁵

Despite all of this, the Klan had an uneventful start in the latter half of the 1910s. At this time the Klan's goals were not clear, and its ideology was not fully realized simply standing for racism, religious bigotry and patriotism.¹⁶ The Klan's message was also drowned out by the 1st World War hysteria.¹⁷ When the United States joined the war in 1917, The Klan took upon itself to protect the country from any enemy that would jeopardize the war effort. The Klan was slowly changing to respond to new threats. In 1920 Simmons contracted with Edward Young Clarke and Mrs. Elizabeth Tyler to help the Klan spread. This was a great success and in 1921 the Klan had nearly 100 000 paying members compared to the several thousand just two years prior.¹⁸

Clarke and Tyler knew how to spread the Klan's reach, but they also made additions to the Simmons' ideology that focused on white supremacy, Christianity and male bonding. Utilizing the fears of white Protestants in the United States post World War One, they marketed the Klan as the strongest defender of pure Americanism. Standing for patriotism and old-time religion and opposing militant blacks, Catholics, Jews and the threat of Bolshevism. This message gained support all over the nation.¹⁹

The addition of Clarke and Tyler changed the division of labor among the leaders of the Klan. Simmons now was to focus on the rituals and public appearances. He also had plans for a university

¹⁴ MacLean 1995, 37, 39–41, 80.

¹⁵ MacLean 1995 6–7.

¹⁶ Moore 1991, 15.

¹⁷ MacLean 1995, 6.

¹⁸ Chalmers 1976, 31–33.

¹⁹ MacLean 1995, 5–6.

that was to be built in Atlanta.²⁰ Clarke and Tyler oversaw the hiring process to great success making millions of dollars throughout their careers for the Klan. The Klan was also expanding to Evansville, Indiana, which later became the largest and most powerful state in the history of the second Klan. This wealth and success influenced Simmons as he became detached from the state leaders of the Klan. The state leaders were also independent from the Atlanta headquarters as they were funded by the local membership fees. Detached from other leaders and intoxicated by his wealth, Simmons lost his leadership position to Hiram Evans in 1922.²¹ Simmons was given a new nominal title, but Evans now allied with Tyler and Clarke held true power over the organization.²²

1.3. The Brief Zenith of the Second Klan

Historians have long maintained that the other major Klan movement in American history – that of the 1920s – did not conform in many respects to the popular image so strongly associated with the Klans of the Reconstruction and civil rights eras.²³

Industrialization gave wealthy business owners more power over their communities than ever before. They could assert dominance over civic matters as they built public facilities through working with philanthropic and social organizations making the local governments reliant on their aid. Helping the poor had also shifted from being the responsibility of the churches and lodges to being taken care of by business organizations and other more secular groups. The rich were also spending more of their leisure time on private clubs and they would also migrate to churches with members of the higher class.²⁴ In short, the business elite were distancing themselves from the broader community while holding more power over their day to day lives.

Industrialization and the growth of cities had effects on rural life. New technologies were improving farm production significantly but having more capital gave richer farm owners an advantage. Rural power was now being consolidated to bigger farms. At this time rural citizens were also migrating to cities at a large rate and even those families who still stayed in rural counties usually had at least one

²⁰ Chalmers 1976, 35.

²¹ Moore 1991, xii, 16–18.

²² Blee 1991, 22–23.

²³ Moore 1991, 1.

²⁴ Moore 1991, 85–87.

family member moving to a city in search of work or education.²⁵ One's rural or urban identity was becoming more important than their individual job which fostered a strong us versus them attitude between the larger communities.²⁶

The start of the century had also seen a national decline in voting. Political corruption had caused apathy among the voters. Also, the relationship between the voter and the candidate had become more distant. The candidates themselves did not seem all that different between parties and the growing sentiment was that political issues were not that significant.²⁷

Upholding Prohibition was a major task that the Klan took upon itself. Government officials and police were failing to uphold liquor laws acting as passive bystanders at best. Public trust in the government was diminishing with the growing feeling that the people's votes were disregarded. The Klan in its campaign against liquor found easy allies in any given community as it set out to restore order that the officials failed to uphold.²⁸ Even though the Klan preached against Prohibition breaking, Klansmen would sometimes disregard the crime for protection fees.²⁹

