

The Second Ku Klux Klan, 1915-1944

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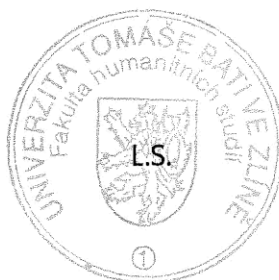
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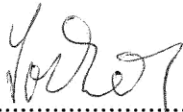
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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce vysvětluje prudký vzestup a úspěch druhého Ku Klux Klanu. Poskytuje stručnou historii Klanu a uvádí jeho složitou ideologii. Dokazuje, že Klan byl sofistikovaná organizace, která se angažovala v činnostech, které byly něco víc, než jen lynčování menšin. Tato práce se také zabývá pádem druhého Ku Klux Klanu a vysvětluje důvody jeho pádu.

Klíčová slova: Ku Klux Klan, KKK, člen Klanu, katolíci, černoši, židi, protestanti, bílá nadřazenost, demonstrace, jih, kleagle, volby

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis explains the Second Ku Klux Klan's rapid rise and success. It provides a brief history of the Klan and details its complex ideology. It demonstrates that the Klan was a sophisticated organization engaged in activities that went well beyond lynching minorities. This work also deals with the decline of the Second Ku Klux Klan, explaining its reasons.

Keywords: Ku Klux Klan, KKK, Klansman, Catholics, Negroes, Blacks, Jews, Protestants, White Supremacy, Demonstration, South, Kleagle, Elections

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INTRODUCTION

The Ku Klux Klan was a successful organization. The First Klan, which was active mostly in the post-Civil War South, used violence and intimidation to subdue freedpeople. They were somewhat successful, and by the late 1870s, blacks found themselves once again as the bottom rung of the social ladder. Its goal accomplished, the Klan was no longer needed, and it vanished. In 1915, D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* was released to great fanfare. It was a movie about the First Ku Klux Klan that portrayed their bravery in the fight to defend white civilization against uncivilized blacks. It had tremendous success, and its release coincided with the beginning of the Great Migration, during which southern blacks moved to northern cities in search of work. This prompted the creation of a new, nationwide Klan, an Invisible Empire that, at its peak in 1924, had approximately 4,000,000 members, or an estimated 3 percent of Americans. The Second Ku Klux Klan included police, politicians, government officials, teachers, business leaders, and members of media. Klan profits were in the millions of dollars. But by the 1930s, Klan membership was in decline, never to recover.

This thesis explains why and how the Klan gained so much power and lost it so quickly. The first chapter describes the origins history of the First Ku Klux Klan, including how its anti-black ideology started and later evolved. The second chapter discusses *The Birth of a Nation* as a catalyst for the new Klan, and explains how this Second Klan became so successful. The last chapter documents the Klan's decline. Ultimately, the thesis argues that the Klan rose to prominence because of anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic tensions in American society and the simplicity of recruitment. The main reason behind the fall of the Invisible Empire was a violent crime committed by the leader of the Klan in Indiana, after which, Klan membership rapidly decreased.

1 THE KU KLUX KLAN ORIGINS AND THE FIRST KLAN

The Ku Klux Klan was a result of the Civil War. In 1865, in Pulaski, Tennessee, six men decided to form a club. They were young and had been Confederate officers during the late war for Southern Independence. The original purpose of the Klan was amusement. It was supposed to be secret and mysterious. The name of the Klan comes from the Greek language. A member of the Klan, Richard R. Reed suggested the word “kuklos,” which means circle or cycle. Capt. John B. Kennedy added the word “klan.” For a better and catchier sound, they settled on Ku Klux Klan. They met in secret places, put on sheets and pillow cases, and ventured out into public in their costumes, often on horseback, to spook citizens of Pulaski. Their rides created so much stir that the Klan chose to make them compulsory for members. Their costumes became more sophisticated over time, including grotesque masks and tall pointed hats that covered the whole face, leaving only the eyes exposed.¹

The Klan quickly developed its own hierarchy. They had a rules committee and six offices, one for each of the six original members. The Grand Cyclops was the president, the Grand Magi the vice-president. The adjutant for the Grand Cyclops was the Grand Turk. Night Hawks protected meetings of the Klan, while the Lictor maintained order within the meetings. The Klan began to recruit new members, and they developed an initiation ceremony. New members were picked up unexpectedly by horsemen in the evening. They were blindfolded and taken out into the country. Klansman put on them “the regular crown”, which was a skullcap with donkey’s ears sewn on it. The initiate was then led to a large mirror and ordered to recite a poem. Then the blindfold was removed. This is how the infamous organization called “Ku Klux Klan” started. It is clear that the origin had no connection with hatred ideology that the Klan had later.²

1.1 Rise

The Klan began spreading outside of Tennessee. It started to appear in newspapers, which drew attention. It was easy to become a Klansman. The only thing needed was permission from Pulaski to establish an independent den. But this could be avoided. For

¹ Sara Bullard, *Ku Klux Klan: A History of Racism and Violence* (Montgomery: Southern Poverty Law Center, 2011), 9.

example, Ryland Randolph in Alabama established a den just because he heard about the Klan. In 1867, the original Klan had a meeting. Its main goal was to bring isolated dens together and control them. They also formulated new rules and reorganized the Klan hierarchy according to military standards. The Klan started to earn revenues through sales of prescripts, fees, fines, and taxes.³

The Ku Klux Klan began to take shape. Gags became more focused on blacks because they tended to be more superstitious than whites. The most popular gag involved a klansman traveling on horseback at night and demanding water from blacks. He had an oilskin bag with a siphon tube that was connected to his face. This all was hidden under his costume. After drinking the entire gallon of water, he thanked the blacks and told them that he was very thirsty and had traveled about a thousand miles in the last twenty-four hours and that this was the best drink he had had since he was killed in a battle. According to the KKK, the blacks fled, but according to blacks, they knew that there were white men under the clothes. These jokes appeared in southern newspapers. It is the first sign that the Klan was becoming anti-black. From gags, patrolling started to be more common. Klansmen broke into blacks' cabins and took their firearms, and broke up prayers and social gatherings. They did so in response to race riots in Memphis and New Orleans. Another reason for patrolling was that it was popular for gentlemen's clubs to do so at the time.⁴

After the meeting in 1867, into the position of the highest office, the Grand Wizard, was voted Captain John W. Morton, a former soldier of the Confederate army, who was becoming influential. Into the position of Wizard was elected Morton's commander, Nathan Bedford Forrest. Forrest was a former general, and a slave trader with a cruel reputation. But he was also considered one of the best cavalry leaders. Once a man of some means, he lost his entire fortune in the war and was bitter over it. After Forest joined, Klan meetings, parades, and announcements appeared in newspapers.⁵ And the KKK had a good relationship with the press, largely because many editors were Klan members.⁶

² Wyn Craig Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 34-35.

