Speaker 1 (00:00:00):

So we wanted to go back and I, as I was thinking today about the 1833 ride, right. Was that, can you tell me what that represented in American history?

Speaker 2 (00:00:11):

Um, well it represented the law in American history. Um, 1833. Um, there was a fugitive slave law, uh, and, um, those, uh, slave catchers were entitled to capture their property. So it was the law. Um, that law would be, was reinforced in 1850 with considered the compromise of 1850, but it was, it was a law and the black community then had to in Detroit, the defied, the law, and, uh, defy that in such way is to protect that, that family, the Blackburns and take them off to Canada. So it was the law, the law of the land until 1865. Uh, well really till 1863 with the emancipation proclamation protected, um, Southern property, which is, which was slaves. And so, um, they were following the law of the land in 1833.

Speaker 1 (00:01:08):

And do you know the story at all?

Speaker 2 (00:01:10):

Well, the, the story is, I mean, the story is a familiar one. It's not simply the it's simply happened to Detroit. Uh, it would be repeated in Boston, uh, would be repeated in elsewhere. I mean, the story is that Kentucky slavers, uh, came North, uh, looking for their properties. And th th the interesting part of the story is that these were people who were fleeing Kentucky, uh, and, um, and that's a border state, uh, Southern state. So it's close to get to. And, uh, they had also come into, um, Cass County, Michigan in the 1840s, uh, looking for, uh, uh, ex-slaves, uh, because in Cass County, um, in towns like DWIs Jack, um, there were, uh, former, former slaves who had, uh, established colonies there. So this is, uh, a pattern, uh, every 10 or, uh, 12 years, every four or five years, someone would come looking for their property and you can look in the Chicago Tribune.

Speaker 2 (00:02:13):

You can look in, uh, uh, the old Detroit papers. It wasn't a free press and the news then, but you can look in all of those papers and you will see advertising, uh, advertisement for runaway slaves, uh, giving description, uh, giving, uh, you know, physical description, uh, um, reward amount. So there was an incentive to go to Detroit, uh, in the 1830s and capture, capture these people. They were worth money, they were worth money and they were valuable. Yeah. And the black community and define that, uh, led them to Canada. Uh, this, that would be, you could see this symbolically as the first step, the black community and community with even more increase, uh, as a result of the 1850 fugitive slave, uh, when more and more powers given to capture slaves. So you see this growth in, uh, uh, black, uh, population. Um, I'm a cup fan, as you know, and I have to always put this in one of my own, uh, favorite pictures with a, uh, Afro Canadian named Ferguson Jenkins, who was a pitcher for the Cubs, and he's from Chattanooga, Ontario. And all of those families can trace their ancestry to the United States having fled over the border. Uh, and, um, I remained there. Some people came back after the civil war, but a handful of people remained in Canada and stayed there.

Speaker 1 (00:03:37):

And in fact, the Thornton's, uh, I'm sorry, the Blackburn Blackburn, right? The Blackburn's went on to Toronto to found a cab and this, uh, they, they, when they died, they were very well, right. They, they stayed there

Speaker 2 (00:03:52):

And many people stay, stayed there and establish, uh, now they were, of course in the 1830s, they were a part of, uh, ironically Britain again, because Canada was a British territory still at that time, that part of Ontario

Speaker 1 (00:04:09):

Want to come back to grand Rapids. You know, the little alliances, you know, Troy wasn't alone, these two riots riots in America, right? The first race riots in America. And this is the way you started that. You have to understand that a city like grand Rapids, the news came here all the time. That's the way you started at the, I keep, can I ask you to do that again?

Speaker 2 (00:04:28):

Oh yeah. Well, the news did come to grand Rapids all the time. Uh, grand Rapids, um, uh, has this image of itself as being a Podunk place, but it was, um, uh, by 1850, uh, charted city. And it was one of these fast growing cities because the industrial revolution hit and it made furniture. And so after the civil war, we see this burst of factories here making furniture, and, um, this, uh, made this city grow very rapidly and it was a hot bed of Republican politics. And, uh, throughout the paper you see, uh, after the civil war, Frederick Douglas, uh, being invited here three or four times. So during a truth, Booker T Washington, president TAF, um, president the first Roosevelt, uh, coming here. And so it, it, it often gives us image of itself as, Oh, we're grand Rapids. But in fact, in point of fact, it was a city well-connected well-established, uh, with a Yankee power, uh, at the top.

Speaker 2 (00:05:35):

And, um, it, it brought all kinds of leading figures into the cities for lectures, discussions talks, uh, all the time. So my comment was that, um, sometimes people in grand Rapids old were from grand Rapids, meaning that we're not connected at all. And I think that was more during the furniture industry heydays to catch the, the East coast buyers off guard that they, these were potent kind of people when they were really, really taking them for a loop, as well as in your town, you see Herman Miller and all of those had their roots in making furniture around this, this way of taking out all the trees

Speaker 1 (00:06:18):

We'll go to furniture. Now, grand Rapids was also, I think you said it had something to do with, with abolitionists, abolitionist and anti abolitionists. So can we go back, were the civil war, what did grand Rapids represent for, uh, for the idea of slavery?

Speaker 2 (00:06:35):

Uh, grand Rapids, uh, was, um, mostly an anti-slavery town that is that the people who founded grand Rapids, the city of grand Rapids were mostly new Englanders or, or Yorkers. We would call a new Yorkers and they came here to found, uh, this town and they brought their anti-slavery sentiments with them. So, uh, the original pastor of one of our oldest congregations, James, but ballad was definitely an anti-slavery and abolition is kind of preacher. Uh, so this sentiment ran through, but there was also another sentiment. And that sentiment is sort of, you have to divide it in along class lines as well, class and religious lines at one level, there's the, um, uh, the, um, Yankees who control power and wealth and their established, uh, church life. And another level, there are poor whites who are coming into town. They are mostly voting for the democratic party, uh, which is the party of the white man as, as with the old, old grand Rapids Democrat used to have on its subheading, so that you see two things going on at

the same time. At one level, you see this sort of religiously motivated, uh, anti-slavery behavior. And on another level, you see this, um, uh, fearful fear of former slaves coming North to put, uh, uh, poor whites out of jobs. So class has already established early on in the city.

