Speaker 1 (00:00:00):

Dr. McRae. Thank you very much by the way. And everybody I've talked with, I think I told you on the phone and everybody says you need to talk to dr. Norman McRae You need to talk to Dr. Norman McRae. So you're the go-to guy.

Speaker 2 (00:00:15):

All right. I hope I don't let you down. You won't.

Speaker 1 (00:00:18):

You wanted to start with a story about your grandfather. Who was your grandfather?

Speaker 2 (00:00:25):

My grandfather was Thomas McRae. He was a black farmer, a successful black farmer in Georgia. Uh, the town called Eley South of making about 35 miles. And, um, my dad died when I was four, so I didn't get to know him too well. But anyway, I had always heard through the family that the Klan had run him off of his land. Now it's a very bizarre story with the number of turns and it shows a number of things, self hatred, and the dominion of fear created by the Klan. Uh, one day, uh, he stood for election at a local notch. He was elected to a high office and there were two guys who were rather to other bike men who were angry that he had gotten the position. So about three weeks later, a note came to the farm that showed a picture of a coffin and it had KKK and it had leave town immediately, or you will die.

Speaker 2 (00:01:45):

K K K. Now my step grandmother could not read. And so when her son, the youngest of the McRae children came in from school, he read the note and naturally she flipped out and she called out into the field, sent him out in the field to get his daddy. And my grandfather came in and they had a powwow and my grandfather and his brother strapped on their 44, four pistols and got in their model T and went to Florida. She and this son, her son, uh, moved to New Jersey somewhere. And they're not really in the family. Now. We don't know too much about them. Now, going ahead, about 30 years, the one of the guys who perpetrated this, one of the black guys, um, call my DZ. She was the only one living there and he was on his death bed. And he confessed to her that he and this other guy were the ones who had sent the note. That really was not from the Klan, but everybody assumed it was from the Klan. And he had destroyed a whole family and destroyed a home, a way of life down there by this particular prank. As soon after he confessed, he died. And so the story shows the number of things, a self hatred and the power, and the fear generated by the Klan

Speaker 1 (00:03:22):

Destroyed your family

Speaker 2 (00:03:23):

Destroyed that, you know, because the land was sold off piecemeal by piecemeal and, uh, and, uh, it really destroyed the wealth of the family.

Speaker 1 (00:03:36):

And was it your mother who came North there?

Speaker 2 (00:03:40):

Well, my mother was from the urban South. She was from Birmingham, Alabama, and my father was from the rural South. He came from Georgia and they met in Detroit and I'm the only child that they had. He died when I was four.

Speaker 1 (00:03:58):

This was, this was your father's father. Then the father father's father had been run off his farm by what was Detroit? Like if you came here, you were a young man. This would have been what, the early thirties, maybe when you arrived here?

Speaker 2 (00:04:14):

Uh, no, my home I'm older than that. My dad, I'm 76. My dad, uh, came here in the twin early twenties. He was a waiter and Detroit. Most of them Detroit was down in the area. Uh, most of the bike people in Detroit, I should say, lived in the area called black bottom, which is now NAAFI at park. And, uh, people came here and you had churches, uh, the two predominant churches, the, uh, uh, Bethel AME and second Baptist church, uh, did a heck of a job of helping them to become acculturated to urban living as well as the urban league. And so these people, uh, came here, I think in 1910, there were only 5,741 black people living in the city of Detroit. 10 years later, they were 20,000. And, and, uh, and in 1925, there was 83,000 black people living in the city of Detroit.

Speaker 2 (00:05:20):

And, uh, as soon as it was, uh, a thriving community in many ways, but because of, of segregation, you had a number of bike businesses. I was telling somebody about a great book that was put out in 1924, called colored Detroit, where it had histories of the people. It was a directory of the businesses, and it told them about Detroit at that particular time. And it really gave you an excellent picture of the times. Another great book too about this period is a internal combustion. The races in Detroit, 1915, 1925 by David Allen Levine, David Allen, Lee Levine.

Speaker 1 (00:06:12):

What did happen to Detroit? I mean, you've got internal combustion, you've got a pressure cooker. Could you, could you tell me about the social dynamics? What was, what happened here?

Speaker 2 (00:06:21):

Well, what happened here was that you had a small bike community, and then all of a sudden it was overwhelmed with large numbers of blacks. Uh, looking for housing. Housing was very, dear housing was very dear for white people as well. And, uh, looking for jobs, also public accommodations, a change, you know, bikes were not, uh, couldn't go to certain places. They didn't want you. They would tell you we don't serve colored or, and, uh, it was not the, the, the lovely place that many Southern immigrants started would be, but the kids were able to go to school. And if they worked hard at Fords and they could withstand the pressure, they could eventually save enough money and buy a house on the West side of Detroit or the North end of Detroit or out in Coney gardens, which was a very lovely place where the book, which was an enclave for the black middle class,

Speaker 1 (00:07:25):

Not everybody thought that was a good idea though. What this expansion of blacks throughout the city?

Speaker 2 (00:07:31):

Oh, no. Oh no, because you know, you had the, the, the suite case in 1925, the Alex Turner case, and, uh, uh, several months before this week case dr. Turner was a surgeon, a very successful doctor. He bought a house over on Spokane, off of grand river. And when they found out that a bike Docker was moving in the place erupted and the Klan, and I mean, they didn't come out in full regalia, but they were sued. I'm sure certain Klan members who were there protesting and threatening his life and limb. So eventually he, he moved also, they had the lawn, their side with the, the restrictive covenant, the restrictive covenant said that right in the deed, it said only certain people can occupy that house. And usually, uh, African Americans, Jews and Asians could not live in certain neighborhoods and the courts would enforce this. And this was on the, uh, uh, legal matter until 1948 until the Supreme court shot down restrictive covenants.