³ *Ibid.*, 37-38.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁶ Bullard, *Ku Klux Klan*, 14.

Forrest was not the only one who lost his fortune. Much of the South was devastated by the Civil War. Former Confederate states had been reconstructed on moderate terms that allowed many former leaders to return to their previous positions. In the South, laws known as Black Codes began to restore the dominance of whites over blacks, resulting oftentimes in virtual re-enslavement. Politics also took a conservative turn, with the Democratic Party, preaching about the need to protect the Aryan race, regaining control of the South. Some states, like Florida and Mississippi, were harsh towards blacks, while others, such as North Carolina, were more lenient, but all Southern states expressed the importance of white supremacy in one way or another.⁷

The Ku Klux Klan began raids on black members of the Union League and white teachers of black schools. The KKK began to evoke fear in numbers. Blacks began to flee to cities for protection. The Klan soon had thousands of members across the South. It grew too quickly to control. Anyone could put on Klan clothing and commit crimes, including personal acts of revenge unrelated to the Klan.⁸

The uprising of violence was not acceptable to the U.S. Government, which classified the Klan as a terrorist organization. Early in 1868, orders came from state capitols and the Union army headquarters to stop the Klan. But the Klan was spreading through counties, and in some of them, the Ku Klux Klan had more power than the officials. Attempts to place spies among the Klan failed. One spy was strung up in a tree, with his feet barely touching the ground. Another spy was stripped and mutilated, and the last one was put in a barrel, in which he later drowned. Infiltration of the Klan was not easy because most citizens supported their actions.⁹

1.2 Fall

By 1869, although the Klan was successful, it started to have organizational and operational issues. To organize such a huge number of members, who often had their own personal interests, was difficult.¹⁰ There were even clashes between groups. In Nashville, groups of real KKK and fake ones fought each other.¹¹ As a result, Klan membership began

⁷ Ibid., 12.

⁸ Ibid., 12.

⁹ Ibid., 14.

¹⁰ Wade, *The Fiery Cross*, 58.

¹¹ Bullard, *Ku Klux Klan*, 14.

to fall, and the quality of membership was also declining in many states. In the beginning of 1869, Nathan Bedford Forrest ordered the dissolution of the Klan. In his opinion, the Klan had strayed from its original goals and no longer adequately represented public interests. Forrest also ordered all Klan documents burned, to hide the tracks of members. Ryland Randolph, the leader in Alabama, shared Forrest's opinion and worked with Forrest to dissolve the Klan, which in his mind had become ungentlemanly.¹²

Klans in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi and Tennessee listened to the orders, and the dens were dismissed. But this did not put an end to the violence. Even though the Klan was officially dismissed, it took mass arrests, confessions, and convictions to stop the rebel Klansmen. In 1871, the U.S. government introduced a law against the Ku Klux Klan. Under this law, the president could declare martial law and suspend the writ of habeas corpus. Night riding and wearing masks was prohibited. Hundreds of Klansmen were arrested, but only a few went to prison.¹³

According to Walter Fleming, a pro-Southern historian, the KKK won because it kept blacks subservient and returned the South to pre-war status. He is right. The KKK served its purpose well. Because of the Klan, blacks lost the right to vote and hold office, and Democrats coasted to easy victories throughout the South. These Democrats then passed more anti-black laws. Any positive Reconstruction-era changes for blacks were undone. 'Jim Crow' racial segregation, espousing a "separate but equal" doctrine, began in the 1880s and lasted for more than 80 years. In this system, whites and blacks were separated in everything, such as schools, buses, restaurants and bathrooms. Although the rule called for "separate but equal" treatment, the former was clearly more important than the latter.¹⁴

¹² Wade, *The Fiery Cross*, 37.

¹³ Bullard, *Ku Klux Klan*, 15.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 14-15; David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Duke University Press, 2003), 19.

2 SECOND KU KLUX KLAN

On March 3, 1915, one of the most controversial and successful movies of all time was released. It was *The Birth of a Nation*, directed by D. W. Griffith. The movie told a story about the Civil War, Reconstruction, the origin of the Ku Klux Klan and its fight against blacks. It portrayed members of the KKK as heroes, who fought valiantly to protect white society from blacks. This movie was viewed by more than fifty million people and influenced the creation of the Second Ku Klux Klan. One fan of the film was William Joseph Simmons. He and 15 others started what would become the biggest organization ever in the United States.¹⁵

2.1 Origins

In 1915, the Second Klan was born. The founder of the Second Klan was William Joseph Simmons, who claimed that his father was in the original Ku Klux Klan. Simmons was a veteran of the Spanish – American War and a former Methodist preacher. Simmons, a self-proclaimed “colonel,” stated that the idea to form the Second KKK came to him in an alcoholic vision of hooded riders in the sky. He named himself Grand Wizard of the organization he founded. The Second KKK had sixteen original members, including two members of the First KKK and the speaker of Georgia’s state legislature. The popularity of *The Birth of a Nation* led to the popularity of the Second KKK; two weeks after its inception, the Second Klan had over 100 members. Like the First Klan, the Second Klan steeped itself in mystery, adopting the moniker the “Invisible Empire.” The Second KKK began actively recruiting pure-white American males. It received its permanent state charter in 1916 under the official name, The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Inc.¹⁶

Until 1920, the Klan was mostly invisible and unproductive, largely due lack of resources. Expenses were high. As a result, Simmons changed the structure of Klan. The peak in the hierarchy was the state or realm, then provinces, and last the klavern. The Klan had eight realms, each led by a Grand Goblin. It was active in Southern cities: Atlanta, Birmingham, Mobile and Montgomery. Although Alabama and Georgia were strong states in membership in the First Klan, the Second KKK struggled to gain members in these states. The new Klan’s most notorious actions were kidnappings. In Mobile, the KKK

¹⁵ Kenneth T. Jackson, *Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1992), 3-4.

kidnapped a labor leader because they wanted to prevent a work stoppage. In Birmingham, a strike leader was kidnapped. The Klan was against unions.¹⁷