Speaker 1 (00:08:09):

And, and you made mention before that African Americans played prominently in, in the paper that, uh, you were talking about. So, so what is, what is the perception of blacks in this?

Speaker 2 (00:08:21):

Well, I mean, even before, uh, grand Rapids, uh, didn't have a sizable black population until 1945, 47. Um, before that, uh, the black population Hoovers around 1%, 1.5%, maybe 2% by 1940, but other than that, it's a really small black, uh, population 0.8% of the population. However, the papers from the 1850s on is very aware of the slavery issue, very aware of race issue, and it plays in the paper. So if a local black barber has a fight with his wife, it becomes a headline story in one, one does, it says, well, why is this because, but blacks also were seen, and I'm a negative stereotype, black people represented, um, minstral characterizations. And so the paper played on this, uh, played on the kind of idea of the, uh, happy Darcie and the, uh, the Southern plantation, but from reading the papers and there's enough clippings out of the papers, uh, before 1865, to suggest that, that they had to be disused black population. And it was more in the psyche of the brains of people around here at the, that these people were attached to this growing problem in the country of slavery. And so it played a great deal in newspaper. And then the handful of black people who actually lived here, um, uh, were oftentimes, uh, characterize in a menstrual like fashion.

Speaker 1 (00:10:01):

Just a thanks to you. I found out about the bathroom of collection. Yes. And, uh, uh, let's see, bloody fight, J Thomas and a couple of colored barbers in the city got into a frack a Sunday evening. Here's here's three column niches. Here's Fred Douglas with Douglas misspelled. Here's Fred Douglas with Douglas spelled correctly, and all should hear him. Um, here is a, uh, all sh all should hear him. Let's see, Oh, here we go. With the Johannes DIA freak, a Sable individual, formerly known as n****r, John paraded around town and something like a kilt right. The other day. And, um, or here's stealing wood, William Mahler, Marshall, the colored man has been living on terms of undue intimacy with John and Herberger's woodpile.

Speaker 2 (00:10:54):

Yeah. Those are the stories. And, uh, you either, you have, um, you have the one hand you have Douglas who, uh, is representative of somebody who's knowledgeable, but the, most of the stories are kind of, like I said, menstrual kind of fashion. Um, they provide sources of entertainment for people.

Speaker 1 (00:11:11):

And, and then, uh, and you know, I'm kind of chewing surgical cutting. So we want to go to the Klan. Right. So when does the Klan first show up in Michigan? What evidence do you mean?

Speaker 2 (00:11:22):

Uh, w the first time we see, um, the Klan in Michigan is in the 1860s, you hear a discussion about cross burning in grand Haven, Michigan. And, um, I, again, I chuckled when I read that because I was asleep. Okay. Well, who do you have the intimidate in grand grand Haven, Michigan, but grand Haven was one

of those seats for the underground railroad. Uh, there was a tiny black, uh, population, maybe a 20, 20, 20 people, uh, representing that area. Um, and there are, you know, there are people who have some sympathies, um, just as blacks came from the South. Also whites came from the South into this area looking for work, and they have sympathies as well as they have sympathies toward, um, the Confederacy. They have sympathies, um, the, toward, um, toward the beat whites being superior.

Speaker 1 (00:12:19):

Now, 1868, the Klan shows up in Michigan in Grand Haven. You know, I never did much like where they raised the cross. I think they raised a whole bunch of other cross there before, you know, I mean, I think we have to look.

Speaker 2 (00:12:34):

Yeah, there's a, in, um, a rather interesting way. I mean, I just think that, um, this is a time of frustration for the country. I mean, you, you come off the civil war, uh, the country is, uh, devastated, uh, and everybody's, um, anxiety field, and, um, these kind of, uh, symbols of resentment get played upon. So I think grand Haven would have been no different or the people who decide to do this, not the entire grant, but the people decided to do this in grand Haven. We're no different

Speaker 1 (00:13:11):

Now, where else does the client show up? Do you know the client? Well, the claim primarily

Speaker 2 (00:13:16):

Was up throughout the South. I mean, that's where the client is going to be because it's a terrorist organization. And I use that word, um, as we would use it today. It's, but it, it would be akin to what you saw in central America, in the 1980s, uh, death squads. Uh, they are there to keep people on the land to keep them subservient, to keep them from moving. Um, they're particularly fearful, uh, blacks moving into, um, urban areas, uh, where they may have some anonymity may have some more freedom and mobility. If you think about it, the South has 75% to 80% of its value, most valuable, um, asset in, uh, cotton economics. And who's working that economics. So you want to keep people in their place. Uh, so, uh, when Nathan Bedford Forrest starts the Klan, uh, it lasts till 1869 and it, then it dies out and goes into other forms.

Speaker 2 (00:14:20):

Um, you see the red shirts in South Carolina under Wade Hampton, the third, uh, running around, uh, trying to keep, uh, specifically black people from voting. If you think about it. Um, Memphis was, um, the city of Memphis, Tennessee had a 40% black population, South Carolina, and the, uh, 1860s seventies had, uh, I had almost a 50% black population, this w and then in some towns, there was a 70% black. This meant that blacks would have had a substantial say so in the voting arrangement. Uh, and, uh, because the union part of the ending of the civil war required, the Southern States required the Southern state, uh, have open conventions that blacks be included, uh, and the power of the vote, the Republicans knew that black people would vote with them. And how, how are you going to stamp out these potential voters? You're going to scare them to death, and you're going to literally take people and you're going to prevent them from voting. Uh, and it's going to have the effect of not only preventing black people down in the long run from voting, it's going to have the effect of suppressing, poor whites from voting as well, so that you have a small oligarchy controlling, uh, region.