The Klan pressured apathetic officials to uphold liquor laws by working with private investigators collecting information of illegal activities that the police were knowledgeable but did not do anything about. The information would go public if nothing was done. The Klan would also take part in city council meetings to call for mayors to uphold law and order. Indiana's Chamber of Commerce advocated for disbanding the Prohibition enforcement unit as it supposedly had not had much of an effect. In Herrin, Illinois 1924 the Klan's Prohibition crusade escalated as Klansmen took up arms against bootleggers and the police in a series of gunfights spanning several days. Still newspapers were keener on blaming the officials and bootleggers for the violence.³⁰

Public education was a popular talking point with the Klan. Teachers were undertrained, and such low salaries wouldn't attract better ones. Rural schools especially were in a horrid state in Indiana. Over 4500 schools were manned by one teacher and 93 percent of teachers had not finished high school and the majority had less than 5 years of experience teaching. The school buildings themselves were dilapidated. The Klan and school reforms generally agreed on improving school facilities and hiring better teachers. Also, higher education was to be more accessible. In order to make strides in

²⁵ Moore 1991, 87-88.

²⁶ MacLean 1995, 38.

²⁷ Moore 1991, 86-87.

²⁸ Moore 1991, 79, 90.

²⁹ Blee 1991, 81.

³⁰ Moore 1991, 101-103.

the field of higher education, leader of the Indiana Klan, D. C. Stephenson, was in talks to purchase Valparaiso University. The failing university was to continue its operation with Klan backing.³¹

David Curtis Stephenson was the state leader, or the Grand Dragon in Klan terms, of the Indiana Klan. From 1922 to 1925 Indiana was the largest Klan state, center of political action and source of the most significant political impacts. Approximately a third of Indiana's white native men were Klansmen. The Klan was the largest organization in the state which made Stephenson massively influential political figure possibly only rivaled by Hiram Evans, the Klan's national leader.³² While Stephenson's real significance to Indiana's flourishing can be argued, he was undoubtedly the face of the state's movement.

The women's right movement and the 19th amendment meant a change in structure to the Klan as women were becoming more of an active part in society due their right to vote. Women interested in joining the Klan voiced their dissatisfaction by mailing letters to the Fiery Cross from 1922 onward as they were excluded from membership. While women's inclusion was a controversial topic within the Klan itself, Simmons and Evans supported this change.³³

Women had taken part in right wing political activism even before the formation of the Women's Klan. One example of these significant groups was the Grand League of Protestant Women which was formed in 1922 Houston, Texas and operated mostly in Southern and Western states. Their ideology was in line with the Klan supporting white supremacy, patriotism and defense of womanhood. The Dixie Protestant Women's Political league adopted the Klan's secretive practices with robes and masks and Ladies of the Invisible Eye (LOTIE) worked with the Klan and had Elizabeth Tyler as a member. LOTIE was the precursor for the official Women's Klan and shared common Klan beliefs of anti-immigration, anti-racial equality and pro Christianity even in public schools. A goal was to educate women to take part in politics, but LOTIEs saw themselves as subsidiaries to likeminded men.³⁴

In 1922, the Klan leaders concluded that establishing an official women's organization was needed. Meetings were organized with leaders of multiple patriotic women's organizations in 1923. Simmons, who had lost his leadership position to Evans a year prior, wanting to uphold any remaining power that he had, set up a competing organization called Kamelia with many of the same goals as LOTIE. Contrary to LOTIE, Kamelia was meant to be exclusively for women and women's issues. Another

³¹ Moore 1991, 37-39.

³² Moore 1991, 7-8.

³³ Blee 1991, 23-24.

