Speaker 1 (00:00):

To understand the Klan and its role in the period, 1865 to say 1871 or 72, you really have to start with the civil war and the destruction of slavery. Once you destroy slavery, you have a huge question that the nation is facing. Namely, what will be the fate of the freed people? The ex slaves will, they simply become citizens like everybody else will. They have some indeterminate status? Uh, really once the civil war is over the nation faces the need to re reconstruct itself to rebuild itself. And it has to do this taking into account the fact that roughly 4 million people who'd been slaves before the civil war, uh, are now free because in 1865, Congress, uh, ratified the 13th amendment ending slavery and, uh, giving the federal government the responsibility to make sure that slavery, uh, remained a dead issue.

Speaker 1 (01:17):

So what you have then if you take a look at the American South is a white population, uh, which had, uh, perfect confidence, uh, in the belief that blacks were inferior beings who, uh, were justly held in slavery and suddenly slavery isn't there. And we're still, uh, the North is not coming forward immediately with a sharp clear program for what should happen. Had the North been able to do that, which of course would have meant that there was a great deal of unanimity in Northern society. Had the North been able to do that, perhaps this reconstruction period would have gone more smoothly, but when the war came to an end, uh, there were many differences. Uh, there were some who believed that blacks should be, uh, given the full rights of citizenship, uh, and, uh, should be entitled to political equality and social equality. Uh, there were others that thought that, uh, no, we should stop short of political equality.

Speaker 1 (02:32):

And it is this lack of a coherent program, which encourages white southerners to think that perhaps they can take matters into their own hands and control the subsequent development of their society with regard to the matter of race. And that's where the claim comes in. Uh, in late 1865, perhaps early 1866, we really don't know. And Pulaski, Tennessee, a group of about six men, uh, who, uh, supposedly just had nothing much to do with their time. Uh, and we're, uh, looking for a way to break out of their boredom, uh, organize themselves into a society, uh, uh, which, uh, they came to call the KU Klux Klan, uh, at first, according to the traditional tale, which may well be true. Uh, at first they, um, uh, they simply engaged in pranks. They are wore sheets, they wore masks and they went into town trying to scare people, particularly trying to scare black people. And, uh, you know, given the context of the time given their world, uh, this would have been a normal natural thing to do. The thing about it is it was so normal and natural for the white South. That

Speaker 1 (04:06):

Organization really became, you might say, uh, the template for a form of resistance to the current of black emancipation that were out there. Now, again, when I say current of black emancipation, uh, this thing, this reconstruction is moving, uh, I had without any centralized control. So what you have in 1866, you have the passage of the Freedmen's Bureau act and the civil rights act. Uh, and you have as well, the, um, writing of the 14th amendment, which will make blacks into citizens, it'll be 1867 or 68 before the 14th amendment is ratified. Uh, but what you've got then is an agenda for making blacks citizens. Now, if blacks are citizens, then certainly they ought to be able to vote. And as this agenda starts to develop, what we see is a white southerners finding ways of organizing to resist. And that's what the Klan is all about.

Speaker 1 (05:25):

When you get beyond the cute stories about, uh, being bored. I'm not saying that story is false. I'm simply stating that the, uh, the reason this organization comes out of obscurity and becomes an important, uh, uh, entity is because it's a vehicle for something marked much larger. It is a vehicle for what I would call counter revolution. Now we get into deep territory here. There are many historians who don't want to call reconstruction a because they feel it didn't go far enough. Maybe it didn't go far enough for, uh, civil rights advocates of today. But for the white people of the South, it went far, far too far. All right. And what the Klan was about was about keeping black people in their place, uh, as they would have put it at the time. And this is in big quotes for keeping n*****s in their place.

Speaker 1 (06:29):

And this was expressed in a VAR on a variety of fields, sometimes efforts of blacks and, uh, uh, Northern whites to establish, uh, schools for the free people, uh, were met with burning the school down. That's one Klan activity. Uh, sometimes we're talking about terrorizing teachers. Sometimes we're talking about something that has nothing to do with education. We're talking about labor. Ah, there were black people who actually assumed that they had the right to quit one job and go to another. And, um, and they did, and in some places, this was met with Klan resistance. Now what I have to say here and throughout, not every black school was burned down, not every black person who changed jobs, uh, found themselves terrorized. Indeed, probably it was true only for a minority, but think about the effect of one school learning or one act of intimidation of somebody who quits.