Speaker 1 (00:15:43):

And Fred's going to slide in here to ask some more, I'm just going to go with the Klan and Michigan some more, by the way you have, do you have that, a copy of that report of the Klan in grand Haven?

Speaker 2 (00:15:54):

It's one, one of those things I have to go dig up. I'm sorry. I have it somewhere. Yeah. Right. Okay. Right, right, right. Yeah. I saw it cross burning 1868. I mean, there are cross burnings. There are lynchings, uh, in port Huron in the 1870s, eighties. I mean, this is a story I want to follow up on, and I know about a lensing import here, and I just happened to glance at it in the newspaper. So yeah. Those are the things I like.

Speaker 1 (00:16:22):

And you saw it last Friday, too. Didn't you? I have the newspaper account of that. Okay.

Speaker 2 (00:16:27):

Oh, do you do? Okay. Thank you.

Speaker 1 (00:16:30):

Do. And this poor Martin, uh, whatever was that his first name, his last name, but that was, we got him, um, the Klan, the Klan doesn't stay though in Michigan. What happens to the claim?

Speaker 2 (00:16:43):

The Klan, the Klan is really never really organized as in Michigan until till the 20th century and the original people are just out doing, um, uh, so kind of social resentments kind of stuff, but it's not, it's not a formidable thing because the black population in Michigan, the state of Michigan as a whole is not large enough to really attract and warrant a Klan. Um, the black population in Michigan, uh, again, it would be 0.5% of the total Michigan population. So you've got certain sectors like Cass County, where there are black people, uh, towns like Niles, where they're black people, uh, the largest black population would have been in, um, um, Washtenaw County. So, but it was too diffused to spread out. But world war one sees this resurgence because black people come to Michigan. Thanks to mr. Fort, uh, in droves to Detroit, just like poor whites from Kentucky are coming to Michigan as well. Looking for work

Speaker 1 (00:17:47):

In our last conversation. You said there were a of other factors as well.

Speaker 3 (00:17:50):

There was a depression, and there was

Speaker 2 (00:17:52):

Speaking of the depression after the civil war and the long depression after the civil war, put the country in no mood to, um, to, uh, think about supporting civil rights, economic rights for any, any people. So from, you know, sometimes refer to as the long depression, the other one is called the great depression, but this is a long depression. So roughly from, if you look at 1877 to, uh, to the 1890s, I mean, this is why you have the populace movement, uh, coming around all through, um, uh, the Northern front, uh,

Northern and Midwest and parts of the Southeast farmer, the alliances. Cause it's a depressed time nobody's making any money

Speaker 3 (00:18:36):

And they're not particularly so blacks aren't making money. They're not

Speaker 2 (00:18:39):

Right. Well, they're after them. Uh, they, after him to keeping them in their place, uh, and not in Michigan, no, you know, they, there's not enough black people here to keep them, uh, um, uh, Coleen their place. Yeah, yeah. In grand Rapids. Yeah. We, uh, we started what was called the bathroom, uh, newspaper collect, uh, clipping collection on Afro-Americans, uh, Carlos was being, uh, he's. Uh, he was doing, um, uh, a study of, um, he's an environmentalist and he wants to do a natural history of the region. So he started wanting to see what devastation the, um, uh, the logging did to the region. So he studying that and trains and railroads to, to write this kind of natural history along the line, that person, he went to church with mal Goosby. He started cutting these stories out. Cause he's been reading all these papers from everywhere. And so he's got this wonderful collection that he's collected from kind of West Michigan, all the way up to Northern Michigan. As he's trying to tell a story, this natural history of the region,

Speaker 3 (00:19:48):

It's fair. It's a fabulous piece of work edits. It's all hand done.

Speaker 2 (00:19:52):

Yeah, that's right. That's right. And now we have other people adding to, you know, read this, reading, these old newspapers, finding these stories. It's really important documentation process.

Speaker 3 (00:20:05):

Okie dokie. Any time we, okay. Alright. Okay. Brenda, what I wanted to ask about was how much of a role do you think that the Freedmen's Bureau and the possibility of the resentment is caused by the Freedman's Bureau and the assistance of those providing the black people after the war played into this growing or as a, as a factor in white, white resistance?

Speaker 2 (00:20:26):

That's a, that's a really interesting question. And the, the answer that I've found so far is that, uh, white business owners in the region, um, uh, wrote to the Freedmen's Bureau, looking for workers. The interesting thing is that most black people refuse to come because they wanted to stay near their families and, or also put families back together after the civil war, since some people had been sold apart. So they refused to come. Uh, and, uh, so, uh, you see, uh, queries, uh, throughout the newspapers again, uh, for black men to come and work on the railroad. Um, but many won't come one instance in grand Rapids where black people decide to come is, um, the mayor Charles C Comstock, who was mayor of grand Rapids and also us congressmen and a businessman start to barrel making factory on the river. And, um, in, in the 1870s and it's called Comstock's row, he decides to build apartments for, um, these workers, these black workers to come and work at his barrel, making a factory, but he gets them. Most of those people come from Canada as opposed to the deep South, and they don't come in such great droves that it's a real threat, but you do see the business owners seeking out cheap labor from the feed mill.