2.1.1 *The Birth of a Nation*

The Birth of a Nation is based on Thomas Dixon's novel *The Clansman*. It was a movie "that worked the audience up into a frenzy" and that would "make you hate." Dixon said "that one purpose of his play was to create a feeling of abhorrence in white people, especially white women, against colored men." In this interview, he also mentioned his wish that United States would be a Negro-free country and he was hoping that this would happen because of *The Birth of a Nation*. Theatres refused to sell tickets to blacks. The president of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, endorsed the play, calling it "history written with lightning." During the film, endorsement cards were given to the audience for them to fill out. These cards were collected before the intermission. Everything that could offend someone – glorification of Ku Klux Klan, negative interpretation of blacks, etc. - is in the second act. Such endorsements were used as advertisements for the film. Outrage against the movie grew, especially among northern blacks. A large amount of money was spent on security to suppress opposition. Even so, many influential public leaders began to speak against the film, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) led repeated protests against it. After a series of public meetings, new censorship laws were established.¹⁸ American society became especially polarized over the film when, on 24 April 1916, newspapers reported that a white man, having seen the film, murdered a black teenager in Indiana.¹⁹

The movie is divided into 2 acts. The first act deals with the Civil War, while the second act concerns Reconstruction and Redemption. The first part depicts Union black militia negatively, while Confederate soldiers are heroes who save white women from the peril posed by black men.²⁰ The second part provides a Southerner's view of Reconstruction. Black soldiers and politicians are negatively stereotyped, and

¹⁶ Michael Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi: A History* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2010), 64-66.

¹⁷ Jackson, *Ku Klux Klan in the City*, 6-8.

¹⁸ "Fighting a Vicious Film: Protest against *The Birth of a Nation*," <https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai2/forward/text4/viciousfilm.pdf>.

¹⁹ Seymour Stern, *D.W. Griffith's 100th Anniversary The Birth of A Nation* (Victoria: Friesen Press, 2014), 47.

miscegenation is legal. Luckily for the South and for the Aryan race, the First KKK is there to save them, but not before a white woman kills herself to protect her racial purity before being defiled by a black man. The film promotes the importance of *herrenvolk* democracy, the idea that whites of all classes must stick together to protect their race from degradation.²¹

2.2 Success

The Second Ku Klux Klan began to be successful when it started to stand against groups and themes that were disliked by white Protestants, such as immigrants, Asians, Jews, Catholics, bootleggers, and sexual matters. Because of this, membership rose. By summer 1921, it had increased to nearly 100,000 and the Klan began to make a profit off of its \$10 annual membership fee. The profits were tax-free because the KKK was classified as a benevolent organization. Simmons made speeches while Edward Young Clarke, a publicist, marketed the organization and made business investments for it. Despite a few Klansmen being arrested for perpetrating acts of violence against blacks, Jews, and immigrants, the Klan grew stronger by the day.²² At its peak in 1924, the Klan reportedly had four million members. Most of the members were from Indiana (450,000) and Texas (415,000). California, New York, Oklahoma, and Oregon had approximately 200,000 members each. The majority of Klansmen were the true “old” Americans from villages and small towns.²³

According to Robert L. Duffus, Klan members could be divided into six groups: Organizers and promoters, businessmen, politicians, preachers and religious people, people who were in the Klan for “fun” and bootleggers that joined for protection because the KKK stood against them. Thus, the Klan had socio-economic classes. It was not normal for community leaders to join, despite the best efforts of Klan officers, called “Kleagles,” whose missions were to recruit new members. After this group, they targeted the middle class, which was reportedly comprised of “solid, respectable citizens, kind and loving husbands and fathers, conscientious members of their churches” and “good, solid, . . . the

²⁰ *The Birth of a Nation*, Movie, directed by David W. Griffith (1915; Los Angeles: Epoch Producing Co.), video.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Bullard, *Ku Klux Klan*, 17-18.

backbone of the Nation.” Yet, notes Stanley Frost, he never saw a Kleagle refuse a member. If the interested person had \$10, the Kleagle would sign him up. Former Kleagle Henry Fry stated that, to him, it was like selling insurance or stock.²⁴

One of the reasons why people joined the Klan was World War I. For Americans, this war was very quickly over, and it left lots of unfulfilled patriotism. People accepted the Klan motto “one hundred percent Americanism.” Black people gained power in many people’s eyes after the war, and lynching and riots against blacks happened shortly after the war in racially-diverse places. An anti-Catholic spirit increased, same as anti-immigrant and anti-Semitism. The evangelical, didactic, and prudish American life faded. The United States embraced “Modernism,” which involved a decreased interest in church, drinking contraband liquor, and increasing sexuality. Morals in America declined in the eyes of conservatives, and something had to be done. For many, the Klan was an answer.²⁵

Publicity in newspapers helped the Klan in gaining members, for example when the Klan was accused of burning cotton gins and cotton bales in southern states in 1920. This was because farmers were upset by a drop in cotton prices. Night riding occurred in an attempt to raise the prices, but the Klansmen were not the ones who burned the cotton; in fact, they protected it. There were speculations that the KKK might be involved in the burnings and because of this, the KKK received lots of letters requesting information about the Klan, requirements for membership, and the program of the organization.²⁶

Klans from the north did not have much support from the start, but in 1921, they started to draw attention because of a liberal newspaper, the *New York World*. This newspaper wrote about the Klan as an “un-American herd” or an “example of southern backwardness.” Its articles analyzed the Klan’s history, ideals, aims, and practices. The aim of the newspapers was to harm the Klan, but the effect was the opposite. There is reportedly no such thing as bad publicity, and the publicity offered by the *World*, although negative, impressed many. When Kleagles started to appear in the north and west, they began signing up new members at a rate of 5,000 a day.²⁷

²³ Arnold S. Rice, *The Ku Klux Klan In American Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1962), 13.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁶ Charles C. Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1965), 9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

In 1922, Simmons was becoming detached from the Klan and eventually lost control of the movement to Hiram Evans. When Evans got the position of Imperial Wizard, he threw out Simmons and Clarke, and they never regained their positions. Evans, a dentist from Dallas, took charge of the national recruitment drive. His vision of the Klan was more than just a moneymaking machine. He wanted the Klan to be involved in politics. Evans was constantly on the road in 1921 and 1922, building relationships with state leaders. This cooperation was successful, and the Klan grew larger under his leadership.²⁸

The Klan organized massive parades to publicize its power. The most important and biggest parades were in Washington D.C. In 1925, Evans led a parade of 50,000-60,000 Klanspeople. This was when the Klan was at its peak. The media reacted variously to this event. Some tried to sabotage it, while others cheered it with headlines such as “Go to it, Klan!”; “let the nighties gleam!” The *Baltimore Sun* wrote, “Washington languishes, a fit place for hookworms and sleeping sickness. Into that depressing solemnity comes the Ku Klux Klan to kick up a few didoes. Deprive it of its fiery cross? Gosh, no!” The *Syracuse Herald* wrote, “Ku-Kluxism is least harmful and menacing when the sun shines on it. Only in the dark can it make trouble. For that reason, we say, let them parade.” The *Washington Evening Star* stated that there is no occasion for alarm and that the march is no different from any other marches of uniformed organizations. The common attitude towards the parade was to let it happen.²⁹ Another parade in Washington D.C. happened in 1926, with approximately 50,000 members, and in 1928, when the Klan was in decay, it still managed to organize a large parade in the U.S. capital.³⁰

2.3 Beliefs

Unlike the First Klan, the Second Ku Klux Klan was partly a religious movement. Klansmen professed Protestantism. After World War I, there was a fundamentalist-

²⁸ Leonard J. Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana* (Chapell Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 18.