³⁴ Blee 1991, 25-26.

competitor emerged in Indiana when Stephenson established The Queens of the Golden Mask (QGM). Daisy Douglas Barr appointed by Stephenson lead the organization recruiting mostly the relatives of Klansmen and promising to contribute to the moral purification of the country. In 1923 Evans founded the Women of the Ku Klux Klan to counter Simmons and Stephenson. QGM was quickly defeated as Barr joined Evans and her organization was assimilated to the Women's Klan. For the next year Evans and Simmons were engaged in a power struggle spreading propaganda about each other within the organization and fighting for the legal rights and titles in the court room. In 1924, Simmons lost in court and had to resign all rights and titles to the Klan, including Kamelia, and afterwards left the organization.³⁵

While moral purity was an important selling point for the Klan, it seemed that only the chapter leaders and rank-in-file members took it seriously. Simmons himself was a drunk and a patron of prostitutes and pornography in his personal life. His assistants, Tyler and Clarke, consumed alcohol and Caleb Ridley, a national Klan chaplain, was arrested driving drunk. Also, the offices of the Imperial Palace were lavish.³⁶

D.C. Stephenson owned luxurious cars and a yacht where he entertained numerous female guests. He was also an alcoholic, sometimes a violent one, and organized large nighttime parties.³⁷ He had married and divorced multiple times and was a regular target of sexual exploitation allegations. This infamous reputation was known within the Klan. Hiram Evans would circulate these facts as rumors against Stephenson whenever they had conflict. In 1925 Stephenson drugged, maimed and raped Marge Oberholtzer, a social worker who he had invited to his mansion. After the assault, she was placed in a hotel where she received no medical treatment. Oberholtzer managed to escape the hotel for long enough to buy mercury tablets and attempt suicide. She was caught and moved to Stephenson's mansion. She was later released back to her parents where she recited the incident. The lack of medical attention still proved fatal as after a few week Oberholtzer died due to the poison and infections from Stephenson's bite wounds.³⁸

The public discourse following the trial focused mostly on Oberholtzer's character. Stephenson's actions were downplayed as Oberholtzer was criticized for partaking in party life as an unmarried woman. Some believed that the charges were too high as he just maimed, not murdered, her. Anti-Klan parties took to defending Oberholtzer's character her having a good upbringing and arguing that

³⁵ Blee 1991, 26–28.

³⁶ MacLean 1995, 98.

³⁷ Moore 1991, 92.

³⁸ Blee 1991, 94–95.

no-one deserved such abuse. Regardless of the conflicted discourse surrounding the case, Stephenson was sentenced to life in prison.³⁹

D.C. Stephenson was motivated first and foremost by personal enrichment and the Klan had proved to be a lucrative source of it. This was true for Evans as well, with whom Stephenson had had internal struggles concerning the bid for Valparaiso University. Evans had replaced Stephenson with Walter Bossart, a Republican politician, as Indiana's state leader in 1924. Stephenson still held significant local political power and tried to sustain his success for the short period before his scandal next year.⁴⁰ After having built the Indiana Klan as the movement's largest operation, the state's Klan organization quickly crumbled after the sentencing of D.C. Stephenson. In 1928 Klan membership had fallen from nearly half a million members to only four thousand.⁴¹

After replacing Stephenson, Evans took more direct control over Indiana's management. Similarly driven by same motives as Stephenson, Evans wanted to extract more income and influence from the state, even at the expense of the broader movement.⁴² While being the visionary leader who ignited the second Klan's movement, Simmons was an ineffective leader. The second Klan was struggling during its first years and only by rebranding itself and beginning more aggressive marketing it succeeded. The Klan was now publishing its own newspaper and manufacturing robes and other regalia internally which proved to be a huge monetary success. When Evans took over the Klan, he increased the Klan's monetization. The Klan soon sold Klan branded paraphernalia and novelty items including flags, fireworks, switchblade knives and lamps. Newspaper publishing was also expanded to printing Klan themed books, plays and music.⁴³

While the Indiana Klan was a huge success for the second Klan, it is argued that it succeeded despite, not because, of its leaders.⁴⁴ If we take that to account in the broader context of the growing monetization of the Klan by each leader, the Klans success seems to correlate with its level of monetization and at the same time negatively correlate with the ideological drives of its leaders.

³⁹ Blee 1991, 95–96.

⁴⁰ Moore 1991, 93.

⁴¹ Blee 1991, 96.

⁴² Moore 1991, 93.

⁴³ Fox 2011, 13–14, 21–22, 25–27.

⁴⁴ Moore 1991, 93.