Speaker 1 (00:08:45):

It may have lasted longer. I have an odd story. When my father died, I looked at the deed for his cemetery plot and it had restrictive covenants for the cemetery. So they were going to get you, whether you wanted to live there or wanted to die there.

Speaker 2 (00:09:02):

That's all right. And that's very true. That's very true. Okay.

Speaker 1 (00:09:06):

We used to talk about, they had the law on their side. There's a whole other story about Detroit too. And the law that David [inaudible] in his book, hooded Americanism, which is very interesting, not exactly accurate in some respects, but he talks a lot about how many law enforcement people were members of the Klan.

Speaker 2 (00:09:32):

Uh, I really don't know, but one of the things that did happen with the Northern migration of blacks you had in the $5 a day for a bounty that they were going to pay. You had a lot of people from all over the world who came here and some of them were Southern white men. And when they came here, they expected to be the mew, you to be the way it was, where they lived and they wanted to control it. And a lot of them got the city fathers to accept the notion that we know these people, and we know how to take care of them. And they were made policemen. That's, that's a that's history. That's, that's a fact

Speaker 1 (00:10:18):

I'm almost where do I go with that? Where do I go from there? Uh, it wasn't just police though. Was it,

Speaker 2 (00:10:25):

You mean in terms of, uh,

Speaker 1 (00:10:27):

Well, eventually we're going to get to Pontiac probably. And, and, and the, the, uh, the black Legion and how it had infiltrated, uh, city government there. But, but I'm wondering if it didn't stop it, just police about how they were going to, we know how to handle them, we're going to, and we'll do it

Speaker 2 (00:10:43):

Well, I'm sure that it happened in a number of the manufacturing plants, where they were hired is, you know, in terms of security force, you know, Harry Bennett, I'm sure used a number of them,

Speaker 1 (00:11:00):

And he really did run the goon squad. Didn't they? Can you tell me about the doctor Osteon suite case? Can you tell me about from a to Z? Who was this guy? What was he trying to do? Where did he come from? What he do right down to Clarence Derek.

Speaker 2 (00:11:15):

Oh boy. Okay. Oh boy. Alright. As you sweet was lived in Florida as a boy, he witnessed a white man being lynched at was very much imprinted upon his mind, but he was a brave lad and he worked certain jobs and he was able to work his way through college and through medical school. And he went to Europe and studied at the Madame Curie school of medicine or science or whatever the incident was. And then he came home. Now he'd been away in, in, uh, in Paris and France. He was treated royally. He was accepted, you know, no Jim Crow whatsoever, but then he came back to Detroit. His wife was from Detroit. And so they were looking for a house. They were living with her parents and there was a house on garment street. Now, the interesting thing about this house on Garland street, the man that owned the house was a man by the name of Smith, but he's an extremely fair bike skin man.

Speaker 2 (00:12:19):

And his wife was white and he was suspicious of him, but nobody, but they, they accepted the fact that, you know, he looked white while he sold the house to sweep. So when suite is suits in September of 1925, moved in, he, his brothers and some of his other friends, his wife and children, they all moved in that day. The crowd started milling around. Now, before he moved in, you had these neighborhood protection associations that were, were hell bent upon keeping neighborhoods pure and white. And so they had created quite a, an issue. So they were in the house and they had their guns cause they knew what was going to happen and then around. And it was really, really crowded with people and they were in the house and then they started throwing missiles at the house. And some of the miss owls broke glass and knocked out windows and sash, et cetera, et cetera.

Speaker 2 (00:13:27):

And somebody in the house shot some shots, some guns. And there was a gentleman across the street on the porch that was killed. The police were called the immediately came down. They took everybody including mrs. Sweet, her child and all the men to jail and put them in jail. Now, the black community, uh, Cecil Roadnet and, and other, uh, important black men of the time didn't feel that a black lawyer would stand a chance of defending the suites. So that's when they went to Clarence Darrow. This is one of his last ROS and Daryl was brought to Detroit to defend them. Now. Um, he, uh, tried, um, there were two cases. I think the first one was a hung jury and the second one, he was acquitted. And, uh, he, it was such an Frank Murphy was a judge. Nobody, none of the judges wanted to be the one to preside over this case.

Speaker 2 (00:14:45):

This was a hot potato in the recorder's court once, which was our criminal court. And, uh, so, um, he did it and, uh, uh, I can remember reading the account where he was telling somebody what a marvelous lawyer, Darryl was, you know, and how he had swayed the jury and how it showed, how the police had

lied and a number of other factors. But the tragedy of the whole damn thing was that as a result, this sweets, wife and daughter died of tuberculosis and he committed suicide later on, I think around 90 in the fifties, early sixties, it was a very tragic situation in his life.

Speaker 1 (00:15:37):

Now, did they contract tuberculosis in the jail?

Speaker 2 (00:15:41):

Well, yeah. I mean the, the exposure, uh, I don't know how long they stayed in jail before they let them out, but they were in jail. They were put inside the jail, a baby and a woman, you know,

Speaker 1 (00:15:53):

And that's where they think that they contracted TB. And that was a killer disease. My aunt died. That's what my father died off. Yeah. That's not a good way to go. Dr. Sweet. Uh, uh, I don't know why I thought he had been a dentist and not, not his brother was a dentist. Uh, that's it. And didn't dr. Sweet moved to Milwaukee after all this. I don't know. He moved away.

Speaker 2 (00:16:16):

I don't remember, but I do remember he committed suicide.