²⁹ “The Klan Walks in Washington,” http://www.oldmagazinearticles.com/KKK_march_on_Washington_DC_Pennsylvania_Avenue_1925-pdf.

³⁰ U.S. Information Agency, 1928, Source: Photographic File of the Paris Bureau of the New York Times, compiled ca. 1900 - ca. 1950, 2016, Digital Image, Available from: Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/usnationalarchives/11192046584/in/photostream/>; “Hate on Parade: When the KKK Marched on Washington,” <http://mashable.com/2015/12/24/kkk-parade/#1Lb6cMyxZkqV>; Rice, *The Ku Klux Klan In American Politics*, 92.

modernist controversy. This was a clash among Protestants. The ideology of Modernism connects Christianity with science and philosophy, while Fundamentalism is traditional.³¹

The Ku Klux Klan favored Fundamentalism. Not only doctrines are the problem, but also the social and political attitudes. Klan was very orthodox—fundamentalism for absolute Biblical literalism and “one hundred percent Americanism”. Each local Klan had their chaplain that opened meetings with a prayer. They modified hymns and used them as their own songs. They went in Klan costumes to churches during Sunday services and gave donations.³² Very symbolic to the meetings of the Ku Klux Klan was the burning cross. This was not used in the First Klan. The first sign of a burning cross appeared in T. Dixon's novel *The Clansman*.³³ The first real burning of the cross happened on November 25, 1915, when William J. Simmons and other 15 members burned the cross on Stone Mountain, Georgia, to symbolize the beginning of the new Klan.³⁴ For Klansmen, the burning cross means “lightning” – a symbol of their faith.³⁵

After the Great War, there were lots of anti-Catholic attitudes. Tales and stories were told how are Catholic churches prepared to fight against U.S. Government or plans that the Pope will take control of United States of America. Governor Sidney J. Catts of Florida claimed with Klan's blessing, that Pope will move Vatican to Florida. These anti-Catholic attitudes were because Catholics were non-Americans in eyes of Klansmen. Klan supported Democratic primary race in Atlanta 1922, where councilman, Walter Sims, won against Catholic efforts. Catholic brotherhood Knights of Columbus organized an anti-Klan campaign in this year and several states led by Iowa, Minnesota, and Michigan passed laws that banned masked organizations. The clash between KKK and Catholics escalated and several shootings happened in Lafayette, Louisiana, where the shooting took place because Catholics revealed names of Klansmen in this area. Even Catholic bishop publically

³¹ Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 6.

³² Lerond Curry, *Protestant-Catholic Relations in America: World War I Through Vatican II* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), 6-8.

³³ Thomas Dixon, *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Doubleday, 1935), 324-327.

³⁴ Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press: 1994), 5.

³⁵ “Why We Light The Cross - Ku Klux Klan Cross Lighting,” <http://www.kkkknights.com/about/why-we-light-the-cross/>.

demanded retaliation. Then riots happened on Klan's parades and the most violent riot in Klan's history happened in Lilly, Pennsylvania, which ended with four deaths.³⁶

There was very strong bound between Protestantism and "one hundred percent Americanism". Americanism means hard patriotism, everything has to be American. People should never betray America or American race because that would be a betrayal to their ancestors and God. The purpose of the Klan is to keep America American. True Klansman has to be willing to sacrifice for his family, nation and his race before anything else but God. Other qualities such as courage, endurance, and self-reliance were also important to Klansmen. They believe in the greatest individualism and diversity and that the aliens cannot understand this or try to be like this.³⁷

Americanism is not only about great values of a man but also about the race. The white race has to be supreme in America and all over the world. Whites can live with other races but only in a way when their rights and interests would never get into a conflict. White people can be never slaves and should never give up on life. The future and progress of the world is in their hands and can be achieved by the supremacy of white race. Whites are superior because it is the only race that did not fail in their progress. Other civilizations or races had their chances and failed. Whites rule and there are no other races that could compete.³⁸

Not only race but also Protestantism must be supreme and has to be prevented. Catholicism was a threat to this. It was not because it had different beliefs, but because Protestantism is a crucial part of Americanism. Without it, America would never exist and would not be as it is. Religion was important to the Klan because all members had to be Protestants, but the Klan can be considered more as a political movement than religious because the securing of the country was a number one priority.³⁹

2.4 Women of the Ku Klux Klan

The ideology of the First Klan was always about the white men supremacy, but times changed and Klan's ideology changed too. Gender equity was no longer a problem. Klan

³⁶ Curry, *Protestant-Catholic Relations in America*, 7-8.

³⁷ Hiram Evans, "The Klan's Fight for Americanism," *North American Review*, March, 1926, accessed April 20, 2016, http://wps.prenhall.com/wps/media/objects/108/110605/ch23_a3_d1.pdf.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

started to see white women as racial victims. Other women that were non-white race, immigrant, Jew, communist, or Catholic were portrayed as dishonorable and irresponsible baby breeders. One of the pillars of Klan's ideology was to protect their wives and daughters against newly freed blacks. Motherhood was very important to the Klan. Bringing a child into the world was seen as an act of repairing the nation. Klan did not look on women as housekeepers anymore, white native-born Protestant mothers had the responsibility and capabilities to be politically active and restore America to its formal glory under white Protestant domination. In 1923, one of Grand Dragons said that women now have the power to rule the world. Klan wanted women to join.⁴⁰

Many women enthusiastically did. Women of the Ku Klux Klan was created and lasted from 1923 to 1930. This movement was autonomous. There were more female auxiliaries, but the most successful was the WKKK. It had same hierarchy, regalia, militarism, and political stances as the male KKK. They wanted equal rights for women that met Klan's membership requirements. They gained large numbers, only the WKKK in Indiana had 250,000 members. Women joined because of various reasons: they came from patriotic societies, Protestant clubs or they were sisters, daughters or wives of Klansmen and they came to promote family togetherness. The WKKK established new chapters by using lectures, organizers, and recruiters. Same as the KKK, the WKKK had economical, cultural, and social units such as bands, choirs or kindergartens.⁴¹

Klanswomen activities were similar to the men KKK, but Klanswomen were rarely involved in violence. The WKKK worked to strengthen the male Ku Klux Klan in politics by organizing or creating rallies, festivals, anti-Catholic propagandas or they led attacks on businesses that were against the Klan. Events held by the KKK like carnivals, cross burnings, orchestras, parades, quartets or lectures were done by Klanswomen as well. These events supposed to build internal solidarity and to gain more recruits. The WKKK was oriented on family a lot. They created a culture of "klannishness." This subsumed family, free time, and social ties. Klanswomen organized also special social services such

³⁹ Ibid.; Thomas R. Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011), 84.