Speaker 3 (00:21:58):

Okay. Yeah. And relative to the, to the, the, there for many people, there's a psychological disparity, a disconnect, trying to understand how the North was generally has this perception of being more tolerant, so forth, how it ends up even being able to have any kind of Klan organization at all. What, what, in, in, in the night, in the late 19th century and into the early 20th century, how were, how was the North more similar to the South? And most people were realize, well,

Speaker 2 (00:22:26):

The North gives us, um, the first rules for segregation far before the South, uh, under conditions of slavery. You don't have to worry about segregation. It's only when you have a free and competing people that you begin to segregate off a Michigan in the 1820s, um, uh, puts a bond. You have to have like $500 cash, you know, 1827. That's a lot of money, uh, to, to, to bring, to show that you can afford to be in Michigan. And, uh, this was one of the things that was put on black people to prevent black people from coming into the state. Uh, you could prevent black people from coming into the state through that, and other kinds of legislature, legislation, um, Iowa, Indiana, all of those States put those rules up to prevent black mobility so that blacks weren't going to come into Michigan and any great droves rather than like the South, which was forced, um, in the North, it was by legislation and it, and that included, um, preventing people from voting, uh, up until, uh, black citizens, uh, protests and, and, uh, uh, tried to get their right to vote. Uh, and they, they are refused this, these are legislative acts. So the North is setting up the scenario for segregation. It's precedent comes from the North, not the South.

Speaker 3 (00:23:54):

So then therefore white resistance to blacks moving into the North by the early 20th century. Isn't anything.

Speaker 2 (00:23:59):

No, no, no, not at all. I mean, and black, white fear about black people coming into the North is not anything new. It's just more enhanced when actual black bodies start coming North,

Speaker 3 (00:24:12):

It's the greatest, uh, outbreaks then of anti anti black resistance, more or less the converge or coincide right around the time of the great

Speaker 2 (00:24:21):

Yes at the world war one, world war one in this, this, this region, uh, you, um, people are aware of what's going on in the South. Everybody's aware, um, that, uh, of the red shirts in 1876, uh, they are aware of, of Hamburg riots. They are aware of the Easter, right? They are aware of the 1908 Springfield rights, but those are slower part of the Midwest. And those are not our region. So they are very aware of those things going on. It's not until, um, a sizable number of black people move to the North that the tension grows and respective cities. So in the 1920s, you're gonna get, um, the OCN suite case in Detroit. And you're going to get, uh, all the kinds of, uh, uh, acts of intimidation going, going through dr. Sweet was the dentist who tried that's correct. That's right. He was the dentist who tried to move in the right neighborhood. Uh, he did move in white neighborhood, a white mob, uh, proceeded to attack his home, um, in, in self defense. Uh, he got out his gun and shot back killing a man. He was a dentist. Uh, and, um, this was, uh, uh, one of the great cases of the 1920s, uh, his defense that he was eventually acquitted. Um, but he died a very bitter man, you know, after that,

Speaker 3 (00:25:49):

How much activity? I know that during the days of, of unionization, particularly around Detroit, that there were even in the unions, there were movements of foot and indeed to some extent, uh, to exclude blacks from joining the union. Right.

Speaker 2 (00:26:04):

That's correct. Yeah. Well, in all of Michigan is, is regional. Uh, and, um, you know, uh, the region. Yeah, yeah. Michigan is regional in the two sides of the state. Detroit is the center of this labor activity. Uh, grand Rapids is, has suppressed labor activity by 1911. There's a great furniture strike, which the owners went out. So there's not much union activity going on. And the black population is steadily increasing, but not increasing as much to threaten white workers in any significant ways. So black workers in grand Rapids area remain in the domestic spheres, porters, um, uh, waiters, uh, cooks day laborers in Detroit, blacks are been brought in by the, um, mr. Ford to keep the union movement from getting established. You establish a union, we'll bring in black workers as strikebreakers creating a tension between these various ethnic communities in Detroit, Lithuanian, German, um, uh, Italian and black workers, because they are looking looked at as a scab and th therefore it's pond. So these two different sides of the States have two different kind of ways they're handling this, this growing labor tension that's

Speaker 3 (00:27:32):

Going on. So with the, if there's a rough breakdown between how the Eastern and Western half of the States are handling the issue of labor unionization, and of course, if you will, the use of blacks in both of those situations, right, is there a similar, can, can you draw a similar fault line between the activity of the Klan and one side of the state and how it can operate in the other side of the state? No,

Speaker 2 (00:27:51):

No. The Klan, uh, is operating, uh, uh, all of the, on both sides of States and a lot of small towns, a lot of towns that are just off of big cities, um, and they are playing on the fear of the people. Um, they are playing on the fear of the folks, uh, in those B they did not the Klan in the 1920s dare not meet in Detroit cause it's got a sizable black population that might really rise up. Whereas grand Rapids, when they met in, had this great meeting in grand Rapids, there's 0.8% of the black population. Um, can do anything about it anyways. So the black population has to sort of make itself invisible on, on the Southeast side of town. Whereas, um, the, um, the, um, so the, the Klan can meet, meet here in a different kinds of, kind of way.

Speaker 3 (00:28:51):

In that particular case, then the Klans target of hostility would have been more anti-Catholic

Speaker 2 (00:28:56):

Anti-Catholic anti, uh, anti-Jewish, which is a small percentage of Jewish in, in grand Rapids. Uh, anti-immigrant the irony of it is that the, where the Klan meeting grand Rapids is in the community where there were the most immigrants, uh, and, uh, and a large body of Catholic. So that's, that's I go figure, I just, I'm amazed at that.

Speaker 3 (00:29:21):

How was Klan activity during that period different in the North than it is in the South? Okay.

Speaker 2 (00:29:28):

Um, in the, by 1915, it's given the air of legitimacy, uh, these are social clubs, activities. They're almost like, um, the rotary club of a sense. And I tell you why I ran across a yearbook photo in the 1919 year book of the South high annual. And I was flipping four because I wrote about a legal case that took place in grand Rapids in 1920s, a civil rights case that made it all the way to the Michigan Supreme court. And I was looking for a young black man who was, who become a dentist and filed this, this suit. And there I flip and I discover that there's a KKK club, uh, at South high school. Now everybody knows those three initials or just not any ordinary club. And it was shocking to me. Uh, so this, this was clearly out in the open. People knew, knew about it, cause it there's a picture and you, you can go to, uh, the archives at the public library and find, uh, the South high, 19, 19, uh, annual flips through it and find the KKK club. And there are nice clean cut, looking, young men dress, and they belong to this. So social club. Okay.