2. Ideological Themes

*To the lovers of Law and Order, Peace and Justice, we send greeting; and to the shades of the valiant, venerated Dead, we gratefully and affectionately dedicate the KNIGHTS OF THE KU KLUX KLAN.*⁴⁵

While the Klan's Constitution opens with poetic prose and declarations of the broad values of the Klan and its place in history, majority of the text focuses on the organizational factors of order such as membership details, titles, regional jurisdictions and taxation. Also, the Constitution itself is very rarely mentioned in research literature. The Constitution itself is signed off by Simmons,⁴⁶ but its true authors are unknown. It can be speculated that the authors are Edward Clarke or Elizabeth Tyler as they were key figures in the expansion of the Klan's ideology after Simmons had started the organization focusing more so only on racial issues. The lack of presence of the text in broader literature also raises the question: who was it for? The Constitution's focus and its lack of mentions in literature would point to the fact that the Constitution was an internal Klan document meant to be seen by higher officers or organizers. The ideology or its values are introduced as self-evident without argument or philosophical justification. In a way, the introduced ideology works as a structure for any Klan organizer as much as the decreed membership duties, titles or forms of taxation. Likewise, this constitutional ideology works as a loose structure for the following thematic examination.

2.1. Uniting the Disenfranchised White Protestant Majority

The Klan enjoyed success as a social organization. It operated largely as any other organization of its type and its mundane meetings reflected that fact. Short meetings would entail discussions about upcoming social events, political campaigns and other relevant political topics with time left for casual socializing. The Klan offered many social activities to its target demographic, especially

⁴⁵ Ku Klux Klan 1921, 2.

⁴⁶ Ku Klux Klan 1921, 6.

during the summer. This would include picnics, parades and festivals often accompanied by music. Large Klan celebrations strengthened the relationship between the Klan and the general Protestant community, and they were able to unify disparate groups in a single event.⁴⁷

In their recruitment, regular social groups would have its own niche demographic that it targeted. The Klan peculiarly organized its activities and recruitment as inclusively as its possible for an exclusively white Protestant group. It appealed to a wide range of ideals that the broader protestant community could identify with. This put the Klan in a unique position to represent the entire Protestant community.⁴⁸ The Klan had clearly succeeded in its Constitutional goal of largely uniting the white Gentile population.⁴⁹

Majority of Klan recruitment happened through personal relations.⁵⁰ The Klan's common recruitment tactic was to target significant members of any specific community so their membership would signal to the broader community that the Klan was a noteworthy organization to join.⁵¹

The Klan's ideology was partially reminiscent of traditional liberalism supporting values of property rights and self-determination at least for the white Protestant man. Social welfare was a way to make a person reject personal responsibility and become reliant on the government. Welfare used to be a function of one's local community that had now been disrupted by socio-economical changes of the times. The Klan in turn supported returning to personal charity where individuals could choose to help those in need. A proper Klansman was supposed to be unselfish.⁵² This was reflected in a common Klan motto: "Non Silba Sed Anthar" (Not self, but others.) In other words, money should not be taken from non-consenting citizens to help those who do not deserve the help.

To support their local Protestant communities, the Klan advocated a practice called Vocational Klannishness which meant the support of local and like-minded businesses. Also, businessowners who were Klansmen or supportive of the Klan would only hire other Klansmen and deny support from foreign capital. This was also a strategy to drive away competing businesses owned by that Klan's enemies.⁵³

⁴⁷ Moore 1991, 77, 95–96.

⁴⁸ Moore 1991, 95.

⁴⁹ Ku Klux Klan 1921, 10.

⁵⁰ Blee 1991, 125.

⁵¹ Fox 2011, 14.

⁵² MacLean 1995, 79, 85.

⁵³ MacLean 1995, 87, 91.

In order to improve conditions of the community, the Klan engaged in charitable actions such as donating to schools and churches usually in forms of Bibles, American flags or money. As charity had largely been taken over by business organizations, the Klan would arrange independent direct charity project such as in 1922 when the Indianapolis Klan delivered twelve truckloads of food and clothing for the poor, even African Americans and Catholics, during Christmas. While the Klan's opposition criticized these kinds of acts as publicity stunts and realistically, they did not create lasting change, the Klan appeared as a caring, community driven organization to those it helped.⁵⁴

This form of direct charity work was in accordance with the Klan's Constitutional tenets which proclaimed the order to an organization of humanity with the goals of protecting the weak, the innocent and the defenseless. A Klansman was to offer generous aid and sympathy and embody the virtue of altruism.⁵⁵ While the Klan's true motives for the charitable work cannot be ascertained, whether they be of genuine selflessness or for status, it is no doubt that outwardly the Klan operated as such.