⁴⁰ Paola Bacchetta and Margaret Power, *Right-Wing Women: From Conservatives to Extremists Around the World* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 111-112.

⁴¹ Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 7.

as weddings, baptisms or funerals. The WKKK helped the public. They gave food baskets to families in need, milk into public schools, and raised money to build Protestant hospitals. These activities helped the KKK to gain new members.⁴²

Another big issue for the WKKK was public schools. They needed to be reformed because for Klanswomen, it was not possible that there could be Catholic teachers, Catholic encyclopedias or teaching German in public schools. Racial segregation had to remain. They fought against this with the distribution of Bibles or Ten Commandments in schools or raising money to put a stop of the parochial education. They ran for board seat so they could support their ideology.⁴³

Same as the Ku Klux Klan, the WKKK wanted to influence politics. They lobbied voters, distributed propaganda and cared for children of mothers that promised to vote for the Klan. Groups of Klanswomen called “poison squads” spread gossips and rumors about the anti-Klan candidates, claiming they are Jews or Catholics. Klanswomen organized boycotts on anti-Klan newspapers and Jewish or Catholic businesses. They were effective particularly in smaller towns. These boycotts were realized through ads that encouraged trade with Klansmen.⁴⁴

The WKKK cannot be overlooked in the history of the Ku Klux Klan. It had great influence on recruitment, their events, and bounding the Klan. Even though Klanswomen did not commit violence, they participated in all racist, anti-pacifist, and right-wing activities. The WKKK pushed for more rights for women such as entrance into professions, right to vote, and change in politics with the help of women. But these rights were only for white Protestant women.⁴⁵

2.5 Ku Klux Klan in Politics

The Ku Klux Klan had great influence in politics during 1920's. In fact, it was far greater than its strength in numbers would indicate. Even when Hiram Wesley Evans, Imperial Wizard, for years denied that “the KKK is not in politics, neither is it a political party,” it is irrefutable that the Klan changed greatly politics of the United States. KKK's

⁴² Ibid., 8.

⁴³ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁵ Claire G. Moses, *U.S. Women in Struggle: A Feminist Studies Anthology* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 102-103.

reason to enter into politics was simple, to “clean up” the country by getting rid of all its enemies.⁴⁶

Klansmen were among every sphere of United States. On June 10, 1921, in *Weekly News Letter* appeared publication by Imperial Kleagle Clarke, who was head of Propaganda in the KKK, where was a photo of 300 police officials thanking the KKK and pledging their support to them. The Chief of police denied this and said that he only met with the KKK when he was giving a permission to them to hold a meeting. Similar episode happened in May 1921 when a Kleagle stated to *Newport News* that chief of police belongs to the Klan with the commonwealth attorney, the postmaster, the police court judge, members of the city council and others. Chief of police with other people mentioned denied this. In August 1921, the candidate of the Democratic Party for Commissioner of Revenue in Virginia, John E. Rose, showed off that he was a member of the KKK. Rose won with the support of one-third of the aldermen, several members of the Common Council, twenty firemen, and twenty-five policemen. In 1921, Chattahoochee, 500 Klansmen were endorsed by the mayor and the chief of police and they were allowed to use an armory of the police for meeting place.⁴⁷

In 1922 during the Democratic primary in Atlanta, Chief of police, Beavers, was running for a mayor and had connections with the Klan. His motto was “to fight any improper influence the Klan may seek to exert in politics, or any hand it may seek to take in the affairs of this city.” But Beaver failed. Another influence of the KKK in 1922 was in Tennessee, Knoxville, where C. Lewis Fowler stated that the KKK is in city hall and among the police. Fowler also declared that KKK will prevent Negroes from getting a public office. The biggest threat to the KKK in political activities in Dallas was the Dallas Country Citizens’ League that considered Klansmen as terrorists and they demanded public office to denounce the Klan. They have sent a questionnaire to all candidates for office in Dallas asking these particular questions: “Are you now a member of the organization knows as the Ku Klux Klan? Is it your purpose or intention to affiliate hereafter in any way with the Ku Klux Klan? Are you in sympathy with the purposes, practices, and objectives of the Ku Klux Klan?” During Dallas Country elections, Judge Barry Miller, who criticized the KKK in public, was visited by three Klansmen in his law office that gave him a

⁴⁶ Rice, *The Ku Klux Klan In American Politics*, 35-36.

warning that if he does not want to get hurt, he will not make another speech against the Klan. The KKK also sponsored an election eve rally in Dallas on August 25, where more than half were Klansmen or sympathizers and candidates that ran for county office were victorious at the polls. On April 6, 1922, Mayor S. R. Aldredge of Dallas requested all city employees who were in the KKK to resign and to disband the local chapter. The KKK took revenge on him by defeating him in elections almost three-to-one vote. His opponent that did not speak for or against the Klan was then endorsed by the Klan's local chapter.⁴⁸

In June 1923, basically, the same article appeared in two Klan magazines – *The Dawn* and *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, where it says that the Klan stands for fights for a clean municipal government. A month after Great Titan of the Realm of Texas announced that in municipalities, where KKK started a campaign for a better government, can be recognized improvements done by the Klan. Pamphlets spread through country following year demanding “law enforcement, stopping private graft and the spoils system, healthful environments in public schools and clean moral surroundings for children.” In the October issue of *The Dawn* was an article by Grand Dragon of the Realm of Illinois titled “The Attitude of the Ku Klux Klan Towards Politics and Political Parties,” where were recommendations who to vote for in upcoming elections. According to the Grand Dragon, there was no excuse for the Klansman to go out voting uninformed. In other Klan magazine *The Watcher on the Tower*, there were instructions for the readers: “Get behind the 100% candidates for your next commissioners. You Know Who They Are. One of the present incumbents must be defeated; one should have your support. For the Commissioner of Finance, if you do not already know who is worthy, ask a Klansman.”⁴⁹

1924 was very important in the relation between the KKK and politics. The KKK supported Edward L. Jackson, a member of the Klan, in elections for governor of Indiana. Jackson won.⁵⁰ Al Smith and the KKK had long-lasting conflict. Al Smith was a democrat and Catholic from New York. This conflict started in 1924 at Democratic National Convention, where Smith was one of the candidates for a presidential candidate. The Klan was naturally against him and the KKK had their delegates among democrats. Other

⁴⁷ Ibid., 40.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 46.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 39.

