

Speaker 1 ([00:00:00](#)):

Tell us what you were doing.

Speaker 2 ([00:00:03](#)):

Sure. Um, the, the census shows that out of the Detroit population, one third of the population are native born whites of native born parents. So that means that two thirds of the population are either in six of 10 of them are immigrants or second generation and the rest are blacks. So the population in Detroit had changed so dramatically so quickly, they had foreign born, but all of a sudden you've got this, you know, this presence of the new black migrants on top of the new kinds of foreign born. And so it's just one of those things that gives Detroiters who'd been there a while or who hadn't been and who were coming into work, just a sense of shell shock.

Speaker 1 ([00:00:53](#)):

And at what period, what would you

Speaker 2 ([00:00:55](#)):

That's 1920, that, that those figures that I just said are from, so it's the change starts 1910 on up um, dramatically different from 1900.

Speaker 1 ([00:01:09](#)):

And those changing demographics lead more of the native native born Detroiters to join the Klan or these gravitate toward theKlan

Speaker 2 ([00:01:16](#)):

Would that, that would be a factor. Whereas they look around them, they see that they're becoming a minority and the people out-state Michigan have that same sense because 1920s, the first time that there are more urban dwellers than rural dwellers in the state. And they look around and they look at places like Detroit, where many of them had never even been. And they think it's a, it's a foreign black world that increasingly is going to engulf them.

Speaker 1 ([00:01:47](#)):

How does the activity that's going on in Detroit during that period? How does that either, excuse me, before we keep going. Okay. What's the connection between this, um, this movement of people to join the Klan and the automotive industry, and then the subsequent rise of father Coughlin.

Speaker 2 ([00:02:14](#)):

The it's, it's definitely linked to the automobile automobile industry. The, um, automobile industry changes everything so dramatically in, in Detroit and Southeast Michigan, but outstate too. You know, there's this notion that the Klan is a remnant of the 19th century, that they are sort of looking back. In fact, it's the automobile that powers them, that gets them to the Klan rallies. And so the not only are they reacting to this new workforce, that's been brought in by the automobile industry and the allied work, but they are making use of the 20th century technology and, and their rallies are full of, um, you know, cars that have come from all over the place. Other States, Henry Ford is their hero at rallies. Have you seen this in the newspapers at rallies? They often will shout out, uh, Henry Ford for president. This is like 1923, 24, and everybody will cheer wildly.

Speaker 2 ([00:03:17](#)):

Henry Ford is, you know, not only the working person's hero and the farmers' hero, but he's their hero. By that time, Henry Ford was in the middle of his, um, series in the Dearborn, independent on the international Jewish conspiracy. And he had a pretty well known position on that, but more than that, he was seen as sort of a popular folk hero, I think. And they just figured he was an honest politician, um, sort of getting away from your initial question, but, um, Henry Ford in, in so many ways, he's, he's represents the complexities of the KU Klux Klan in that time period, because he's creating this new modern era, which on the other hand, he's decrying and the Klan. One of the things that they really emphasize in Michigan is the need for morality, the need for people to be churchgoers. They're tremendously anti, um, rum runner, anti prohibition violation.

Speaker 2 ([00:04:24](#)):

And of course, Detroit's one of the key places in the country for prohibition violation. So a lot of the people who are in theKlan are people who were petitioners in that campaign to get prohibition through in Michigan. So there are people who've already, they thought they accomplished that, you know, they got it on the ballot. They got it passed in 1916 and they got it through before the United States moved to prohibition. And then within no time they find out it didn't matter. People are drinking, more rum running is going on here. Violence is up. One of the cities on the West side of the state had anticipated that when prohibition came, they could cut their police force because they thought, you know, crime from all these drinking carousing people will drop. In fact, they had to triple their police force because it went up.

Speaker 1 ([00:05:17](#)):

So theKlan then see themselves as kind of like the moral guardians of society among other things as well. That's a big thing. Yeah,

Speaker 2 ([00:05:25](#)):

They do a number of their activities are geared toward breaking up, uh, the rum runners activities and going into speakeasies and smashing things and stopping the, uh, the liquor traffic. There's, uh, a minister in Pontiac who was minister of a large Presbyterian church. And they would meet at his church for rallies before, and then they would go out to the bars and try to wreck the speakeasies. Um, they called him trooper Tom, because he took on sort of the, the role that the, that the cops weren't doing. And there's pretty clear notion in a lot of the literature that the police will talk about this another time too. Aren't they are in, in theKlan in many places, there are police men who are in theKlan, but that they, even if they weren't in theKlan welcomed their help to try to break up the prohibition violations.