2.2. Chivalrous Men and the Modern Woman

The Klan's view on masculinity and manhood was a mixture of individualistic ideals and community values. A real man would be able to defend his home and property, which included women and children, from outside threats, while showing self-control and aggression when the time called for it. On the other hand, he was a fraternal figure, co-operating with his brothers and submitting to the hierarchy of the Klan. A Klansman was an independent actor still tied to his fellow Klansmen and the common cause. The only real men were the Klansmen and everyone outside was considered less than.⁵⁶

It was not only the Klan's mission to protect white protestant women from the abuse of the Klan's usual enemies, Jews, blacks and Catholics, but also from physical abuse of their husbands and common vices such as alcohol and gambling.⁵⁷

Women also had symbolic value to men. As the ability to control and protect one's woman was a duty of a Klansman, having a proper woman was a sign of power and failure to uphold these values

⁵⁴ Moore 1991, 104–105.

⁵⁵ Ku Klux Klan 1921, 5–6, 11.

⁵⁶ Blee 1991, 43–45.

⁵⁷ Blee 1991, 71.

meant the loss of honor. Even though sexual relations between black men and white women were unacceptable and the fearmongering concerning black men sexually assaulting white women was common, there was next to no condemnation of white men sexually assaulting black women. In other cases, Jewish men also lusted over white women, would seduce them with money and power and take advantage of them in the workplace. While the Jewish man seduced, the black man took by force and, in both instances, this was a show of power over the white man. In turn, the Klansman would show his power over the black population by sexually assaulting black women.⁵⁸

The Klan's Constitution also repeated this traditional view of men as the protectors of womanhood and in fact elevated this to a sacred duty.⁵⁹ Admitting women to take part in Klan activities posed new problems. For Klansmen the formation of the women's Klan was an addition of an auxiliary and subordinate organization to the main one partly for financial benefits. Women were on the other hand interested in advocating for the women's rights in addition to the usual Klan beliefs which was a contentious idea for Klansmen.⁶⁰

As women gained the right to vote, it was believed that their addition was necessary for the Klan's political activism. Women were believed to have a good moral sense for politics but had to be properly educated on other matters by men to be effective in political activism. Klansmen thought of the new women's organization as an opportune channel for this education.⁶¹ In other words, while the Klan supported women's addition to political action, it was still seen as an extension of men's action and wants.

In 1918 University of Georgia admitted women students for the first time. More women were choosing professional life, not wanting to be reliant on an infantilizing man or becoming an economical or a social burden. Women's mundane habits were becoming more daring as women started smoking and had the length of their skirts shortened. This shakeup of the social order created short-lived fears as it was believed that a smoking woman would not be a proper mother and short skirts were a sign that a woman would not follow their husband's lead.⁶²

Womanhood was often used as a symbol and a way to compel men into action in the sacred duty of protecting it. Womanhood was the cornerstone of family, society and country and the degradation of it was considered the highest crime. Motherhood was the virtue of white women and critical to

⁵⁸ MacLean 1995, 143–147.

⁵⁹ Ku Klux Klan 1921, 5.

⁶⁰ Blee 1991, 42.

⁶¹ Blee 1991, 31–31.

⁶² MacLean 1995, 31–32.

maintaining a protestant country. Home was closely tied to womanhood as women's domain and as an object that men were meant to defend. As the home was women's domain and extension of herself, its protection was men upholding women's interests.⁶³

The Klan tended to criticize women more often than men as women's role in society was the one changing. Gender roles were meant to be strict and different as the Klan saw the genders being reliant on each other. This was reflected in their stance on marriage. Parents put their individual aspirations on side as now their duty was to family and society. Divorce was a clear sign of parents forsaking their duties for personal satisfaction.⁶⁴

Klanswomen were not often known to take part in violence or terrorism like their male counterparts, but their job was in turn to legitimate such actions. They circulated portable versions of the US constitution, advocated for improvements in public education while decrying parochial schools, reminding fellow protestants to go to church and raised the issue of immorality in the film industry pushed on by the Jews. Some chapters even established social welfare services like homes for wayward girls or a free day nursery in Florida.⁶⁵

Klanswomen occupied a unique position in Klan's activism. In an organization aiming to preserve an old lifestyle where women are mostly seen as objects or symbols, an activist woman seems oxymoronic.