Speaker 1 (00:16:21):

Oh my. And where was the Klan in all of this?

Speaker 2 (00:16:24):

Well, the Klan probably they weren't in their regalia, but they were out, you know, out there raising hell and, and, you know, standing fast and pushing other people and involved in it. I mean, they, they were there, they were there, you know, there are modest things, uh, that they were involved in that they didn't come out in their regalia.

Speaker 1 (00:16:51):

You know, it was the Klan then instead of just some old boy,

Speaker 2 (00:16:55):

Well, that's a good point. That's I let's say I assumed there was a cleanse, the, you know, because they were very much active, uh, in, in, in neighbor, especially in neighborhoods adjacent to bike neighborhoods, because there was a fertile ground for recruitment, because there was always the fear that blacks were going to move into your neighborhood. Detroit had a number of what I call a number of place streets that I call chord on Sandy tears. And I remember in 1914, after the NEF 17 after world war one, uh, Lord Curzon said they were going to put an imaginary line from the top of Europe down to the Baltic. And we're going to stop the flow of communism. They call that the court on sanitaire. Well, then he tried to had a number of streets like that. Like for instance, on the West side tire man Avenue would, would have a new and, uh, Bryan road in the Northeast Detroit, where on this side of the street, you were bike on that side, you were white and there was this nine.

Speaker 2 (00:18:12):

And, uh, and you know, and, and, um, and breaching that line created a lot of protest. And, uh, and sometimes reprisals read your over my shoulder with a question. It doesn't McCray, even though the Klan often may not have been out in the regalia as you point out, would you say that, uh, the, the, the environment in the North at that time in Detroit specifically that the agenda that people had and keeping blacks and whites separate and for social control of blacks would have been the same anyway? Oh, sure, sure, sure. If it, um, I'm just, this is a major assumption that considering you had, uh, I think it was Kenneth Jackson and in his book, uh, the Sikh KKK and the cities said at Michigan, there were about 70,000, um, Klan members, 30 for half of them lived in Detroit. And, uh, and it only took one or two to, you know, to start Sturt, stir up trouble.

Speaker 2 (00:19:25):

And he had the backing of an organization. Plus they had their newspaper that they sold the fiery cross. And, uh, that was, they were, they, they were, they were in the mix of things. So even though they were clam members themselves, it didn't take too much for me to tap into a similar amount of people who wanted to, you know, this, this is very true during the Sojourner truth of a housing situation and the prelude to, to, to, to, uh, the 1943 riot, the months before you had a lot of people who were, were very upset because blacks were in competition for jobs and housing, as basic as that, uh, one of our interviewees John coming, perhaps you remember John from the Clark historical library at CMU. I remember him. Yeah. I sat him down. We were talking about lynchings in Michigan. There've been six. Uh, they, that NAACP counted eight, seven of whites and one black, the NAACP says there was eight lynchings in Michigan, three of them, two of them in Nagorny, no, I don't know where they were, but there were seven whites and one black. Hmm. John has a different score. He, he

Speaker 1 (00:20:48):

Wound up with two blacks and, and, uh, was it two blacks and four whites?

Speaker 2 (00:20:59):

What John said,

Speaker 1 (00:21:00):

I said was the riots in the forties and this other pressure, the way you're talking about your best recruits come from the neighborhood next door, right across this cordon sanitaire. This was a, uh, a scrap, a fight for the bottom rung of the line.

Speaker 2 (00:21:17):

Of course, if that's what it was, uh, it is, it is, is a fight for the bottom rung of the letter. And plus it was very much true in the South. Uh, S uh, you know, the only thing they had going for them was the white skin. And this is why let's see in the, like, in the latter, in the riot of 1906, they went into the very prosper section of the black community and burned. It, tried to burn it down. They did this in Tulsa in 1921, they had airplanes flying over. They used to call Tulsa. The black wall street is a very prosperous by community. They were throwing dynamite from airplanes in the neighborhood. Yeah. He's attacking symbols of black wealth. What happened in Detroit, Detroit, Detroit. It was, uh, which, which, which time, you know, there were four of them

Speaker 1 (00:22:17):

I'm so ignorant. Tell me all four.

Speaker 2 (00:22:19):

Well, the first riot occurred in 1833. This was the, uh, the riot over the freeing Thornton Blackburn, and his wife, and, uh, in the bikes who, um, who, um, participate in at wild Roundup and put in jail. And later they were forced to leave Detroit because of the rule that said that after an 1827, that everybody was supposed to register, uh, with the clerk and to prove his was three. And or if not, to put up a bond poop against his good behavior to ensure his good behavior, uh, 1863, a man by the name of William William Faulkner, not the writer, uh, who was had a restaurant downtown. Detroit was, um, very kind to two girls when Ellen Hoover. And I can't think of the other girl, one was white and one was white. And, uh, they were out one night and late, and rather than getting in trouble with their parents, they said that William Faulkner had tried to molest him.

Speaker 2 (00:23:34):

And the newspapers tried the men in the newspaper. And, uh, and as they were being carried from the jail to the court, uh, mob tried to get him. And one man, a newspaper said a German by the name of Langer was killed. And he said, if we got to be killed up for these n*****s, let's go kill them. And so they went into the black neighborhood, which is where Greektown is download, located and tried and destroyed about 200 homes. They killed one person and, uh, and, uh, injured many blacks that was, uh, 1863, 1943. Uh, it was, um, uh, it was suspicion in the, uh, there had been the Sojourner truth riot. And the week before the riot in 1943, 200 whites, it had a battle with about a hundred bikes at Eastwood, um, gardens. There was amusement park. Um, there had been all kinds of frictions and there had been frictions on Belisle.