Speaker 1 (07:43):

Uh, and so, uh, you know, we really don't have numbers for these kinds of things at any rate, what happens in education and in labor, those are that's small potatoes compared to what happens in the field, uh, of politics, more than anything. The Klan was about preventing blacks from voting, preventing them from holding office, intimidating them. So they would not vote. Uh, and, um, I can illustrate this, this for you in fact, by talking a little bit, let me talk a little bit about the structure of the Klan. And then I will come, come back to the matter of, uh, uh, the way in which the very organization and the Klan suggests, uh, their counter-revolutionary, uh, purpose. This is a copy of the founding document of the Klu Klux Klan. Uh, and what I want to do is just give you a feeling for what it contains, and then we'll come back to the issue of political intimidation. It starts, and by the way,

Speaker 2 (08:56):

In what I'm reading, or it doesn't ever says KU Klux Klan, it says asterisk, asterisk, asterisk. Okay. Uh, and I will just read that as KU Klux Klan, uh, we, the order of the KU Klux Klan revolution, reverentially acknowledged the majesty and supremacy of the divine being, and recognize the goodness and prevalent Providence of the same and re we recognize our relation to the United States government, the supremacy of the constitution, the constitutional laws thereof, and the union of States that are under now, I hasten to add, they're talking about the constitution as it was before the civil war. They do not mean the constitution with the 13th amendment or the 14th amendment. And then they talk about their character and objects. And here, I'm going to take the Liberty of leaving out some so that I don't bore you too much. This is an institution of chivalry, humanity, mercy, and, and patriotism, uh, uh, our, uh, and then it goes on and says, its goals are first to protect the weak, the innocent, and the defenseless from the indignities wrongs and outrageous of the lawless, the violent and the brutal.

Speaker 2 (10:09):

And by this, they met black people, uh, second to protect and defend the constitution of the United States and all laws passed in conformity there too. Again, they're talking about the constitution as off old third to aid and assist in the execution of all constitutional laws and to protect the people from unlawful seizure and from trial, except by their peers in conformity of the, to the laws of the land. So on quick read, this may sound like these people are just assisting uncle Sam, but that's not what it's all about. Now, we get to the matter of titles, uh, section one, the office officer,

Speaker 1 (10:53):

This order shall consist of it.

Speaker 2 (10:55):

Grand wizard of the empire, and is 10 Jenai at grand dragon of the realm and his eight Hydrus at grand Titan of the dominion and is six furious, a grand giant of the province and his four goblins at grand Cyclops of the den and his two Nighthawks, a grand Meiji, a grand monk, a grand scribe, a grand Exchequer, a grand Turk, and a grand Sentinel. Then it goes on the body politic of this order shall be known and designated as ghouls. Well, this all sounds both scary and silly all at the same time, but let me assure you, it was not silly. Uh, if you're not scared, I understand that, but silly it wasn't, uh, then it goes on to talk about it. The territorial organization, there is the empire, which is the South. All right. And then below that, uh, the shall be divided

Speaker 1 (11:54):

Into four departments. Uh, pardon me? Um, let me back up. Um, it says the territory in the empire shall be, uh, coterminous with the States of, and it specifies the States. Uh, and then it goes on to say the empire shall be divided into four departments, the first to be styled the realm, and coterminous with the boundaries of the several States, the second to be styled the dominion, and to be coterminous with such counties as the grand dragons of the several realms may assigned to the charge of the grand Titan. And here's where I want to stop these Dominicans turned out to be congressional districts. Okay. So what we are talking about is an organization that is geographically designed to be able to affect congressional elections. I hope I didn't bore you with all of this mumbo jumbo, but, uh, what it was all about when you cut to the chase was about political power in the South in turn.

Speaker 1 (13:02):

Now we'd have to come back to the sec subject of reconstruction at least of death. All right. Uh, without going into a lot of detail, let me say that the reconstruction measures that were adopted in 1866 were in various ways rejected by Southern opinion. So that now the Northern Republicans in March of 1867, have to pass, uh, something called the reconstruction act, uh, which was talking about reorganizing the South, uh, uh, having Southern States holds, uh, constitutional conventions, uh, at which they were required to enfranchise blacks and to, uh, recognize equality in various ways. All right. So it is now this new reconstruction, this, uh, military reconstruction, alright, which in turn creates something, we call radical reconstruction in which blacks play a role in the government of the States. Now, one thing I need to say at the outset, except for a brief two year period in South Carolina, or maybe four, uh, blacks did not play the dominant role in any Southern state during the entire period of reconstruction, but they were involved in the politics of reconstruction. And, uh, again, keeping our eye on the Klan. The point is what you have is a relentless resistance to this. And now I need to say something about the limits of the Klan.