2.3. Immutable, Unequivocal Race

Klan drew from common racial sentiment of the early 20th century which saw the highest concentration of racist publications in history, science and popular culture. Anti-black, antisemitic and eugenics literature had strong attraction from different ideological demographics such as conservatives, liberals and feminists. Ideologically the Klan was only one of the many groups advocating these beliefs which it did with exceptional fervor.⁶⁶

For the Klan race was the sole explanation for human behavior and by extension society and history. This also meant that different races were more suitable for different forms of government. The submissive nature of Celtic, South European and South African people explained their disposition for Catholicism and poverty. Simmons believed that the Russian parliamentary system was a failure due

⁶³ Blee 1991, 45–47.

⁶⁴ MacLean 1995, 114–115.

⁶⁵ Blee 1991, 39–40.

⁶⁶ MacLean 1995, 133–134.

to country's inferior breed. Only a homogenous race would be able to uphold a proper republic and the Klan's brand of democracy was only possible for a population that shared vast commonalities. Without these shared qualities Evans believed that society would fall into stagnation. Even the destruction of the societies of antiquity were analyzed through a racial lens as the Klan blamed race mixing as the cause. Miscegenation meant tampering with the natural order and would have catastrophic results.⁶⁷

In defense of womanhood, the Klan often tied their chivalric rhetoric with racial dynamics. Black people were predictably dehumanized, depicted as animals who could not control their sexual desires. An inferior breed with tendency towards criminality, but who were still lazy, overly sexual and incapable of democracy. The Klan wanted to uphold racial purity and stop the white race from mixing with the lower breeds. The Klan leaders were worried about the rebelliousness of the African American community post World War I. This new attitude towards colored people was not exclusive to the United States as more revolutions were happening all around the world post October revolution. According to Simmons, race war was inevitable, and the Klan had to prepare for it. Evans also believed that the races could not share the world in peace.⁶⁸

An uncomfortable truth was that African Americans were a source of reliable and cheap labor for the United States. The Klan knew this and wanted to keep it that way without admitting the value of the African American workers. One of the Klan's criticisms towards Communism was its promise of worker's equality, which would disrupt the racial hierarchies in the United States.⁶⁹

Uniquely to most white supremacist groups, The Klan saw Jews as a racial enemy. Still, the Klan's criticisms towards Jews were mostly about class as they were the personification of big capital. They operated the global monetary system monopolistically and advocated for a corrupting belief that money was more important than the character of a nation. As the Klan supported small, independent proprietors, the Jewish big capital was in turn a destructive and unnatural form of competition.⁷⁰

Pop-culture was also heavily influenced by Jews who used it to push immoral media to the nation's youth. Youth culture was a severe issue as parents were losing control over their children due to automobile culture, jazz, drive-in-movies and sexual freedom. The Klan supported strong censorship to deal with these issues.⁷¹

⁶⁷ MacLean 1995, 132–133.

⁶⁸ MacLean 1995, 82, 134, 139–140.

⁶⁹ MacLean 1995, 140.

⁷⁰ MacLean 1995, 135–136.

⁷¹ MacLean 1994, 100, 113, 144.

Jews were also critiqued on their willingness to push for more immigration. Simmons warned about the effects of importing the “mongrel population” from Europe to come work in the United States where they would be concentrated in Ghettos that worked as bases for insurgency and Communistic revolution. Increased immigration would lower the living standards of native workers and heighten the possibility of labor strikes while exposing Americans to immoral European moral standards. As the Klan opposed labor revolution, it wanted to unify native white workers and their employers to oppose the foreign workers into a conflict between native and non-native rather than worker and employer.⁷²

The Klan’s rhetoric concerning race is notably more aggressive compared to other tenets of their ideology. As noted earlier, the Klan believed race to be the sole explainer of human behavior and forsaking that racial purity would mean the downfall of the county. Additionally, worker hierarchies and by extension racial hierarchies were under threat all over the world. For the Klan white supremacy was God given and, in their Constitution, it is pointed out to be ready to operate militaristically.⁷³ Naturally from these points the Klan would take up a more aggressive, zealous rhetorical and even policy stance. While the country was facing many other issues, race was the foremost one that could not be compromised on.