Speaker 2 (00:24:37):

And, uh, and there were also, um, uh, that's where it started. It was a hot, hot, uh, Sunday. And, uh, the rumor after the fight had started, and you had some of the soldiers, sailors, river Broadhead, Naval army armory, engaging in the battle. And then, uh, somebody, some guy who identified himself as a policeman, he wasn't at the nightclub in the black neighborhood, said, uh, they had thrown a, um, a black woman, uh, and their baby off to Belle isle bridge. And in the white neighborhood, it was rumor that a white woman had been raped. And so, and, uh, that's how that started. Uh, 1967. It was just a situation where people, um, some people, some black people were making it, but a whole lot of people weren't, they were angry because of the jobs around the city. Um, the, you had gone through a system of, um, what you might call Negro removal with the freeway construction and urban renewal.

Speaker 2 (00:25:55):

And so now, and the jobs had moved out and if you needed a car to get a job in a plant, and so you had a lot of 'em, but you did have the poverty programs and other things, plus of the riots were going on. It was a matter of people taking stock and saying, look, uh, all this is happening and we don't have this. Are we doing this for other countries? And why not do it here in Baba? But anyway, it was a, uh, it was a, an illegal activity, the guy out of the hand, and it was historic grievances coming to, to rest and just shut up. And now I don't not have people say, well, it was a plot. It was a rebellion. I don't think so. Uh, there may have been some of that at Kevin, but it certainly hasn't been seen. Or if it's, if it's no, if it's happened, it hasn't been revealed is yet

Speaker 1 (00:26:52):

I made the, we, we drove down from this neighborhood. We stayed at a BNB nearby. We drove down to Greektown cause I wanted to take the guys to the new house cafe last night. And we had a wonderful,

but you know, boarded up stores burned out demolished buildings. And Fred said, what happened? And I said, I think this is a community that was destroyed by race.

Speaker 2 (00:27:17):

What, what, what area we were driving down Woodward. Oh yeah. Was you, you see another thing you get, if you're talking about today, uh, 67% of the people in Detroit have no high school education or not high school graduates. W I don't know the number of people here who are receiving some form of assistance. There are not jobs available. I mean, you have what you have here in Detroit now, especially in the black community, you have some very wealthy people moving here and some, some moderate people, but we have a whole lot of people who cannot find jobs. Um, now they can get a job, uh, flipping hamburgers, maybe, but, uh, you know, but if you're a woman and you got three kids, uh, who's gonna take care of the kids while you're flipping hamburgers. And that's, that's a PR problem. Housing is still a problem because they've torn down a number of places.

Speaker 2 (00:28:29):

And, uh, um, like for instance, Lafayette park used to be black bottom. Well, when they erected Lafayette park, people who live there couldn't afford to buy to move in there, you know, and that's the way it's happening all over. That's be great. You mentioned an incident that occurred in 1863. Do you know, um, exactly what that had been the, the, the spring, the summer of 1863? Oh, it was in the spring of 1863. Okay. Um, I only asked because that is there's, there seems to be historical irony there because in January Lincoln issues as a mass patient proclamation, it's the same year. The New York draft riots was summer. They were later, they weren't made it, but you see one of the, one of the underlying, I wrote a book almost 40 years ago, Negroes in Michigan during the civil war. And one of the things have happened that they were working, men were concerned about.

Speaker 2 (00:29:35):

And this has always been a problem competition for jobs from blacks in the, it was white men worried about slave labor and in the North, um, the labor from, from blacks, you know, and another thing employers in the 20th century, uh, did a lot to, uh, engender this feeling because they would hire blacks as strike breakers. You know, this company, when you go out on strike and they go down to Mississippi someplace and to bring up a car and load a black workers, and they would work there till the strike was settled, then they let them go. And if you were a white guy and this guy was trying to take your job there, you know, that would be no love would be most there. And that's why the union was such a boom for black and white workers. I still, it's not a panacea.

Speaker 2 (00:30:29):

It's not the most perfect thing, but it did help. Um, see another point I'm going to make about, Oh yeah. And so that's, [inaudible] during the civil war, there was a concern that when the civil war is over, all these blacks are going to come. North Chicago Tribune did a study where it's, where it tried to prove conclusively that blacks were not come North, that they would stay down South where the weather was warm and he did not have to fight the wintery, snow, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. But that was a major concern. You know,

Speaker 1 (00:31:14):

They're going to be our neighbors. That's always the fear

Speaker 2 (00:31:17):

That concern over, over labor issues in wages was as you correctly pointed out in your draft wise as part of what sparked those later on in the summer. Oh yeah. They, they say, if we, if we're going to be killed at you, be drafted to kill her, killed the free these Negroes, you know, and they're going to take our jobs. Yeah. So that, yeah, that was, that was a, and really, it was a case of, um, I think he was Tom Hayden in his book about the Irish. She said that they came here, uh, during the, uh, potato famine and they moved in and they, and they made a, it became their, their lot in life to, to keep the pressure on blacks beneath them. Cause they were just one step above them. In the social order.

Speaker 1 (00:32:13):

John Cummings said they were one step below. You would not, you would ask an Irishman to do something. It would be life risking, but you wouldn't ask a black to do that. At least in the slavery system in the South, you'd sacrifice an Irishman before.

Speaker 2 (00:32:26):

Yeah. Cause yeah. Yeah. But see, after the civil war, blacks were no longer valuable. But prior to that, yeah, they, they, they represented money. Is it safe to assume that when these blacks would be up, for example, in the South, we're brought up as strike breakers, is it safe to assume that they were paid at a lower wage? Of course.

