



## KU KLUX KLAN

### ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS OF TERRORISM

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The whole gamut of American cinematography features scenes in which groups of men clad in white gowns and masks, very much like high fluffy hats covering the head and face with the eyes wide open, carrying burning crosses, wreaking havoc somewhere in a neighborhood, often home to blacks, burning down homes and killing men, women and children, while committing wanton vandalism, turning the place upside down. These are not action or documentary scenes; rather, such scenes make up a true part of the practices of the oldest terrorist group in our contemporary world. It is the Ku Klux Klan (KKK).

### KKK Roots

KKK derives its name from the Greek word kuklos, which means 'circle', and from the English word clan, which means 'tribe'. KKK was founded by six former officers in the US Confederate Army between December 1865 and August 1866 to oppose the liberation of the blacks after the American Civil War. KKK notoriously committed much violence and terrorism, such as arson, battering, property destruction, killing, rape, flogging or whipping members of the Federal Army, which was considered an occupier after its victory in the Civil War, prompting US President Ulysses Grant to completely destroy KKK in the civil rights process in 1871.

KKK was eradicated for security purposes only, rather than ideological purposes, so it soon regained more power. In 1915, William Joseph Simmons brought KKK back to life in the Stone Mountains, Georgia. The second establishment of KKK was better planned, as it became a formal organization, consisting of a formal membership with a national structure, with local affiliates throughout the United States.

Colonel Simon sent more than a thousand supporters and advocates to recruit members into KKK. The terrorist organization reached its peak after a ten-year period of time, including nearly 15% of the official total population of the United States, accounting for more than four million members.

Social conditions in the early 1920s were conducive for a membership campaign (KKK), especially in the southern states, where a third of the population moved into urban areas after they were in the countryside, and urbanization produced many changes, especially the spread of crime, which disturbed many conservative rural people. The booming oil cities produced vices and evils, such as prostitution and gambling, which were resented by religious people, who were targeted by the organization in its second establishment.

KKK acted and operated as a community guard and usurped the police function in various regions of the United States of America, so its members applied moral standards to members of community, flogging perpetrators, chasing criminals and collecting debts! More surprisingly, criminals used to be extradited to police officers who will administer punishment to such criminals! KKK targeted Jews, Catholics, social and racial minorities and denominations and persons who are accused by them of committing immoral acts such as adultery, usury, gambling, and alcohol abuse, and sought to re-establish Protestant Christian values in America.

The south was the real origin of KKK; however, its second numerical strength was in the West and the Midwest, and its influence was greatest in California, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Louisiana, and it managed to make governors and legislators win the elections of these states. FBI documents record that John M. Parker, former Governor of Louisiana, solicited the federal government assistance to counter the terrorist activities of KKK in a memorandum dated September 25, 1922, which he sent to the public prosecutor, and he was unable to use any of the mail, telegraph, or telephone to send the message because of the KKK control, therefore, he managed to ask journalist Paul Wootton to do so as a mediator.

## Vulnerable Yet Persistent

By time, KKK became weaker, its membership was glaringly becoming on the wane and its last affiliates were dissolved in 1944; however, it remained persistent as if imperishable, and it came to surface across some southern states in the 1960s, and it secretly committed a number of terrorist acts, such as bombings, shootings and flogging. Although the goals and actions of KKK go against the trajectory of history towards tolerance, diversity and acceptance of the other, that was not sufficient to defeat it; it remained alive despite its divisions, the decline of the number of its members and its vulnerability.

KKK is no longer a single entity run and managed by one single leader from central headquarters, as there are at least four main groups, operating today under KKK:

- The KKK National Knights Church: it was established in 1960, and now it operates from Indiana and is one of the most active KKK groups.
- The KKK Knights, also known as the Knights Party, was founded by David Duke in 1975 when he was 25 years old, and its main office is headquartered in Harrison, Arkansas.
- The BOK was founded in 1996 by “Dale Fox” and is exceptionally secretive. It considers itself the sole heir of KKK, and is the only one to have a presence outside the United States (in Canada). It is believed that its headquarters are in Henderson, Tennessee.
- The Imperial Klans of America was founded by Ron Edwards in Dawson Springs, Kentucky in 1996. It is believed to be the second largest group in KKK, after the BOK.

KKK groups have returned to the limelight in the past few years. In 2014, Fraser Glen Cross Jr. (alias Miller), founder of the Carolina KKK Knights, was arrested for killing three people in the centers of the Jewish community in Kansas. These four groups include a large number of small factions, the number of which reached up to 160 factions across 41 states, with two thirds in the states of the south, but in 2016 they decreased down to 130 factions, then to 51 factions in 2018.

## Financing and Recruitment

KKK raised millions of dollars to finance its social, media and terrorist activities from its members, through membership fees, taxes and proceeds from the sale of products. Hence, the increase in membership fees was crucial for profit-taking, especially from those holding leadership positions in KKK. The group produced its own tools as a second source of revenue, so all its members were required to purchase the KKK uniforms, which are smocks produced in its factories, and members are not allowed to design their own gowns.

As for supporters who do not seek full KKK membership, they make up an important source of funding, as this invisible army contributed to the financing of the group in millions of dollars, and each of them contributed about 25 to 100 dollars. In September 2019, PayPal froze an account used to collect funds by KKK after receiving frequent complaints.

The organization employs modern technology, spearheaded by the internet and networking sites to recruit new members. KKK also exploits political events and major attacks in media propaganda. In 2015, after Dylan Rove shot and killed nine African Americans in a church frequented by blacks in Charleston, South Carolina, the Knights Faction (White Knights) from KKK handed out leaflets that included the website and phone number of the platoon, accompanied by bags of candy in the states of Alabama, California, Georgia, Kansas, and Mississippi, emphasizing in the publications that Dylan decided to do what the Bible commanded him to!

## Ideology and Identity

Like many organizations that present themselves as fraternal ties, KKK has given its members a feeling that they belong to something special, with its own and sometimes secret rituals in shaking hands, nicknames and encrypted or coded words, uniforms, parades, picnics, sport teams, entertainment competitions, orchestras, concerts,

parties, wedding ceremonies, funerals, baptizing and more. The organization has conducted campaigns for hundreds of candidates for state or local level positions, and the Americans elected countless group members to be mayors, members of city councils and state and federal legislators.

On the ideological side, KKK has combined foreign xenophobia, religious extremism and racism with conservative ethics! In the midst of the global recession that followed the First World War, fear and anxiety spread widely among white Protestants over the future of the country they once knew and controlled. They were very concerned by the influx of immigrants from Eastern Europe, the increase in the influence of Catholics and Jews in American life, the immigration of African Americans from the South, the increasingly growing circle of political and sexual freedoms for women. In short, they saw crime and vice on the increase, and that the world was developing out of their control.

They believe that Christianity is their identity and their *raison d'être*. Although many KKK members and groups have declared that their Christian beliefs are the motive for their terrorist actions, we find that their use of Christianity was merely a cover to legitimize their violence. Christianity is just a pretext, and they have no connection with valid Christian beliefs, texts or practices. This is typical of all extremist groups that practice violence in all religions.