Speaker 2 (14:53):

You can just cut this out. Okay.

Speaker 1 (14:58):

Um, the Klan was only one of many organizations, all right, among other organizations that could be mentioned where the Confederate relief and historical association in Tennessee, the pale faces in Tennessee, the Knights of the white Camillea in Louisiana, uh, and, uh, some other States, the white brotherhood in South Carolina, that council of safety in South Carolina, the association of 76 Louisiana, the young men's w democratic club, uh, both in Florida and in, uh, Virginia and a white league, uh, in Louisiana. Now there's no doubt the Klan was the most prominent of these groups. There is no doubt that it had a structure of organization, right, which started at the top with a grand wizard and worked its way down. If you will remember what I read you before, uh, the point is all of this elaborate structure was sort of lost on the audience. And the reason is because if southerners were racists and they certainly were, I should say, white southerners. What is also true is that southerners really believed in local rights.

Speaker 2 (16:27):

And

Speaker 1 (16:29):

Frankly, a while, I'm sure there were occasions when orders were handed down from on high in the Klan, by and large white violence against black people in the South tended to be a local matter. And that's the way white southerners wanted it. Uh, there's no way we do not have adequate records of the Klan. I cannot prove to you that there never was an occasion when Nathan Bedford Forrest, the grand wizard of the Klan, didn't send down some blanket order. I can make a very good guests. That blanket orders were never carried out very well. Uh, the, uh, uh, the Klan was not quite the same as a military unit and even in the civil war, uh, there had been considered a considerable problem with state's rights, uh, and military units. Okay. So what we've got is a situation where on the one hand radical governments have been created in the South and where there is sporadic resistance here and there, uh, from the

Speaker 2 (17:50):

Klan and in many other places from, uh, from other organizations, it varies a good deal, depending on the nature of what part of the South you're in. And the violence is greatest in places where the white and black populations are, uh, relatively equal and where, um, the political stakes are very high, uh, in those kinds of places, uh, you have the bloodiest incidents. And I think for reasons of time, I won't get into detail about those incidents. But what I will say is that this situation, mounts and mounts, until we get to 1870 and 1871 in South Carolina and the surrounding States, and in this area, Klan activity was extremely, uh, uh, intense

Speaker 2 (18:55):

And vicious. Uh, there's one story of, uh, Elias Hill, uh, a black minister who, uh, uh, had from childhood, uh, suffered from a wasting disease. And he was a kind of shriveled up person, uh, who had a great deal of respect from his congregation and who, uh, was trying to carry his congregation to Liberia felt that the only answer to the problems of black people in America was to leave and go elsewhere at the very same time. However, he was involved with the Republican party, and he was subjected to a, uh, an

absolutely merciless beating at the hands of the Klan, which was designed of course, to do much more than to punish him and to tell him not to be politically active. The name of the game in this instance, as, and in virtually all other instances was to send a larger message. Now what's also true is that black people were not the only victims of the client, uh, in particular white Republicans.

Speaker 2 (20:10):

And, uh, here, I need to stop and say that the, the, the political party of this revolution that's taking place is the Republican party. All right. And the Republican party, uh, in the South was the party of black people and, uh, of white supporters, which included both those who were called scallywag local whites. And those who were called, uh, carpetbaggers whites who had come down from the North. Although I suppose I need to say there were black carpet baggers, too. All right. When you're talking about, uh, the desire of the southerners for decentralization, their inability, really to structure in a hut, to operate in a highly structured centralized situation. In fact, you're anticipating many of the developments of intelligence in the 20th century, when the whole idea is you organize yourself into relatively small cells, so that if a one, uh, unit is caught and captured, uh, it will not affect the whole thing.