Speaker 1 (00:32:46):

Yeah. Well, and in fact, I'm going to get you to elaborate. How were the blacks who were brought up treated? Okay.

Speaker 2 (00:32:54):

Well, I can't give you any, uh, I think there are many studies in this building and Ruth in library about it, but when they came up, most of the time they stayed right on the place or they had a special place for them to stay cots and very primitive. And then they worked and they were given, uh, uh, the least amount of money they could cause they didn't have to pay them as much.

Speaker 1 (00:33:23):

Want to go back to the Klan. Yes, sir. Yes. What influence has the Klan had in Detroit's civic life? What is the Klan man

Speaker 2 (00:33:33):

For this community? Well, I could only go back to 1923, 1923. There was a mayor by the name of Frank DOR ramus. He became seriously ill and he could no longer continue as mayor of the city of Detroit. So they were going to have an election to fill that one year of his term. And you had John Smith, Frank Martin, John Smith was Catholic. He was, had the immigrant vote and the bike vote of Frank Martin had the businessman's vote, the middle-class boat. And then there was Charles Bowles. Charles Bowles was a young man or a man from someplace in Michigan. Uh, I think he went to Ferris and then he went to university of Michigan law school, but he liked this ritualistic stuff. He was very high muckity muck in the Masonic water. And, uh, he was, uh, he became the, he, the Klan supporter and a four, four.

Speaker 2 (00:34:48):

And he told them that write me in now on C uh, Chris, I mean, in, in, um, Christmas Eve, 1923, they had a, they had a fire, uh, the lighted, a fiery cross on the steps of the County building in November. They did the same thing on the lawn of city hall. Um, they were having an Andy Klan rally at arena garden, which was not far from here on forest and, uh, and uh, about Oh 6,000 Klan members came down and blocked the door. So people couldn't get in and the police couldn't do anything about it. So the police, uh, went and regrouped in these, these, when they were walking three of breasts down Woodward Avenue, shouting bowls, bowls, bowls, and sniping stickers on the cars for bowls. Well, the police went and got the riot squad and they formed themselves into four groups, 50 each.

Speaker 2 (00:36:07):

And with tear gas, they broke it up and then they stood guard. So about 5,000 people could go to the anticline rally. Uh, in the, just before the election in 1923, uh, they had a it's out in Durbin township. They 1,008, they, they cite between 25 and 50,000 that you know, out there. And they would, um, they had a huge cross and the, on the lights from a thousand or so automobiles on the cross and they had a big political rally. Well, sir, the election came and bowls missed it by 11,000 votes. And the reason he did mus was because the right people who wrote his name in goofed, only three things were acceptable in the right end, Charles Bowles, C H a S bowls, Charlie bowls, if it was anything other than those three, the ballot was discarded. So he had 17,000 ballots discarded. So natural, he demanded a recount and the results was the same. So he took it to the circuit court and the circuit court said, no, you know, we're not gonna pursue this. And so he backed off. So that was their attempt to get control of the, um, of the city government. And it would have happened if they could have written in one of the three correctly. Now, um, Smith did win though Smith won

Speaker 1 (00:37:52):

And, uh, but he made, he complained about the Klan, particularly after the, uh, dr. Sweet, uh, riot. Uh, he said that the Klan was, was, was holding up investigative efforts. The Klan was holding him back.

Speaker 2 (00:38:09):

I don't remember. I don't know about that, but I know that he did go to Catholic churches in the area and say that the Klan had robbed and burn Catholic churches. So, you know how that went over with the Catholics and they were going to be in his, uh, in his corner

Speaker 1 (00:38:27):

Klan, wasn't just again, black.

Speaker 2 (00:38:29):

Oh no, no blacks Jews, uh, and foreign. And, you know, just like the black Legion was an offshoot of the Klan.

Speaker 1 (00:38:41):

Let's go to the black Legion. I call this the, the Klan on steroids.

Speaker 2 (00:38:47):

Okay. Uh, well, I don't know too much about them other than, uh, you know, there was a movie made about the black Legion, starring Humphrey Bogart back in the thirties, 1936. Yeah. And, uh, uh, the, uh,

it was a paramilitary organization and, uh, two of the leaders, I can't think of their names. Uh we're from Ohio. And then you have one guy who was the bickered Brigadier general from, from Michigan. And I think that they were more anti-labor, uh, than anything else because they killed some guy who was, uh, an activist in the, the automobile communist party, uh, our automobile workers, communist party, he was killed and dumped in a ditch out in Lincoln park. Would that have been Charles pool? No. Charles pool, uh, was shot by Deaton Dean because he allegedly beat his wife. You know, the plan Klan was great at morality, you know? And so I think that was, you know, he was, he was brought to trial for that, but, but they don't know who did the city and another guy was killed and he was not a communist and was killed, but on a union man, uh, dumped out on, on the roadside near Monroe, Michigan. And so, uh, I mean, pardon me, the, the, uh, the bike Legion. And, uh, I think that the trial and the exposure caused him to go underground and to disappear.

Speaker 1 (00:40:24):

I wanted to talk about the Klan and politics in the state.

Speaker 2 (00:40:28):

I don't know too much about that.

Speaker 1 (00:40:29):

Have you heard anything about the Klan running? I mean, well, the Klan had had bowls by the way, bowls did make it 1928 for eight months. Didn't they? I don't remember. He was, he was removed, I think for something he was, he ran without the backing of the Klan. I remember that we got real quiet about the Klan, anything know anything about governor gubernatorial candidates and client endorsements? The Klan was running candidates for governor? No, I don't. Okay.