If race was the sole explainer of one’s actions and was also immutable, then one must conclude, that the Klan’s educational plan to Americanize foreign individuals would be a hopeless endeavor. The Klan was also more adamant about Americanization than the regular general school reform activists, so the Klan was not trying to appeal to their demographic in their racial rhetoric. Advocation of Americanization and belief in fixed racial qualities are seemingly contradictory. One could also argue that there is a difference in the Klan’s fervent ideological rhetoric and their real-world policy positions. Rhetoric can be used in a more hyperbolic ways whereas policy operates in a more practical sense where pure ideological goals might not be reached. Also, to make these tenets compatible, one might argue that Klan’ belief in immutable race meant broad racial groups, but outstanding individuals could be Americanized to be more suitable for true American life. Secondly, if race, not culture or laws, explained people’s behavior, how could the Klan explain the newfound rebelliousness of the African Americans post World War I?

2.4. The Elusive Mob Violence

⁷² MacLean 1995, 138–139.

⁷³ Ku Klux Klan 1921, 5, 9.

The amount of violence or vigilante action perpetrated by the Klan is difficult to measure. When public lynchings or floggings happened, the participants would be reported as unknown parties. Klansmen were known to practice flogging, which often happened in nighttime, in order to terrorize the target population and affect political change. The Klan did have justifications for vigilante violence as a form of defensive violence against the threats faced by the white protestant community.⁷⁴

In 1921, Athens Ministerial Association in the hopes of curbing lynching that were happening in the county, condemned lynching and locals formed a Law Enforcement League to aid officials in the task. After this Klansmen were reportedly seen terrorizing the black locals stealing their mail, vandalizing cars and driving citizens out of their homes. A black church and two schools were destroyed by dynamite shortly after these events. Those who sympathized with African Americans could be targeted as well either by violent action or death threats. Even though the police supposedly had evidence of the perpetrators, next to no indictments were brought forth. Officials wouldn't oppose mob violence.⁷⁵

Different demographics would "earn" their flogging for different reasons. White native men would be targeted for moral failing such as adultery, bootlegging or the continuing abuse of women. White women were flogged for abandoning their child, prostitution or bootlegging. African Americans were punished similarly for selling alcohol but only when it was sold to white people. Interracial sexual relations were also punishable. As defending one's home, amassing property or defending the rights of yourself or your peers was seen as masculine traits, Klansmen would sometimes punish African American men for expressing these traits as an assortment of masculine dominance.⁷⁶

For the Klan in Indiana, violent action was openly admonished by the organization and never supported as a tactic on the state level. This might be why Indiana never had large violent conflict with its enemies in Indiana and the small amount that was carried out was done by smaller, independent Klan groups. In fact, Indiana Klansmen were more likely the target of violent action. On the other hand, the Klan's typical racial targets were a tiny minority in Indiana's ethnic makeup. Indiana did not see much immigration at the turn of the century as it industrialized slower compared

⁷⁴ MacLean 1995, 150.

⁷⁵ MacLean 1995, 152.

⁷⁶ MacLean 1995, 164.

to other states. The lax racial tension felt by the Klansmen in their day to day lives didn't drive them to violent action like in other states.⁷⁷

The Klan still had a reputation as a secretive and violent vigilante group.⁷⁸ It is easy to believe that this reputation and the disparity in racial demographics would be enough to create an atmosphere of terror in the Klan's enemies in the same way as flogging one man terrorizes the community as a whole and, has the wanted effect on the target population.⁷⁹ With its general reputation or a single flogging, the Klan could efficiently affect the change it wanted.