⁵⁰ Linda C. Gugin and James E. St. Clair, *The Governors of Indiana. Indianapolis* (Indiana: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2006), 277.

democrats wanted to condemn the Klan and held voting for this. The final vote was 546.15 for the Klan, 542.85 against it. After 4 days of the convention, it was deadlocked. Next day 20,000 Klansmen in their robes held a picnic in New Jersey. They called it “clownvention in Jew York”. Al Smith withdrew after 99th ballot and even the Klan’s favorite William Gibbs McAdoo did too. All this ended with compromise and on both sides and another candidate was elected.⁵¹

These fragments from years 1921-1924 proof that the KKK was involved in politics. Even after all these events, Imperial Wizard Evans said at Klonvokation in 1924 in Kansas City that the Klan has no connections with political parties. In 1926, he said that the policies of the Klan changed, and it is now completely out of politics. He stated again that there was no connection when he was charged in 1928 when Republicans financed the Klan to gain support against the Democratic Party.⁵²

2.6 Klan Economics

One of the reasons why the Klan was so powerful was because of its profits. The Klan had initiation fee that was \$10 for every person. This made great profits taking into account that the KKK had approximately 4,000,000 members at its peak and it was tax-free, because according to the Knights, this was a donation rather than initiation and the Klan could get away with this, because clubs and societies were taxable in the U.S. Kleagles, who collected the money, got \$4 from the fee, the King Kleagle or state sales manager got \$1, Cyclops or division manager got 50 cents, Clarke got \$3, and Simmons got \$1.50. Another amount that the new member had to spend was initiated pays off \$6.50 for a mask or helmet and a robe. This was purchased from the Gate City Manufacturing Company of Atlanta that produced it and it was owned by Clarke. Robe for a horse that was mandatory for riders was for \$14, also from the same company.⁵³ Another way how Clarke made money was from the water used in initiations. It was presented as Klan’s special liquid and had to be used during initiation. A quarter of the water cost \$10.⁵⁴

⁵¹ “The Democratic Convention of 1924,” last modified June 4, 2009, https://web.archive.org/web/20090605025544/http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display.cfm?HHID=451.

⁵² Rice, *The Ku Klux Klan In American Politics*, 35-36.

⁵³ Erza A. Cook, *Ku Klux Klan Secrets Exposed* (Chicago: Incorporated, 1922), 40.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

Simmons was interested in pupils in college. The Klan invested into Lanier University, where it started to recruit by making discounts. Boys from college could join for \$1 only and they got their masks and robes for \$5. Simmons got this idea of recruiting young boys from German militarism system that prepared boys for the army.⁵⁵

Being a part of the Invisible Empire was not cheap. An annual membership fee was \$5, an imperial tax \$1.80, and it was encouraged by the Klan to buy other merchandise such as swords, Bibles, helmets, dry-cleaning, special insignia or life insurance. Imperial Tax was for all members of the Klavern when it reached 100 members. Revenue from this tax was not shared by anyone outside of the Imperial office. The first year of membership cost \$23.30 and for follow-up years, it was \$6.80. At Klan's peak in 1924, when the movement had approximately 4,000,000 members, revenues from all their sources were, at least, \$25,000,000. Klan did not need large funding of its basic operations, in fact, this was only a small portion of their revenue.⁵⁶

2.7 The Klan's Media Campaign

The Klan used several ways how to promote their actions to the public by newspapers, pamphlets, books, speeches, songs, etc. Klan's newspapers were, for example, *The Watcher on the Tower*, *The Imperial Nighthawk* or *The Dawn*. Klan had supporters among writers and editors of other papers that wrote for their benefits.⁵⁷

2.7.1 *The Watcher on the Tower*

For example, how the cover of the "Watcher" looked will serve vol. I number 10, from August 25, 1923. There is a picture of Klansman – the watcher, waving at Statue of Liberty. Another picture is on the cover where are the America's most influential people such as George Washington or Abraham Lincoln and one man standing with them and he is undressing the Klan's robe. Sun is shining on the U.S. capitol. This, in my opinion, represents that Klan or its ideology was always behind the U.S. government or the White House. A title below the picture says: "THE KLANSMAN UNMASKED."⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Roland G. Fryer and Steven D. Levitt, "Hatred and Profits: Under the Hood of the Ku Klux Klan," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 127 (2012): 11.

⁵⁷ Kathleen M. Blee, "Women in the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan Movement," *Feminist Studies* 17 (1991): 60.

⁵⁸ "Watcher on the Tower," last modified August 2, 2008, <http://depts.washington.edu/labpics/repository/v/KKK/watcher/>.

In this newspaper appeared ads or prize contests. The contest from July 21, 1923, had 5 prizes, first place was 1923 Durant, the second was also a car. Other prizes were cash. The WKKK had their own page in the papers. For example, on July 21, 1923, there was an article about how is the ceremony seen through the eyes of a woman. On August 4, 1923, there was a creed of the KKK, explaining why they are members of the Klan in 14 steps.⁵⁹

Various articles appear for example on September 29, 1923, about the numerical strength of the movement, providing estimated numbers of members from the whole United States. Another one from September 29, 1923, Dr. Matthews, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Seattle, have a sermon where he mentions the crisis in Germany and situation in Europe. He states that this is not because of World War I, but because of the communists, enemies of the government and real Christianity are using the advantage of after war weakness. In “Watcher” is from October 13, 1923, is an article about a demonstration in Colfax, California, where 2,500 people gathered. The “Watcher” claims that it was probably the most spectacular and inspiring demonstration ever in the district. This demonstration was in fact ceremony, in which nearly of 100 new members were accepted to the Invisible Empire. These are just a few examples what appeared in the newspaper and what impressions it could make. These newspapers could attract new members interested in the Klan.⁶⁰

2.7.2 *The Imperial Nighthawk*

The Imperial Nighthawk unlike *The Watcher on the Tower* had the same cover in every edition. On this cover is a Klansman on a horse. In his right hand is a burning cross. Not only he has the robe and mask, but also his horse and with the insignia of Klan and letters “KKK”. This scene is very familiar to a famous painting of Napoleon Bonaparte, where his horse has its front legs in the air. The Klansman looks powerful because of this. There is a fog around the Klansman and he is probably in a meadow.⁶¹

This analyze is of the edition from August 29, 1923. On the first page, an article deals with poorly restricted immigration. This article urges Klansmen to take action and prevent America from becoming a melting pot. It claims that in America are already born

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ “The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan,” last modified July 14, 2012, <http://www.authentichistory.com/1921-1929/4-resistance/2-KKK/nighthawk/index.html>.