Speaker 3 (00:30:53):

Yeah, there seems to be, uh, some, some organizational discontinuity between the original Klan of reconstruction, the one and the early 20th century. And then the one that is the resurgent during the civil rights movement. But can you explain or comment upon how that even though there may be some organizational discontinuity or activity discontinuity, the attitudes, right, that, that provide the foundation for these guys to resurface again, never really breaks down. Sure.

Speaker 2 (00:31:21):

Well, the, the Klan sort of dissipates because now they can go back into open politics and control, um, the lovers of power through open politics. You don't need a secret organization to intimidate people anymore when you can participate in legitimate politics. So the Klan throughout the South particularly is involved in legitimate politics. Everybody's, um, um, knows that, uh, excuse my phrase, n*****s have their place, but that's just how it is here. So for using intimidation, using laws, Jim Crow, laws developing throughout the 1880s, it's all in the open in 1915. Um, you get the, this new resurgence one by, I think it's very crucial, the cultural, uh, adaptation, I mean the film adaptation of Thomas Dixon's novel, the Klansman, which romances the Klan and says that this was a historic, uh, uh, uh, heroic, um, group of people rescuing the South from these deadly black people who were, um, um, all lecherous looking for white women, all this, that, that that's the birth of a nation is, is the moment.

Speaker 2 (00:32:47):

The other thing is that the Klan, uh, the rebirth of the Klan, um, meeting the meeting, uh, stone mountain, Georgia ties the old living old leadership with this new leadership. And, um, just the other day, a student came to me and says, you know, I'm from Indiana. And my grandfather was a part of the gland, and I discovered this as we were talking about it in class. And, um, this was, this was now ordinary people in these small town Americans, um, frustrated at their lives as, as farming was decreasing, as the economy of small times were decreasing in trying to figure out who to blame it on. Well, who do you blame it on? You blame it on all those people who came in the 1890s, who were from Southern Italy, who were Catholic and had funny Italian names. And you blame it on those darker skin, people who, and with, uh, with the large noses you Jews. So you gotta find somebody to blame this on because the economy is going bad, uh, in a certain sense, um, the war has come. And so we are looking for a scapegoat and then it becomes enshrined in that movie. And this just opens the door

Speaker 3 (00:34:03):

Floodgates. That movie was shown all across the country.

Speaker 2 (00:34:04):

It was shown all across the country. Uh, and, um, there are letters to the editor, uh, in grand Rapids all over the place complaining about that movie and what a detrimental effect that it would have on black communities everywhere that used to let us run the black community. That's correct. 1915.

Speaker 3 (00:34:23):

How do you, how, how, what, what observation can you make on the fact that you have this convergence of stone mountain, uh, the birth of a nation, and then the reaction of the, the reaction of a white community across the country that seems to be prepared to see this message and hear it and believe it

Speaker 2 (00:34:40):

Well, yeah, they want to believe it because, um, they see now that blacks are moving into big cities, New York, Detroit, Chicago, these people are going to be a problem. Um, I think they are, I think the average ordinary person is, uh, manipulated by their leadership and, uh, they, they follow, they follow in suit. I think there is, um, even new immigrants, there's a cultural predisposition toward a racist, uh, ideology. Um, you know, thank God I'm not one of them, uh, attitude. So, and you have to remember American ethnic groups competed against each other for most times the lowest wage jobs. I don't want to sound like a Marxist here, but I think it's in Mark's head absolutely right on. And that way, these, the competition between all of these people competing, you, Italians lived in their neighborhood. They were trying to get a steak, Dutch, poor Dutch folks here in grand rounds. They're trying to get a state. The poli started trying to get a steak, and then you got this black community and, you know, all of them there they're lower than us and we can't let them have a stake.

Speaker 3 (00:35:54):

So in that respect, then that, that would be the, it seems like that would be the Northern variety of what occurs in the South, where in, in the South, it doesn't matter if you're the most despicable white trash in the community. Right. You can always hang your head.

Speaker 2 (00:36:08):

That's correct. That's correct. And that, that was in trying to country, um, from the late 18th century, once you distinguish between an indentured servant and a slave that that's in shrine and in the, the kind of, uh, the cultural DNA of the United States.

Speaker 3 (00:36:25):

So then even in the North end, the KU Klux Klan, it's kind of like shifting the cross as a risk targeting depending upon what the current threat is and the social media

Speaker 2 (00:36:32):

That's correct. I mean, remember all of these small Midwestern towns of Protestant, they are, you know, and now you've got these new Catholics coming in, they're building their church and we're going to have, they're going to draw on sentiments from the 19th century. We're going to have filthy papers as they would say, coming in here and defiling America. Well, America is a Protestant town, a country. I mean, that's the history, that's the narrative that we've been told, you know, the Puritans and all the way to Woodrow Wilson. That's, you know, that's the narrative, but what about those Catholics? And of

course, um, um, the, the Klan helps to beat, um, our first, uh, uh, presidential candidate who is Catholic, you know, and Smith and in the 1920. So this, this is a really important symbol. Um, anti-Catholic cinnamon is a really important symbol in these small towns.

Speaker 3 (00:37:29):

Finally, can you tell me just a little bit more on how it's particularly relative to the compromise of 1876, by that time reconstruction has gone into a stall, right. And there's been a lot of things that's gone on the country seems to be just exhausted with this whole idea of slavery, civil rights, the civil war,

Speaker 2 (00:37:47):

And there's a depression, right? So is it

Speaker 3 (00:37:51):

Just a general exhaustion kind of like maybe compassion, fatigue?