Speaker 2 (00:40:57):

That's, that's a, that's a, that's a area I don't know too much about

Speaker 1 (00:41:01):

What has Klan activity been say in the last 30 years since the civil? What about the sixties and the claim search?

Speaker 2 (00:41:09):

Yeah, I don't like to back off and say, tell you about the client activities. I think, uh, during the, uh, forties and world war II now, um, there's, uh, was an organization, the civil rights Congress of Michigan, and they had a number of a number of conferences called smash, the fifth columns. And, uh, they accused the Klan of, um, uh, being behind a number of issues, uh, incidents rather like for instance, uh, in 1940 at Northwestern high school, which is, Oh, about a mile from here on grand, it was, it was right on the corner of grand Boulevard and grand river. And, uh, in 1940 you had bike kids coming from across grand river to, to, um, to Northwestern. And you had white kids coming across North of grand Boulevard and over East of, uh, grand Boulevard. And so it was, um, and you had working class and you had middle class and, and blacks were not, could not belong to certain clubs at the high school.

Speaker 2 (00:42:47):

Uh, blacks couldn't go to the fishy, Y MCA cross the street. There were certain drug stores. They couldn't go in. And, uh, but they, they participated in certain groups and, uh, went to, uh, it made a small contribution to Northwestern. Well, in the 1940, just before and around may, uh, certain incidents occurred and there was a, uh, a riot mini riot at the school. And it was believed that the Klan was very much involved in that. Uh, and, um, and then certainly in, uh, when you, during world war two, you had a number of, pardon me, these hate strikes. People don't talk about them, but hate strikes were where like at Packard motor car company, um, they put a bike, man. They elevated a black man from a sweeper to a machine and the place was shut down, you know, uh, you know, you, it was, you were, you could, you could accept, they would accept you at certain levels, but it's certain places, certain levels they would not in the South.

Speaker 2 (00:44:12):

There were always Negro jobs in white men's jobs. It just like, you'd never see a white woman working as a meet in the South. I don't know if it's changed, but that was that a no-no or a white man working as a chauffeur, um, because they were, they were considered a demeaning and they were, they were, they were, they Negro jobs. Um, and so they had the same philosophy when they came here. There were certain jobs that were for Negroes. And you had many people who were born in white men, born and bred in the North who felt they should be kept in their place. There are all kinds of theories about, you know, about that.

Speaker 1 (00:45:03):

So the hate strikes in the forties, then the Klan inspired riot at, uh, at the high school. What else happened that may have been Klan related?

Speaker 2 (00:45:14):

Um, uh, Sojourner truth, the housing rights, 43 43. Um, certainly the 43 riot because I have a friend dr. Robert thorn. Uh, what I didn't mention is that, uh, from 1934 to 1944, I lived in Saginaw, Michigan. All my relatives lived down here. And so every summer I would come down and so this 43, I was down, I was getting ready to get a job. And one of my best friends came down from Saginaw, uh, about five o'clock in the morning to take the army air force in Tam. He became a Tuskegee airman, and he was about, Oh, just made the, the height qualification. And so he, when he finished, it was about nine o'clock. And he knew that my aunt lived on King street, which was North of grand Boulevard. So he was gonna get out, he got on the Woodward street card and he was to come out and visit well, sir, he got on he's all these people running downtown Detroit, and somebody got on the street car.

Speaker 2 (00:46:35):

And when the streetcar got to forest and Woodward's white men were pooling blacks off and beating him up. There were two white ladies who were on the car and he was such a small guy that they put him underneath their seat and covered up with packages and said, there are no Negroes on, you know, and that was the only reason it scared him out of him, you know, for awhile, he never wanted to come to Detroit, although his son is practicing dentistry here too. Uh, but he, uh, that was a scary situation for him. And, uh, um, that, and I think that that was very much Klan inspired, that particular activity, just like whites on the, in the bikes, they were being stopped and beaten up too. You know, what about the Klan and the 67 riot or anything there? I really don't know. I really don't know all my, one of the things I think about the 67 riot is that I feel that a lot of the people white and black who were involved in that were there because they could get something for nothing.

Speaker 2 (00:47:51):

The looting, you know, it was, you know, a lot of people and then to, this may be an urban legend, but a lot of businessmen use that as a means to finance their move to the suburbs. Um, and, uh, you know, but, but, but one of the things that I like to share with you, a tape I had at one time about a Klan meeting in the South, uh, audiotape, and, uh, the guy gets up and he said, well, I'm the, I'm the grand dragon from Tennessee and said, I just got back from Washington, said, you know, you don't want to go up there to Washington no more. They call that Hershey town said, because it's all half black and half nuts, then everybody laughs and then they, each grand dragon would come up and pledge your support to stop Martin Luther King and these people and blah, blah, blah.

Speaker 2 (00:48:56):

And then just before it ends, there is a guy who gets up and I won't use the N word, but when I say Negro, you know what I mean? He said, he would say, well, tell him about the sickle cell anemia. He said, Oh yes. He said, God cursed. The Negro said, if you're hiring a Negro gal, be careful what she does with your children, because she might cut her finger and put a drop of blood in their food or their milk. And they will have sickle cell anemia and they will get sick and die. And then the guy who was moderating and said, well said, we've had a great time tonight. And I want you to leave here and drive carefully. Don't, don't, don't get in trouble with the sheriff or any, the FBI, et cetera, et cetera. So drive carefully. And from the background, the guy says and run over every Negro you see? So it was a, it was a, you know, and I played that tape for a friend of my mother's, who had moved down South all her life and it worked. And she said, that was no good bastards said we've been working and cleaning and working from all our knives. And they would come up with some bullshit like that.