Earlier historians tended to conclude that the 2nd Klan was non-violent as officials reports of violent actions were scant. MacLean argues that this conclusion is naïve as absence of evidence does not prove evidence of absence. The Klan's leaders clearly admonished violence, but these statements could not be taken at face value as the same leaders would also claim that the Klan was not racist or antisemitic. Also, both Simmons and Evans had given instruction on performing the "rough stuff." The Klan's attempt to distance itself from violent action would be a self-interested tactic to protect the organization from legal trouble.⁸⁰

The lack of sources has provided a difficulty for historian to accurately measure the extent of the Klan's violent actions and as MacLean pointed out, it would be short sighted to strongly conclude that the Klan was innocent of violence when flogging itself was a common occurrence depending on the state. These crimes could not be blamed on the Klan either, but it would be naïve to deny the likely possibility that the largest white supremacy group might have had a part in these crimes.

The Constitution likewise does not make mention of vigilante action beyond the general notion of defending one's values and stating that the militaristic nature of the order. These tenets still are not in contradiction of violent mob action and this absence could be seen as the Klan's way of creating plausible deniability.

⁷⁷ Moore 1991, 23–24, 81–82.

⁷⁸ Moore 1995, 24.

⁷⁹ MacLean 1995, 166.

⁸⁰ MacLean 1995, 165–167.

3. Conclusion

The Constitution of the Klan is written in rosy, elevated language as it calls its members to uphold values that it considers moral, right and just. The ideological tenets themselves are clear but broad, giving its followers freedom to enact in ways they see fit. Also, the Klan positions itself as defenders of its values, making those who oppose the organization appear as aggressors. Additionally, “defending” one’s values can take many forms from legitimate political action to domestic terrorism. Appearing as protectors of moral purity and appealing to a wide cross-section of the Protestant population, the Klan’s goals were often easily justified.

The Klan capitalized on and flourished due to the common worries of the White Protestant community rather than acting as an agent of change in the broader ideological arena. The far reaching, broad ideology and low barrier to entry garnered high membership numbers. Ideological tenets were also strongly intertwined where one criticism of society’s ills could be linked to another. For example, if someone’s problem was the use of alcohol, The Klan could insert itself into the conversation, but also direct the subject towards moral purity, gender relations, problems of immigration, Jewish influence over the economy and so on.

The wide-ranging support that the Klan enjoyed ensured acceptance from the Republican party at large, but it was passive and superficial. Additionally, the Klan’s leaders were often preoccupied by personal enrichment with halted strong policy victories for the Klan. Still the successes of vigilante actions taken by the rank-in-file Klansmen speak to the strong grassroots power that the Klan held.

The Klan’s ideology was molded to fit the changing worries of the White Protestant population. As the first years of the Second Klan were a failure, broadening the organization’s mission statement was needed for its survival. The expansion of the ideology ensured success as it offered a strong interconnected set of values, but it was largely operationally amorphous. The ways in which the Klan would uphold any specific value could change depending on state. The constitutional ideology would speak to the numerous concerns of its target group, unifying them under one organization, while the

localities themselves could put the ideology into action in the ways they saw fit. The needs and worries of the members would in turn be informed by their socio-economic pressures.

The disparity between the efficacy of local Klansmen and the Klan's leaders would be a potential subject for further research. Why was the Klan's leadership seemingly so ineffective to capitalize on the wide support of the movement? Were they true believers in the Klan's cause or more interested in personal enrichment? The best-known leaders of the second Klan were unsuccessful businessmen or involved with fraternal organizations before joining the organization. While being unsuccessful or a career fraternizer is not mutually exclusive with being a true Klan believer, there are other reasons to believe that the leaders had other motives than the Klan's ideological agenda. Firstly, the major Klan leaders all lived contrary to the strong moral values of the Klan. A leader of a movement who engages in lecherous activities, consumes alcohol in lavish parties, lives a life of excess and even abuses women would be a prime example of things the Klan opposes. Secondly, the Klan's leaders failed to effect Prohibition on a large scale, potentially affected by the leaders' own proclivity for alcohol consumption. Even Stephenson's bids for Valparaiso University failed because of internal issues and such project was never attempted again, although the lack of such projects might be influenced by the short lifespan of the Klan in its prime.

On the other hand, local leaders didn't have scandals such as the national leaders. Additionally, local chapters were actively taking part in the issues that effected even without directions from the national leaders. This discrepancy between the two sides, local and national, and because the Klan's ideology was not unique to the Klan itself, would point to the potential that the leaders of the Klan took the opportunity to monetize the growing fears and ideological underpinnings of the White Protestant population.

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