Speaker 2 (21:25):

Uh, well, Southern decentralization, uh, does this in a very effective way. And not only that in a very honest way, because there simply is no sense nothing coming down from the top. Now there's a reason why, uh, there's nothing coming and it has to come down from the top. And it's real simple. There was a great deal of unanimity among white southerners, uh, on basic goals. Uh, the underlying, uh, assumptions were assumptions of a racist society that a racist society is the proper organization of society. Uh, and then you go from there to say, air go a black voting black office, holding our offenses to civilize being beings. Uh, what can we do to protect our society? Well, let's bring it to a stop by any means necessary. And that is what they tried to do. And again, though, they didn't do it every day in every place, rather, it, it weighted on particular circumstances, but it happened.

Speaker 2 (22:44):

So now let me bring us back to South Carolina and to 1871, uh, by this time, uh, the, uh, activities of the Klan, and here it is the Klan. And they were so egregious that I either the union government at the North, and now, uh, the government is being led by president Ulysses S grant the union government at the North either. We'd have to just throw in the towel and accept the fact that southerners are in the process of retaking the South, so to speak, or they have to do something. And the grant administration to its credit decided that it would do something. And it passed a number of KU Klux Klan acts, uh, uh, acts, which, uh, made congrats, which federalized congressional, uh, elections, and made interference them a crime, and then a final KU Klux Klan act. And this is the name of the act, uh, which listed the kinds of activities that the Klan engaged in and made those federal offenses.

Speaker 2 (24:00):

Finally, the federal government was given, uh, the right to declare martial law in, uh, uh, counties where, uh, um, elections could not be held peacefully. And it is in this situation, all right, that we find Ulysses grant S grant, uh, intervening. He does send troops in. He does act forcefully and the Klan is put down. And really by the time you get into 1872 to all, all intents and purposes, the KU Klux Klan is dead. Now there's a problem here. Cause Klu Klux Klan is dead, but reconstruction is not quite dead. And what starts to happen in the wake of this federal intervention is that the white southerners simply say, Hey, we've got to be a little bit more subtle about this. And we've got many other organizations both already

existing and, uh, if you will capable of being created. And so in the months and years that followed what you have is in one state after another, including South Carolina, uh, uh, white southerners organizing in order to, uh, prevent blacks from voting in order to intimidate them.

Speaker 2 (25:34):

Uh, and in order to take political control legally, that is through the election process. Um, and, uh, no, this was not done by the Klan, but it certainly was done. If you will, with the spirit of the Klan in Mississippi, there was something called the Mississippi plan. And under the Mississippi plan, uh, in 1875, one of the things that happened is that whites just very ostentatiously started wearing the, all wearing the same kind of shirt and carrying their guns with them wherever they went and sometimes firing them. And the whole idea was simply to send an ominous message to black people cause this was done at election time at the same time, uh, nobody was actually shooting anybody. I'm not saying there were no violent incidents, but the thrust of the Mississippi plan was to do this by intimidation, not by, um, uh, the actual of force.

Speaker 2 (26:44):

And, uh, they also did it by, uh, ballot stuffing and, and the life now for me, the most interesting part of this story is what happens in South Carolina in seven 1876. Okay. Remember South Carolina, the Klan had been operating there in 1871. Uh, uh, the Klan had been put down by the federal government. The Klan is not in business. So people in South Carolina are facing a gubernatorial election and they're wondering, how are we gonna win this one? And they found that they remembered a South Carolinian who'd gone to Mississippi to live. And they asked him, would he come to South Carolina and give them if you will a seminar on what they had done, uh, in Mississippi on the Mississippi plan. And notice, this is a South Carolinian who had gone to Mississippi and now lived in Mississippi. So he's really local. We're back to this emphasis on localism, but they get him to come from Mississippi.

Speaker 2 (27:58):

He tells them all about the Mississippi plant. And then we have, uh, shortly thereafter, the development of Wade Hampton's red shirts, uh, who used what was in essence, the Mississippi, Mississippi plant in South Carolina, same tactics, uh, uh, quite similar results. The actually technically the election was disputed, but in the end, um, why, uh, the whites emerged, uh, victorious, uh, and this really marked the end of a radical reconstruction as what's South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana, um, uh, become, uh, democratic once the Republican party loses in those States, uh, as, uh, after a disputed election, uh, uh, you can talk our, uh, the white stalk of the South being redeemed. Now I want to say one last thing about all of this, because underlying it all is an insoluble problem for democracy. We fought a civil war to keep the nation together, but also to end slavery, once we ended slavery, we had a big debate, uh, an argument over all, what should be the role of black people in the country.