Speaker 2 (00:37:54):

Sure. Well, it's not just a compassion fatigue, it's the economics. I mean, um, in this area, people want to get on with building the country and if you want to sell your furniture, well, buddy, you want to sell that new furniture down in Atlanta because Sherman's burned that place down. And that's a BoomTown. Um, you want to have your connections down South, uh, and you want to do business. You don't want to be saying, I want you to treat black people better. Um, so largely in this area, racism is seen as a Southern problem, even though there's racism all through the North, it's called Southern problem. It's ignored. And, and so it's a Southern problem and not seen as a Northern and Northern problem at all, but to do business in the South, well, you got to come, you have to accommodate [inaudible] that's right. And you accommodate now very well. Now, there are, well, there's a strong abolitionist tradition within the city of grand Rapids that reached out to people like Booker T Washington and Frederick Douglas. But overall it wasn't about changing the social structure. The problem was then put from grand Rapids.

Speaker 2 (00:39:12):

We can stop the problem from, from the perspective of grand Rapids is that, um, the leaders decide, you know, what we're going to do. We're going to support Southern black education, and we're going to help support schooling in the South. And, you know, and people do, um, Samuel Graves, who, uh, was the pastor at the fountain street, uh, w was, uh, uh, fountain street Baptist church. Now it's just fountain street churches that kind of Unitarian liberal church today, uh, becomes the second president of Atlanta Baptist college, which is the de Morehouse college. And in fact it is grace who moves the college to where it currently stands. And the oldest building on that campus is graves' hall, but race is a Southern problem. Not our problem. All along, uh, black people are discriminated against can't buy shoes, certain places, uh, won't be served in certain restaurants, but throughout the press, it is a Southern, uh, Southern problem.

Speaker 2 (00:40:23):

So there's an emphasis on uplifting the race down there, right? While at the same time, more or less shoving the issue in the North, that's correct. In Michigan, particularly. That's right. Why in particular in Michigan? Well, again, I get a lot of people came to Michigan and they want to draw on the heroic efforts of people to, um, uh, fight against slavery. And, um, they want to draw that legacy we're we're

North. We were antislavery, uh, we supported the, um, from towns like school craft and, and other places we supported, uh, the fight against slavery. Uh, we don't want to say anything bad about Michigan, that maybe people aren't being serviced, maybe people don't, uh, have the right to, to buy a house the way they want to.

Speaker 1 (00:41:09):

Okay. Bill talks about southerners taking action, and I think there are three, four big riots. I'm wondering if you can tell me about them. I know I'm thinking we got Colfax and Hamburg and the Easter riot. Do you have a chronology for these and who was involved in what?

Speaker 2 (00:41:25):

Well, the, um, Hamburg riot takes place in South Carolina, um, and it's not a ride. It's a mob action. And the mob are led by men like a Wade, uh, Tillman. I mean, I'm sorry, Wade. Hampton. Let's go back and pick that up. Wait, wait, wait, Hampton, the third and an interesting fellow who become Senator from South Carolina, a Pitchfork Ben Tillman, as he was known. And these, uh, actions a Hamburg is an attack on a small town called Hamburg, South Carolina, and the mob, uh, allegedly, um, um, said that, uh, black men had attacked white men and they whipped up a fury and went in to attack the black community in Hamburg. This was a ruse, uh, to keep people from voting, uh, to cut down. The number of votes really was that the Democrats wanted to get back in power. And the Republicans in South Carolina would have a majority with black votes.

Speaker 2 (00:42:30):

And the way you cut that out is you attack, uh, you attack, you attack this a community and you attack the white people as well. And you say that they were fomenting these, these docile Negroes to do things that were unconscionable, and we are trying to protect democracy. So, uh, Hamburg riots, Colfax, all of those Southern riots in the 1870s and eight early up to eighties and nineties were all about politics. Every one of those riots, we're about to, again, to repeat, to suppress an areas where blacks might have come out to vote in any large number and to suppress those votes do intimidation. So those riots had to be looked at in a context of, of, of using power, physical power to intimidate other people saying, well, you know, I'm not gonna go out there and jeopardize and risk my family in this. Um, those riots will see themselves rise again in urban communities.

Speaker 2 (00:43:33):

The most famous urban kind of mob attack again is 1906 in Atlanta. The Atlanta race riot is, was referred to once again, it's not blacks attacking whites. It's white wholesale on the accusation that a black man has raped a white woman. This is only an accusation. There's a fury rip, uh, in town and, and, and the wholesale attack of the black communities, uh, in Atlanta. Um, again, you'll see a riots in 1917, uh, East st. Louis, uh, Illinois. Uh, this time the riot is over employment. Blacks are st. Louis is a border kind of state East st. Louis and blacks are moving in unemployment. And again, a whole wholesale attack, 40, 40 blacks are killed in East st. Louis, uh, and only six whites. I mean, again, mob mob attack, um, comes down to finally Chicago, 19, 19, um, um, the, the, the, um, bloody bloody summer of 19, 19, uh, again, blacks are moving up into factory employment.

Speaker 2 (00:44:44):

There's ethnic tension, um, particularly with the Irish community in Chicago and, um, a wholesale riot with a tie, uh, black people, 1920, 21, 22 Tulsa, Oklahoma. Those all are, um, based on economics. Tulsa

has this growing black middle class prime property, downtown, um, fine homes. And the black community is once again, and the roots political roots attack, uh, and, um, sort of, um, uh, uh, disenfranchise from their, their property, their homes, uh, and have to move out because of ethnic intimidation and those stories repeat themselves. So riot, that's a funny word that they use, uh, not like black people suddenly, like if you think of in the 1960s and 64 65, um, in Harlem and, uh, uh, I mean, in, in watch and, and, and, uh, other places taking a torch and burning down a neighborhood, or in 1967, Detroit, no riots this time, our white mob action against a black community.