14,000,000 foreign newborns right now. Among these immigrants are paupers, criminals and diseased. They are unable to speak English and the great majority of them cannot read or write in their own language. They cannot compete with American labor that is already overcrowded. Klan has to prevent this by insisting on a new law that would stop this immigration. It also describes numbers of Jews and Japanese coming in the U.S.⁶²

There is a very similar article to the pastor Dr. Matthews in *The Watcher on the Tower*. This time, Reverend Walter Bruggeman also endures Klan and gives a sermon about how communists in America are the forces of the evil. Reverend Bruggeman is from Presbyterian Church same as Dr. Matthews. Another article reveals Klan's assets and liabilities. The increase in cash from 1922 to 1923 is \$558,089; permanent assets increase about \$86,710 and the total assets increase about \$696,287. All liabilities decrease. Largest of the listed liabilities are notes payable with \$137,091. In 1923, they were 0. Total liabilities decreased about \$201,113.⁶³

The longest article in this edition is about Thomas R. Abbott, Klansman, who was killed by an anti-Klan fanatic in Carnegie, Pennsylvania. Abbott is portrayed as a hero murdered during a march. He died because he was an American, marching with his flag and cross and he was killed even when he had his right of peaceable assembly, free speech, and free movement over highways. Three other Klansmen were stabbed, four shot and three had their skulls fractured by bricks when about 2,000 protesters attacked. Then there are several examples how others newspapers commented this event.⁶⁴

This shows that newspapers had a similar layout. Powerful cover with articles about Klan's activities, mainly parades, endorsements, commentary of current problems and information about the Klan. This newspaper could bring new members from Georgia, where it was published weekly.⁶⁵

2.7.3 Songs

Klan had also its own songs, where it represented its ideas, for example, *Mystic City* from 1922. In its lyrics, it mentions "Mystic City of the empire that's unseen" that represents America. Immigrants are floating into this "Mystic City" and bringing with them

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

their flags and customs. In its chorus, it says who is a Klansman - a Protestant, gentile, native born man. Also, that the Klansman is born free and obeys God. In the second verse, it states that America should be united only under one flag and that Klansmen for their flag and heritage die before they yield.⁶⁶

Another song as an example could be *The Call of a Klansman*, from 1924. This song also says how determined are Klansmen to God. The first verse has powerful and emotional lyrics such as “They are sweeping o’er this country, this their own and native land.” “Too long we all have suffered, as we’ve journeyed thru this life; you may find the road hard traveling; but it’s worthy of the strife.” These songs could drag new members in, same as the other ways of propagation of the Klan, and it evokes the feeling of the power of the Klan. On another hand, it could be frightening for non-sympathizers.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Danny O. Crew, *Ku Klux Klan Sheet Music: An Illustrated Catalogue of Published Music, 1867-2002* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2003), 29.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

3 FALL OF THE INVISIBLE EMPIRE

As how the Klan gained so much power, it lost it so quickly. Around 1925, Klan began to decay rapidly due to a combination of sex and embezzlement scandals that involved Klan leaders and because of the passage of stricter immigration laws, the Klan stopped to have a meaning for American people. Although losing great numbers in membership, the nativist forces that supported the Klan remained strong. Klan's influence can be seen years later when it created dissension in polls. In 1937, Hugo Black was nominated for U.S. Supreme Court Justice. Protests occurred because Black was formerly an active member of the Alabama Ku Klux Klan. A research of public opinion polls was taken asking Americans if Black's association with the KKK should disqualify him from public office. Results of this research show an almost even split between supporters and protesters of formal Klansman and this could represent how the Klan created different opinions and conflicts in American society.⁶⁸

3.1 Indiana scandal

One of the reasons why the Klan's membership in 1930 had declined to only one percent of what it achieved at its peak, just five years earlier, was the scandal in Indiana. This was the biggest scandal that ever happened to the Klan and it was the murder trial of D. C. Stephenson, leader of the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, where the Klan was the most powerful.⁶⁹

In March 1925, Stephenson kidnapped Madge Oberholtzer, who was a 29-years-old white woman. Stephenson forced her onto a train heading to Chicago, then he forced her to drink and then he raped her and even bit off parts of her flesh.⁷⁰ She died shortly after this. After murdering Oberholtzer, Stephenson was tried and convicted of second-degree murder and was sentenced to spend rest of his life in prison. Even his protégé, who was the governor Ed Jackson, refused to pardon him after this shocking behavior. This trial got abundant attention by media. Stephenson's gory act did not merge with his self-defined

⁶⁸ Michael Lewis and Jacqueline Serbu, "Kommemoratinc the Ku Klux Klan," *The Sociological Quarterly* 40 (1999): 145.

⁶⁹ Fryer and Levitt, *Hatred and Profits*, 12.

⁷⁰ "The Rise and Fall of D.C. Stephenson," last modified August 30, 2012, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/murder-wasnt-very-pretty-the-rise-and-fall-of-dc-stephenson-18935042/?no-ist=>.

image as a defender of “Protestant womanhood” and as a result, entire Klaverns abandoned from the Knights.⁷¹

But this could not be the only reason. Considering that Stephenson was not the founder or titular leader of the Klan, the impact could not be so great on the whole Klan consisting 4 million members. Other factors had to be behind the fall of Invisible Empire.