Speaker 2 (29:27):

And we did not have an agreement between if you will, the North on this and the, and the white South on that matter. And so really we ha we were forced with it to make a choice as a nation, either forget the democracy and use the force of the national government to protect black rights and blacks fully deserved protection. They were entitled to protection under the 14th amendment and the 15th amendment too. All right. But if you do that, the hard reality is you're going to have to have martial law in the South for 10 20 years. And you're going to have to find some way of retraining, the minds of

southerners, which of course is runs counter to basic premises of, of democracy. So what you had to do in this situation really is to choose between two sets of in quotes, democratic values.

Speaker 2 (30:34):

Now think about it is that one set of those democratic values required the assumption that blacks were not part of the black body politic. That was the underlying assumption of the white South. And that's what the argument was all about. And in the end, that's what the in quotes redemption of the South meant is that that opinion emerged triumphant. At least for the time B I do want to say that the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments remained on the books, and yes, we ignored them for close on to 75 years, but they were there after world war II when the nation, uh, began to rethink this matter and begin, uh, uh, partly as a result of an enormous amount of black activity insisting, uh, that they weren't entitled to rights. We began, uh, to take that seriously and to say, uh, that blacks must be given the rights of full citizenship. They took 75 years, but it took 75 years.

Speaker 3 (31:57):

Now. I'd like to go back to Nathan Bedford, Forrest, the popular history has him realizing that the Klan is getting out of hand, it's unruly. And so he, um, he has choosed it, he condemns it. And the idea that KU close that's Greek for circle, we're just a circle of friends. You know, that's where the, the KU Klux Klan came from this Greek word of cool close circle and, and, and things were getting out of hand. So we, we put the quietness on it.

Speaker 2 (32:29):

Well, I, if you read the testimony of Nathan Bedford, Forrest in 1871, and he testified before Congress in 1871, if you read his testimony, you

Speaker 1 (32:40):

Find that there are so many contradictions, it's very hard to set out to sort out there are also, there's no doubt. There's probably a good deal of truth. There. It's probably true that, um, uh, basically, uh, he threw in the towel. I mean, as I was saying earlier, I really doubt that there could have been much genuine control from the top. All right. Uh, but you know, one will never know that unless we get some, uh, hidden treasure trove of records, which I don't think even exists.

Speaker 3 (33:18):

Well, it's interesting how, how the Klan goes. Sub-rosa that, that in fact, that it's a technique that there, that Robert Miles advocated in the, in the late 1990s that put your hoods away, put your robes away, uh, have as many babies as you can, and, and put it under, put it under the table, let's keep going.

Speaker 1 (33:41):

Well, yeah, I, I think I'm not sure they were that conscious. They were basically, they were whooped in the counties where, uh, the federal government took action. All right. And in turn for the rest of the South, it just meant using other organizations, uh, and, uh, just was not, I was not, I think, a problem for them,

Speaker 3 (34:09):

How well, in fact Klan did that, uh, in the 20th century, you know, the Methodist men boosters, the whatever, the chamber of commerce, many of these organization services covers for the client. So the client had this history of we're going to co-opt other organizations, but it was such a pervasive, uh, way of thought.

Speaker 1 (34:32):

Yeah. In some communities. I mean, it might be that all that the law enforcement officials, uh, we're all part of the Klan. Um, but I don't, I don't look at it as the Klan comes in and subverts the law enforcement officials. I think it's more likely that a community, uh, has a, if you will, a larger sense of purpose and, uh, the people with that sense of purpose get together. Uh, hopefully it wasn't every white person in the community in many places. It certainly wasn't, but it might well have included many leading people. And one thing that I do want to say there is a stereotype out there, uh, that suggests that the people in the Klan where the riff Raff, the poor, uh, uh, uh, the white trash, um, such people were certainly in the Klan, but there was also plenty of leadership from the white Southern aristocracy. Uh, this really does cut across lines of social class. How much

Speaker 3 (35:38):

Violence was really at the hands of the Klan and how much violence did they need?