Speaker 2 (00:50:27):

You know, one

Speaker 1 (00:50:28):

Of the guys I talked with, uh, described, in fact it was, it, it was, uh, John again, John coming, uh, who, by the way, relayed a story of, of helping, um, a young black man who was trapped during the riots. He gave him a ride home. Cause this guy was cowering beneath the work bench in a machine shop. We're afraid to go home and, and, uh, John took him home, but John also said, well, you know, in his gruff way, the client, wow decline is certainly doesn't have, uh, an honorable past, but you know, for most of the people who joined the client, it was kind of a fraternal organization. It wasn't intended to be as though, um, John in no way exonerated the Klan.

Speaker 2 (00:51:16):

I know, but, but, but, but, but here it was a social gap group grouping and they got in there because they were likeminded. And when they get, and I'm sure that events and situations in group pressure forcing them to do certain, and some of them were just bad people to begin with, you know, uh, because they had a very bad history, like for instance, um, uh, it was the Klan in reconstruction in, during the redemption, how they, when they redeemed the Mississippi and, um, in South Carolina, they may not have had on their sheets, but there, they may have called themselves, uh, the red badges or mother's little helper or whatever, but they were, they were, they were vicious men who were out to kill people in order to regain political power. So it's, uh, you know, it, the history is there. And, uh, you know, I don't know why, uh, people would want to join a group that, you know, I would certainly want to be part of a

group that goes around killing people and whooping, you know, innocent people for voting and things of that nature.

Speaker 2 (00:52:32):

But it's their history. Like I told you, it just freaked out my grandmother by step grandmother. You know, the fact that the Klan was telling them to leave, you know, they, and she didn't tell her they did not Terry. And that was another problem that happened in the South too, is like I have a cousin, uh, she's an older woman. Her husband was telling me about a, a, a young relative of theirs. This was in the 1930s, uh, this, um, young fellow let's say he was about 15. He happened to be downtown or in the neighborhood or in one of the areas. And he and this white kid got in a fist fight, no, no bricks, no stones, nothing, just the ordinary fit. And he got the better of the fight. And so when he home and told her what happened, his family got some money together and quickly put him on the train for the North that night, the women of the family went to some and the children went to a house, several blocks away.

Speaker 2 (00:53:43):

And all the men gathered in this house with the rifles and guns and shotguns and a group of white men. Now, they probably maybe were not Klansmen, but they were coming to wreak retribution upon this kid. And they were coming through the cornfield. So they avoided any confrontation by setting the cornfield on fire and, uh, you know, and many in the lives of many black families, uh, something happened and they had to the male males, especially they had to get out of town. And then too, you got to understand that there was a dominion of fear in the South because of the convict lease system because of tenant farming and, and, and P and engine, all of that. So, you know, that was not the place to be like my stepfather, as a boy in Oklahoma city remembers that for years, he would never go South because he's a boy, he was shut shoe shining, a shoe shine boy.

Speaker 2 (00:54:51):

And, uh, uh, this man suffered some reason, some white man just hauled off and kicked him in the behind and, uh, you know, nothing he could do about it, just take it. And, uh, and he had never, he's never forgotten that you mentioned the dominion of fear in the South. Can you comment upon how are the elements or the forces that transferred that dominion of fear to the North? Many people generally think that the KU Klux Klan, especially the finally Klan is something that's inherent to the South gate coming upon its existence, also our movement to the North. Well, it, uh, I think that many of the militia groups in the North and Northwest are, have the same mental capacity, same, same feeling that the Klan has and just, just packaged differently. And, uh, and, and they just want to maintain the status quo. Um, you know, you, you know, a black man in the South could get lynched for, for talking back to a white woman.

Speaker 2 (00:56:17):

You know, all she had to do was say that he insulted her, or, you know, for instance, that's what started the riot. It was this young white girl who was the elevator operator in the building. And she was a, what we would call a special ed person. And, um, she wasn't all there. And then there was this young black kid who was the, um, was a messenger. So he got on the elevator and they had a few words. Uh, he didn't try to proposition you. He didn't drive knew, had a few words, but by the time the story escalated, uh, certain men in the white community wanted him given up in the black community, say, we're not going to give him up. And that's when it started.

Speaker 1 (00:57:09):

One of the favorite treatments in the South was castration, if not lynching.

Speaker 2 (00:57:13):

Oh, well, w w the lynching, they, they, they were, you know, when you think about Nazi Germany, I often think about, there's not a hell of a lot of difference between Nazi, Germany, Germany, and, uh, in the, in the South, during the heyday of the Klan.

Speaker 1 (00:57:30):

Well, and in particular, you had, you had just touched on the idea that the Klan and the Nazi party shared a lot, the silver shirts and the, and the fifth column that the Klan, well, they shared racial goals. Didn't tick, sorry. So there was, there would be a lot of friction

Speaker 2 (00:57:47):

Cool. And the German American wound, and then did to, uh, I mean, uh, uh, certainly the Edney Jewishness of father Caughlin, uh, certainly, you know, see, you know, was in that. So you had a lot of people who, uh, who, you know, who, and a lot of times, people hundred people, I don't have to tell you, but other people aren't critical thinkers. They, you know, they, and, and they, they will let their feelings get the better of them. And that has nothing to do with race people in general.

Speaker 1 (00:58:25):

What have we not covered that we should have covered?

Speaker 2 (00:58:41):

I really don't know if you could sum it up.

Speaker 1 (00:58:47):

What has the Klan meant for your town here for Detroit?