3.2 Other factors

Another reason that reduced the Klan’s membership and made it unstable was the sales force of Kleages. They were only oriented on gaining new members and did not consider the quality of the new members, they also did not care if the member remained active after signing up or if he provided a public good to the organization. This created huge membership but on the other hand, attachment of the typical member to the Klan was smaller than in other social groups. Another fact is that majority of members were in the Klan for a short period, and when the Indiana scandal occurred, it affected their view on the Klan. This majority was even in other fraternal groups, so Klan was not a priority for them. As a contrast how membership was unstable because of this scandal can be Catholic Church and its pedophilia charges. Catholics have an allegiance to a single religious denomination that goes with them from their birth, and this is what made Catholic Church much more stable, unlike the Klan.⁷²

Hate-based ideology may be also considered not prosperous for the Klan. Klan’s primary weapons were fear and intimidation. Anyone who resisted risked Klan’s violent revenge. This can be considered as a weakness if considering that more critics of the Klan the less credible was the Klan’s response towards them. The Klan could not intimidate everyone in the Stephenson case and that disarmed the Klan’s primary weapons. Another way how could the hate-based ideology and the Stephenson scandal affect the Klan’s downfall is that leaders of the Klan instigated the hatred by telling stories about the enemies of the KKK. After the scandal, Klansmen trust to these stories could be broken and they could start questioning if they were true or not. This scandal showed how Klan

⁷¹ Fryer and Levitt, *Hatred and Profits*, 12.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 26.

leaders were not living the virtuous life as they claimed to. Perhaps, after this confusion Klansmen could try to find the truth about their enemies and change their minds.⁷³

Great Depression started on October 29, 1929 and that could also affect the membership of the Invisible Empire. Banks were failing, businesses closing and more than 15 million people became unemployed. As mentioned before in this work, being a member of the Klan was financially hard and with this situation, people could not spend money on things that they did not really need to survive. Great Depression lasted until early 1940's, so rebirth of the Klan was not possible in these desperate times.⁷⁴

The mindset of Klansmen can be also another factor behind the fall. As mentioned before in this work, middle class, which was reportedly comprised of “solid, respectable citizens, kind and loving husbands and fathers, conscientious members of their churches” and “good, solid, . . . the backbone of the Nation.” Another representation of mindset of Klansmen can be found in *Hatred and Profits: Under the Hood of the Ku Klux Klan* by Roland G. Fryer, Jr. and Steven D. Levitt. Here are graphs showing membership in the Klan during the years and number of lynchings. Comparing these two graphs shows a surprising result. When the Klan had 4 million members, the number of lynching was the lowest since 1880. Even in the end of 1920's, when in the year 1927 was the membership under 50,000 it was about the same as at the peak of membership. This proves that average Klansmen were not violent even though the violent ideology connected them.⁷⁵

3.3 Fading away

The Klan never regained its numbers or influence it had before 1928. At this year, Klan did not expire, but it laid down to recover from the sharp loss of members and exhaustion of trying to stop Alfred E. Smith's attempt for the presidency. Klan's activities in the 1930's were for example rituals in fields outside of town, burning crosses, parades in streets or taking measures against their opposition . It was the Klansmen outside of the borders of the former Southern United States that kept the spirit of the Klan going.⁷⁶

⁷³ Ibid., 20-21.

⁷⁴ “The Great Depression,” <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/dustbowl-great-depression/>.

⁷⁵ Fryer and Levitt, *Hatred and Profits*, 42-45.

⁷⁶ Rice, *The Ku Klux Klan In American Politics*, 92.

Klan stayed active in politics after 1928, for example, Alabama case, where Senator J. Thomas Heflin, who was a member of the Klan, influenced 120,000 Democratic voters to cast their ballots for Herbert Hoover. Smith won only by 7,000 voters and because of the exhaustive toil to get voters from Alabama Democratic Party. When Smith announced his intention of entering Democratic senatorial primary in 1930, the Klan took action again. The State Democratic Committee ordered that only candidates who supported Smith in the election of 1928 could run for Democrats. Heflin hoped to discomfit the Democratic Party by accepting both Klan and Republican aid. John H. Bankhead won the race for Democratic nominee for the senatorship. This was a victory for the Klan.⁷⁷

Klan's ideology changed in the 1930's due to stricter immigration laws. Dr. Samuel J. Green, who was a post-World War II leader of the Klan, said that it was his order which first "discovered" Communism in the U.S. in 1929. From the beginning of 1930's, the KKK despised American Communists because they wanted racial equality and economic advancement for blacks. In 1931, fourteen Klansmen kidnapped whipped two Communist organizers in Dallas, because they were making speeches against Jim Crow laws. In Alabama, 1932, paper pamphlets were tossed on blacks from a building by members of KKK. These pamphlets said: "Negroes of Birmingham, the Klan is watching you. Tell the Communists to get out of town. They mean only trouble for you, for Alabama is a good place for good Negroes and a bad place for Negroes who believe in racial equality. Report Communistic activities to the Ku Klux Klan, Box 661, Birmingham."⁷⁸

Klan leaders de-emphasized the anti-Negroism, anti-Semitism, anti-foreign-bornism, and anti-Catholicism. It was very obvious that the new crusade is aimed at anti-Communism. This can be confirmed by the speech of Grand Dragon of the Realm of New York, H. W. Garing, in 1936. He repeatedly stated that the movement is not the least anti-Negro, anti-Catholic, or anti-Semitic, but anti-Communist in every respect. Or when a Klingle on reorganization meeting in 1936, Westchester County, said that the stumping of Communism is needed and he feels certain that American people will rise up to defeat President Roosevelt at the next general election."⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Ibid., 95.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 102.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 103.

When World War II broke up, Klan activity stopped. 1944 is the official end of the Invisible Empire. It was because the Klan could no longer pay taxes as their membership was so small.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Ibid., 109.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to explain how the Klan could get so successful and gain so many members. The Second Ku Klux Klan started because of the highly successful movie *The Birth of a Nation*, which aptly represented the mindset of most white Protestants. America was changing. The new era brought too many changes into society. White Protestants started to be scared of what was happening: immigrants pouring into the country, Catholic lessons in schools, too much diversity, Modernism in religion and a loss of morals. The Klansman portrayed the ideal qualities of an American. He had the willingness to sacrifice for his family, nation and his race before anything else but God. Other qualities such as courage, endurance, and self-reliance were also important to them. After World War I, Americans were left with unspent patriotism. The KKK offered a way to express it, with their “one hundred percent Americanism” ideology. Women could join the Klan, and the Klan was supporting their rights. The Klan was so successful and powerful because it was highly profitable and politically influential. The media also, often unwittingly, helped its recruiting. The KKK showed its power in parades, songs, and literature, all of which contributed to the Klan’s success.

But as quickly the Klan gained the power, it lost it. D. C. Stephenson’s crime, the rape and murder of a white woman in Indiana, caused many Klanspeople to become disillusioned and quit the Klan. The Klan tried to play damage control, but it could not stop the media from discussing the scandal. The majority of Klansmen were not violent, and they did not want to be associated with violence, especially violence against a white woman, as for many Klanspeople, the white woman was the peak of civilization and had to be protected at all costs. The modern interpretation of the Second KKK as a terrorist organization does the Klan a disservice. The truth is that when the Klan’s membership was at its greatest, lynchings were at their lowest. Even the media tended to view the Klansman as kind and as the backbone of American society. The great depression was the last nail in the coffin of the Second KKK, for millions of members could not afford their membership dues. But the Klan was still able to successfully lobby Congress anti-immigration laws.

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