Speaker 1 (35:45):

Boy, I don't know. I don't know how you do the quantitative thing. Uh, I studied in depth, uh, a person named Henry Adams who was born, a slave in Louisiana, served in the union army, uh, became a Republican politician and subsequently led, uh, a backed, uh, well, a movement to go to Kansas. Pardon me, when you're going to have to cut this out, uh, uh, subsequently led, uh, a back to Africa movement. Uh, many of the people who followed him, or really not so many, but some of them wound up going to Kansas in 1879 and Henry Adams alleged that half a million people had been murdered in Louisiana in 1865, 66. I have it in writing now it's wrong. I mean, Henry Adams, just to put it bluntly, he had no sense of numbers. We're really talking about something where slave culture is running right up against the culture of the white man in the army.

Speaker 1 (36:59):

And he's being asked to give specifics. Uh, so we we've got numbers like Henry Adams, and they don't mean anything, uh, later on in his career, Henry Adams collected list of outrageous, and he made it, and there were tons of duplications there, but we, we have a list of outrageous. And I suppose if I hadn't seen that first estimate by Henry Adams, I might be tempted to go and kind of sort out the duplications and so on, but I just don't know what good it would do. We know that there were many outrageous, many acts of violence. We know also that there were instances when Republicans and black people exaggerated the number of instances of violence, but it doesn't seem to me to matter a whole lot. Uh, the number of real instances of violence was, uh, quite high enough for anyone's taste or at least for the taste of anyone who doesn't much like violence. Uh, so all I can say to you is it was pervasive enough to have serious effects on the black community. You knew that you were taking your life in your hands. If you, uh, remained politically active with all of that, there were areas in which blacks did remain politically active. It should not surprise us that these areas were areas in which there was a very substantial black population. Uh, I hope that says that's specific enough, cause that's about as specific.

Speaker 3 (38:42):

And in which those black heavy population, the reprisal was probably strongest when it happened. So you, you kinda, you up the ante.

Speaker 1 (38:50):

Well, I mean, if you have a heavy enough black population, uh, I mean, what we're really talking about is a place where if you've got 70% black people, you are not going to have a whole lot of Klan activity. Okay. But if you've got 50 50, and you have a very contested election where blacks are voting well yeah. In a situation like that, you might well have a Hamburg riot.

Speaker 3 (39:22):

Did the Klan make any inroads in the North?

Speaker 1 (39:27):

Uh, during reconstruction, as far as I know, none. And I don't mean to suggest that there's much chance that they did. It just was not, uh, it wasn't a Northern organization and that's not what they were about.

Speaker 3 (39:41):

Great. Next, anything we've got done here that I can think of immediately, what haven't you told us that you showed up?

Speaker 1 (39:57):

What haven't I told you, told you, uh, well,

Speaker 3 (40:02):

Oh yeah, the box is briefing, but

Speaker 1 (40:07):

I guess not a whole lot. I mean, I could start trying to get into detail about the Colfax massacre, where 280 people died, but the problem is that's exactly what my lack of preparation does. You see? Uh, and if you wanted that, you'd have to pay me twice as much as you pay it.

Speaker 3 (40:25):

Well, we're willing to do that was the cool facts massacre. Anyway,

Speaker 1 (40:32):

It happened on Easter Sunday, uh, in Colfax, Louisiana. And all I'm remembering right now is that 280 black people were killed. Louisiana was probably, I mean, Henry Adams figures were way wrong, but I think that there was a truth underneath it all, because I think that no place was as violent as Louisiana. I might be wrong. South Carolina is certainly would be a close second. Uh, but in Louisiana, uh, they really could get pretty bloody. Yeah.

Speaker 3 (41:07):

You say this was Easter Sunday. Tell me again, the Colfax massacre, what doing

Speaker 1 (41:12):

1873. And that's all I know I said to myself, uh, I should look this one up. No,

Speaker 3 (41:17):

You're fine. I mean, we wouldn't have known about it. If you hadn't told us we can, we can do a little work. Anything else for it? Is there a correlation between the activity of the poopless plan and the presidents of the union army, particularly Sarah?