Speaker 2 (00:58:53):

Well, in the early days, the Klan was something to be feared when you stop to think of the riots and the near riots that occurred over housing in the city, in the twenties. Uh, but as the population increased, uh, the Klan does such didn't show itself too much around cause, um, uh, if a white guy started spouting that kind of stuff to a white guy on the street of Detroit, say from the forties on, he was in trouble, you know, there, there would be a little fisticuffs or something, but outside the city of Detroit, as he, one of those things that people do not seem to understand, but Clem was having his heyday in the twenties, because it was a longest age. You had prohibition, the police were corrupt, uh, and you had 5,000 different speakeasies in the city, uh, you know, rum running across the river.

Speaker 2 (01:00:13):

Uh, it was a new age where women were, were, had a certain bar, a different brand of feminism, you know, and they were just getting the vote. And, uh, and, uh, and, and one of the things that, uh, there was a book published in the seventies by Al Tony Gilmore called bad n****r, Jack Johnson in the white America or something of that nature. Well, a lot of people don't realize the effect that Jack Johnson had on many, many white men in the United States, uh, in, uh, from 1912 of say up in the 1930s, you know,

because, you know, one of the, I remember when I used to hear my folks talk about Joe Lewis, they would say, I hope he doesn't do like Johnson, Jack Johnson, and mess around with white women. You know, that was a no, no, you know, in those days. Um, and then the thirties, when the Klan and the, and the bike Legion, which were doing their thing, that was a time of depression.

Speaker 2 (01:01:25):

You had the 1932, you had the hunger March that shook up. A lot of people had, was rather divisive. It put people in different camps. Um, and, uh, and then, uh, then forties, we were supposed to come together, you know, and we fought world war two with one arm, because you had segregation in the armed forces, segregation, and war production, uh, et cetera. You know, you never had your full potential utilize because of segregation. And so it's a slowly, you know, we haven't reached Nirvana yet, but things are getting better, but you still do have these isolated incidents of groups who want to maintain the status quo of, uh, of 1910, and they're ruined use forced to do so. So you think the client is still around. Why have new dots, men have different names, but it's around because one of the things it does, there are so many white men in America who believe that they are better than anybody else, Asians, Mexicans, blacks. And when they feel that their position is threatened, they revert to these kinds of groups to maintain the status quo.

Speaker 1 (01:03:01):

One of the links we haven't been able to make yet is between the Klan and the Michigan militia.

Speaker 2 (01:03:08):

Well, uh, well, I, uh, I don't, I don't know what the link is, but I'm sure it's there. Robert Miles is somewhere in the picture, you know, I mean, he was, he's a conduit, I think.

Speaker 1 (01:03:23):

Can you take a look, Terry, Nick, are we, is there anything else Fred, that you can think of that you,

Speaker 2 (01:03:32):

You pointed out that the client had his heyday in the twenties? That was an interesting point because yesterday in a wasabi, we were in a WASO and we had pictures of a, of a rather large margin of YSO in 1924. And there was a publication in like a town directory. I think it was 1928. That said, why, so does not have a Negro problem for the publication in 1936. They said, why? So there is not a Negro in a YSL in the city limits. And so we were trying to extrapolate on the chronology of that. Then you have birth of a nation in 1915, then these other subsequent events. And so how do you think that given those three a D did you see a connection with any of those, for the birth of a nation? The merchants went 1924 and it appeared a lawlessness.

Speaker 2 (01:04:23):

You're talking about what I personally was trying to figure out. Why would the claim have been so popular in a time that was generally considered to be a boom period economically in America? It was because you had a president, you realize the birth of the nation was premiered in the white house when Woodrow Wilson was president and Woodrow Wilson also disrupted the, uh, the, uh, the civil service, uh, system and segregated, certain ranches of it, you know, where blacks had, had been working, you know, um, and, uh, and most of his cabinet, they were, they were Southern men. And, uh, and that was the way they believed they, they believed in the superiority of the white meal. And, uh, and, uh, if you

ever heard of Jesse Daniel, Jesse Daniel was a woman from Texas who, um, I don't know the name of an organization, but there is a book that I think a temple, no, John Hopkins press put out, uh, something about chivalry, but her group was there. They were dedicated to stopping white men for using white women for purposes of lynching. Uh, she wanted to take themselves out of the equation, you know, they were, uh, they were against Nigeria, you know, and it was, it was a group in the South. Uh, Jessie, Daniel, I do remember her name.

Speaker 1 (01:06:00):

So, so who is this Robert Miles care and why should we pay attention to him? What was he associated with

Speaker 2 (01:06:09):

A boy?

Speaker 2 (01:06:16):

Well, Robert Miles, um, Livingston County, I don't know where he came from or his history, but he was, he emerged during the Pontiac busing controversy, Irene McCabe, Brooks, Patterson, uh, and he, uh, either did, or was planning to, to destroy the buses. So the buses couldn't be used to transport to do, to engage in cross district busted busing. Uh, he also, uh, was, uh, did do some time for tarring and feathering, a principal of a high school in Willow run, Michigan. Um, and, um, also he wrote a book. I can't think it has some about being able to blush. I swear, I was looking at my notes, the theory being that only true Anglo-Saxons can blush no people of color can't blush. So if you, if you, if you can't blush, if you can blush you're Anglo-Saxon. So, uh, you know, and, and I really don't know what effect the Turner diaries or those other kinds of things had on, on these groups of people. But, uh,

Speaker 1 (01:07:39):

Now was miles a leader of the Klan. I mean, Livingston County.

Speaker 2 (01:07:42):

Yeah, he was, he was, he was the grand, the grand dragon for Michigan. I think, I don't know if he's alive yet, but I think he passed on.