Speaker 1 (00:45:58):

And, uh, I'm trying to think Hamburg, it was about nine to one, nine blacks to one white, right? That's correct. Is it, I'm sorry, can you,

Speaker 2 (00:46:06):

Yeah, no, no, no. It's not nine to one. It's about voting. If you got nine black citizens, one white, there may vote all Republican. If I want to control the political apparatus, I have to do something else. What do I have to do? I had to fake something issue to get people riled up and to get from neighboring towns and then come from neighboring towns to attack this time. And that's what that, that's what occurs. And that was Hamburg. That's what was Hamburg?

Speaker 1 (00:46:39):

Uh, one of the things, one of the areas where we're bill was just reading, reading, reading, and it's all gonna go away if he's not going to read that anymore, we've decided that is, he was talking about the organization of the client and, and it's at least on paper that there was all this structure. Do you know anything about that?

Speaker 2 (00:46:53):

Yeah, well, I mean, the Klan was structured around politics. I mean, that's what it was initially for. Um, and they were structured around congressional districts, uh, and to make sure you control the certain districts and mostly in the South, I mean, this was well organized, well planned by an elite leadership member of net, Nathan Bedford, Forrest is not, not, not this poor boy out the country coming along and say, yo, y'all, we hate n****s, you know, this is the elite leadership, and they are trying to get resume control of this, uh, of, of all the congressional districts. So all of these organizations are set by district, uh, and, uh, in region at the region, but particularly in South Carolina and in Mississippi, in particular, those two States, those two States have black populations that are at the 50% Mark total, and some areas more than 50% depending on towns.

Speaker 2 (00:47:57):

So you have to do this very carefully and consciously. And once union troops are out of there, you can do it free, free will, but even before union troops, I will tell you this story. This is a story that goes, and, uh, the, my family is a history. Um, my great grandfather, great, great grandfather was a, uh, a Baptist clergyman. And, um, he, um, um, I had formed a little church after the civil war by the 1868 69. And, um, he, uh, was preaching and he was trying to organize a school. And my, as my grandmother tells this story, she was born in 1906, the youngest child. She says that the Klan rolled there in her grandfather's church. They rode their horses literally into the church and told my grandfather great, great grandfather that he had to be out of, out of, out of that little Mississippi town by the night or else he family, everybody is dead. And of course he, he accommodated them. He moved across the river to the

Louisiana side, where family was from. And once again, resumed a new congregation that was formed in 18, 1871. And he did start a school, but this is the kind of intimidation that these people, these were rural towns, country, people, as we would say, rural people, uh, and they were, uh, wanting them to be kept DASA.

Speaker 2 (00:49:35):

It's all about control control, right? I control a region. I control the politics of that region. And I also control the economics of that region. These were, you want to see the return of the elite planters, the people who lived in those big houses, well, few, and they wanted their resume, their power base after the end of the war. And they planned it out carefully and well, how to control the politics of their region. And it worked, it worked effectively. It worked very effectively because as the North tired, as they needed to sell more products and consumer products in the South, let's do away with talking. We've got to sell our Sears products down South, too, just as much as we have in the North.

Speaker 1 (00:50:30):

And I'm wondering, do we want to go any place with Missouri, the red shirts and the Missouri plan?

Speaker 2 (00:50:36):

I mean, I think, I think all of those things are the same thing. I mean, regional, it's just regional. I think politics like, like a labor contract patterns itself, right? One labor contract, you're patting off another one. That's why other communities say it's how much you're paying your work, cause it's going to affect. And it patterned itself all over. Missouri was a slave holding state, uh, at the end of the civil war. Uh, it wants to make sure that people don't have a stake in the political apparatus. So it stayed after state. It's the same, same thing. It's no different. I wish there were some differences. Uh, I wish there was some more moderations, but there's no difference. I mean, South Carolina set the precedent for the civil war, South Carolina and Mississippi will set the precedent for actions of terrorist actions of, of these, uh, uh, putting, uh, Mav actions throughout the country. So there's a pattern

Speaker 1 (00:51:41):

It's repeated Louisiana, new Orleans

Speaker 2 (00:51:44):

Far from each other, right? I mean, just like a, you know, the politician looks over there and say, wait, that's working. I better get on that. Or I better get ahead of that before it comes to my state, not much creativity, not much creativity, not the initial creativity. You know, I mean, like Mississippi is a creative and trying to figure out how they can, um, block people from voting. And every other state says, Oh, let's get that in our analysis,

Speaker 1 (00:52:13):

Which is the way that red shirts came to beat. Um, one of the things that bill said, uh, um, what do you want? What was it? Oh, well brainfart, um, any the anticline legislation that we want to go there with anything? Yeah,

Speaker 2 (00:52:33):

It was anti Klan legislation, but that was, I was really, I mean, and not to disagree with such a great historian is bill calm, but it was really marginal because nobody cared about it. I mean, look, between 1880 to 1950, there are 4,230 lynchings. 1000 of those are white. 1,200 of those are white and black, the U S Congress couldn't pass anti lynching legislation with all the power that Franklin Roosevelt allegedly had. He couldn't get it through Congress. So the anti Klan legislation was this, uh, uh, sort of a nod, a tip that we shouldn't be, but all these other factors we're working in. So in many ways it was very marginal to, to the process. It didn't do anything.

Speaker 1 (00:53:34):

Well, it wasn't just the Klan, but they were the white chameleon sons. Right. You know, and again, and again, and again, it didn't have so, so for those of us who say, okay, the client was put down,

Speaker 2 (00:53:46):

No, but, but the cultural attitudes, which the claim reflected the client always had a base because we had a cultural, um, um, soil that it could, it could spring up and action again. So, yeah.

Speaker 1 (00:54:04):

Have I not asked that I should have asked someplace that you wanted to go, that we haven't gone?