Speaker 1 (41:36):

Uh, uh, I would say, uh, without having done a detailed study of it that, uh, uh, where the union army was, the KU Klux Klan was most dormant in most covert, uh, you know, I'm sure that that was so, I mean, the United States as an experiment, it wasn't the losers in this experience seem to have been the black people. Well, that's an interesting question. Uh, I think that's that oversimplifies it, I think that because it's not that we did an experiment and we were all and, and, and the people who set up the experiment were agreed that, well, if this works okay, and if it doesn't work well, the black people will lose what we did was to kind of grope toward a way of making blacks part of the body politic. And that's what the winning side in the war wanted. All right. And frankly, in my view, that was the right thing to do. But the other side of the equation is that the South was in no way prepared to accept this. It lost, it, lost the civil war, but the North did not say to it, okay, you lost the civil war. Now we told you when you went to war that this was a war to keep you in the union because you were American citizens and you didn't have a right to give it up.

Speaker 1 (43:29):

So Southern has said, so we are American citizens. That means we have the right to control our government and our institutions. And we don't have to let you tell us how to do it. Okay. Uh, Northern is of course felt well. That's not exactly what we meant, but you see, I mean, from the Southern point of view, once you say you are part of the nation, again, this war is at an end, then that invites them to exercise their political rights. And if the federal government seems to be exceeding its role, well, what do you do? You resist just as we did against British oppression. Okay. From their point of view, this is oppression that comes from elsewhere. Now you can argue that that point view is based on the most racist kind of thinking you would be totally correct. But I mean, if we're going to understand what makes people do things, you have to look at square in the eye and say they really believe this stuff.

Speaker 1 (44:47):

And the crucial thing is the Northern government was not able to give them a message. Like, like what I'm about to say, look, you guys lost the war. And we said that it was a war to make you citizens. Pardon me? We said it was a war to keep you in the union. Well, it was a war to keep you in the union. All right. But it was all, it also became a war to free your slaves and no kidding guys. The entire nation is United in this. And we will use as much military force on you as is necessary for as many years as are necessary until you come to share our beliefs. And if that takes you 50 years, be our guest. Now, the problem is that there was no way the Northern government could say that among other things, because after all it wasn't elected government and opinion in the North, which had moved dramatically in the direction of equality had never gotten all the way there.

Speaker 1 (46:05):

And then finally, what you have is a kind of illusion that we also find happening in the United States at the time of the second reconstruction. All right. If only we can get rid of slavery, then the black people will immediately become like us and start functioning as free people. Well, aside from whether the black people might want entirely to become like us, okay, a point was, it gets very complicated. If slavery was as bad as the abolitionists said it was, and it was pretty close to as bad as the abolitionists said it was. Then there were a lot of wounds from slavery that needed to be bound up before black people could just throw away their crutches. All right. And in the meantime, those wounds to the white southerners are complete proof of the incapacity of the black people. So what's, you're looking at is white. Northern is expecting the blacks to go out and function like Greek citizens, so to speak, um, in a world where that was utterly impossible, not least because the Klan is burning down the schools. Um, there's really a catch 22 here. I realize it's tragic, but that's the way it was.

Speaker 3 (47:37):

And that's exactly what I was after. Thank you for letting me ask a very simple question. You're welcome. What can you speculate? What must just, I mean, can you, what, what must life have been like for your typical everyway seminar on April 10th, 1865?

Speaker 1 (47:54):

Well, that's a good question. Uh, and, uh, what I think is that as the civil war is dragging to a close and the soldiers of the Confederacy would coming home, uh, with their weapons, they were about as defeated as human beings can be defeated. They expected the northerners to impose some form of black supremacy on them. All right. And I think that if the Northern government had been able to speak in a totally United voice, uh, spelling out those terms, and especially if the, if it had been able to spell out those terms with enough generosity of spirit, as to suggest that we understand your pain, we know this is going to be difficult. We're going to try and help you, but it really has to happen. And saying, we understand that your pain doesn't mean that we're going to let you get by with pushing blacks into the mud.

Speaker 1 (48:57):

You know, if the North had been able to say this in April and then to insist on it, yeah. Maybe it could have been done. The analogies are really interesting and quite relevant to the world. We live in this moment, because what we're talking about is, uh, what happened to Germany in Japan right after world war II. Fundamentally, we set the terms and we said in no uncertain terms to those societies, we won, you lost, you do it our way. We're going to teach you democracy, not negotiable, not negotiable in the slightest. Now, in fact, there were small ways in which we weren't quite so absolute. The crucial point is we did not allow the vanquished to determine the small ways, if de-Nazification was somewhat less than perfect. It was less than perfect because we needed German scientists for our purposes. Not because German scientists were telling us that they had rights.