Speaker 2 (00:54:08):

Oh, well the one thing I want to repeat though, that I said the first time, and I think it's important though. And the second wave of the Klan, you, you have to see, um, there's the second wave of the client in light of a worldwide phenomenon. We have the Klan in the United States, but you see, um, uh, black shirts in Italy, in the Brown shirts coming along. Um, there is this kind of reactionary moment in history. Um, the people, uh, uh, worried about the social order. And so I want to give them in a context that this anxiety about the social order is put in a context of, of, of a need for authority. I need for control a need for, uh, organizing the society, uh, in, uh, so all kinds of fascists and authoritarian, uh, hate group kind of movements are going on both in Europe and North America, uh, to keep control over, um, over their societies, black people, not in and of themselves, but as a symbol serve as, as a symbol of chaos and disorder, especially in the 19th, between 1915 and 1930, this F Scott Fitzgerald calls the jazz age.

Speaker 2 (00:55:34):

And so who's a symbol of disorder, mal contentment, uh, not in their place while these new urban black people. And whereas in Germany, it might've been, uh, the cabarets. It was certainly Jews, um, and communists, and also in the United States, there's, you know, this communist movement going on. And of course they are seen with Jews. A lot of people who are Jewish are communists. And, uh, and so all of those, all those things are coming together at one time. And I don't think we should take the client outside of that context. That is a part of this, um, growing authoritarian movement worldwide at that time, especially in Europe and these movements are antidemocratic and Klan in my mind is antidemocratic as a company, even though they're saying they're fighting for democracy and to democratic,

Speaker 1 (00:56:31):

I remembered what I wanted to ask you. What does this character forest all about? I mean, who is he really? I mean, bill doesn't seem to think he was there at the, at the drop of the hat on the, uh, at the start of, of the Klan.

Speaker 2 (00:56:45):

Well, if he's not at the start of the Klan, which it matters little if he's there at the start of the claim, he is the figure, Nathan Bedford, Forrest who legitimizes the Klan. I mean, he's a, he's, he's, he's a Confederate general. I mean, he is, uh, um, um, seen in the South as a hero. So whether he's there at the start of the Klan or not, he is a figure that everybody galvanizes around as this heroic figure, um, having fought those Yankees. And now when he does give legitimacy to this organization, because everybody writes, uh, all of historians, right? That, that it's around his image, if not, uh, not his person that this thing gets started. And it's so well disciplined and organized one things, one had to be a military person to have run this. He's not, he's not Jesse James and that form of Confederate running around Robin banks in Northfield, Minnesota. This is, this is very well structured.

Speaker 1 (00:57:50):

One of the people that I've talked with is his great, great, great grandson who lives in Detroit, who makes no affiliation with the client, but this guy is there and he's willing to talk with us. So there may be some family. Sure. Fred, is there anything I've missed? One of the things yes, sir.

Speaker 2 (00:58:08):

Um, speaking on relative to make them different for us by more so in the academic realm, the academic social realm, how much did that add to the civil war? There was this whole school of teaching the civil war, civil war era, you know, that was built around the lost car, right. How much did that play into visually happened relative to the whole birth of a nation and the preparation of America's academic community and to some extent the social community? Sure, sure. Right. Right. The, the, um, um, the academics of the laws cause, uh, comes in all over the place. I mean the, the teaching a history at first is popularized in the newspapers. There are newspaper accounts of about the old South, not the real civil war, but the nostalgic South and so popularized. And that, that venue that, uh, it was a war of Northern aggression.

Speaker 2 (00:59:08):

And, and, and you see this, these kinds of articles being put in, in, in the newspaper, again, you remember the Telegraph works, people pick up stories all the time. There are wire stores and they pick them up, they run them in their paper. So, so the South, uh, is, uh, uh, not seen as fault, uh, by 1890, 95, the civil war is this mystical war. And, uh, the South is reconstructing itself and people in the North go along with it, there are stories about, Oh, you know, the longing for the black mammy, all of those lay the groundwork, and then academic historians are going back and rewriting the evidence to justify why the soft lost the war. Uh, and of course our own, um, uh, president of the United States, Woodrow Wilson is a part of that, uh, school, uh, coming out of Princeton as a political science history, uh, PhD, uh, rewriting how the South, uh, uh, was, uh, um, wrongly attacked, uh, aggressively attacked by the North. So yes, the groundwork was laid in academic historian and wouldn't be defeated until the 1950s. So that, that, that school of thought was there for a long time.

Speaker 1 (01:00:28):

In fact, weren't Wilson and Dixon classmates. I'm not, not well, no,

Speaker 2 (01:00:34):

I don't think Dixon went to Princeton. Wilson is a Princeton student and he's a good Presbyterian. I don't think they were classmates. I think Dixon was a Baptist clerks. Him. He was a social gospel, but he was Baptist, I believe, but I'm not sure about that. Can't quote me on that.

Speaker 1 (01:00:49):

So somehow there's a connection right there that either Griffith and

Speaker 2 (01:00:53):

Maybe Griffith and Wilson were classmates, because Griffin gets Wilson to do a cameo just before the film of birth of a nation. And they're saying that this is a film that you all ought to see. So yeah. You know, Woodrow Wilson comes on camera and says, this is, this is history. And this is the way he's been explaining history. And it's right there on the, I showed that film every other year to my students. It's on, it's on that, that little clip is on that, you know, Wilson comes out and the silent movie and they show the president coming out and you know, this is, and he's endorsing that field.

Speaker 1 (01:01:31):

He finally had to take back,

Speaker 2 (01:01:32):

Well, he did have to take it back into his endorsement, but, but you know, many black voters voted for Roger Wilson to, um, uh, to their horror cause he resegregate to Washington DC. So by the time the Lincoln monument is, uh, uh, being dedicated to blacks are seated in the back, roped off in the back.

Speaker 1 (01:01:54):

He literally sold themselves.

Speaker 2 (01:01:56):

Yeah, that's right. He did. Yeah.

Speaker 1 (01:01:59):

Anything else? No, that's, that's it. We got all kids. Yeah. Yeah, it is. Can you think of anything? I think we've got it. Okay.