Speaker 1 ([00:06:26](#)):

Is this because the police see them as being additional like unofficial deputies or

Speaker 2 ([00:06:33](#)):

Yeah, they're there they're help for this, you know, law violation that's going on. And I think it connects back a little bit farther just during world war one. Um, Wilson and the justice department had established the American protective association when the citizens are semi deputized to watch for dangerous foreign, radical, uh, un-American activities. Detroit had about 4,000 people who were part of that league going around, looking for, you know, an American activities. So it's an easy transition for

them to go from that activity to going to the Klan activity, trying to find violators of prohibition laws, people who are dangerous to this country's laws,

Speaker 1 ([00:07:27](#)):

How deeply involved was the Klan during this period in Detroit city politics and in the labor movement,

Speaker 2 ([00:07:34](#)):

They are involved in Detroit city politics. The election that's often talked about is the election of 24 when the Klan backed bowls who was running for mayor, ultimately as a writing candidate. And, uh, the Klan supported him. He would probably, he would have won the election except for so many spoil ballots, but, um, they were, they were very active in Detroit, uh, in trying to get council members also elected. They weren't as successful there, but they were, uh, they were definitely a voice and they would show up on the steps of city hall at the time of elections. And they were, uh, putting a lot of literature in newspapers, all around the state, reminding people to vote in the primary. It was the primary. That was the key thing where they focused. And they were politically astute because Michigan was so heavily Republican. So it was the Republican primary that mattered and out-state and small towns, they would, they would do the very same thing. There would be notices in newspapers, pretty clearly kind of Klan oriented saying, remember, um, every, every husband and wife represents two votes, cause now they're getting women out to vote too. So if, if you know, you've got to balance out the Catholic women and the black women who are voting, we've got to get the white Protestant women out to vote.

Speaker 1 ([00:09:07](#)):

What about their involvement in the labor movement or their influence in the labor movement?

Speaker 2 ([00:09:11](#)):

I, I don't know enough about this. I think for the most part, the Klan is anti-labor movement. They would support the ideas like Henry Ford had and Coughlin father Coughlin had these same ideas that labor unions can be as dangerous as abusive power by employers. That was Coughlin's notion. The Klan would see labor unions as definitely related to radicals socialists. And they, they too are fed that notion by the justice department. The justice department in 1920 goes on the, the spell of red rates around the country. And Detroit was one of the key spots for the read rates and the justice officials together with state police and city police came through Detroit in a sweep in January and 1920. And they rounded up about a thousand people. Many of them were labor, um, supporters. They were not at all radicals. They were foreigners who were at places like the German working men's hall. The Polish newspaper office was rated. So in the mind of the Klan dating from such things as world war one up to, you know, very short time to 1923, 24, uh, labor organizers are dangerous radicals, which equated with socialists and communists and, you know, atheists, dangerous people.

Speaker 1 ([00:10:51](#)):

So then would it be your assessment that Klan of this period, the twenties would have been considered a mainstream organization or consider themselves a mainstream organization?

Speaker 2 ([00:11:00](#)):

I definitely thought they were a mainstream organization. They, uh, they really saw themselves as well. That's their slogan is 100% Americanism, which of course they get also right out of world war one, Woodrow Wilson and George Creole's propaganda machine was saying to everybody be a 100%

American, don't be a hyphenate. And the Klan saw themselves as the original 100% of Americans. Um, and, and they feel they're the guardians of American values,

Speaker 1 ([00:11:33](#)):

Any resemblance between their, their focus and the, if you will, the Northern tier of Klan activity specifically, obviously Michigan, but also the Southern Klan,

Speaker 2 ([00:11:44](#)):

Any similarity, um, in there overall the, um, the Northern Klan at certainly in Michigan is less preoccupied with the, um, African-Americans than the Southern Klan Southern Klan is anti-black it gets that's its origin, although they too talk about foreigners and radicals, but in many, it looks from Billy's book and others of the deal with the South, with the Georgia Klan, that the South is more preoccupied with the black problem in the North. In many places, they they've got a multifaceted, uh, agenda. And depending on where you live, you can pick your, you can pick your enemy. That's why I think the Klan starts to pick up in the North in like right after 1920, when, uh, Simmons hires those two recruiters, Clark and Tyler who changed the focus of the Klan to emphasize patriotism, morality, um, Nate, you know, being a native American, not being a foreign born person. That's, that's the new focus of the Klan. And that's when it starts to catch on in the news,

Speaker 1 ([00:13:01](#)):

How far throughout Michigan did Declan's influence extend?

Speaker 2 ([00:13:04](#)):

You know, Michigan has 83 counties and there were according to one source 97 chapters of the Klan. They were almost in every County, even in the UPP, which is remote. Um, apparently two thirds of the counties had Klan chapters or some Klan presence. Um, so it's, it's all over the state. It's not just the Detroit phenomenon. It's not just an urban, uh, Klan preoccupied with, you know, urbanization and the newcomers it's takes root in little places like Mecosta and the wiggle counties, which are rural, which see their power base slipping among other things too, to the city of Detroit. One of the other things that figures in Michigan at the time of the Klan is that they had been at the forefront of a lot of the progressive reform acts and legislation. So Michigan had enacted such things as the primary plus the initiative referendum and recall, um, which gives them new tools and the 1908 constitution mandated that reapportionment had to take place by the mid twenties, by the time reapportionment has to take place. Um, it's becoming apparent to people who live out in mid state that their old, uh, over-representation is going to go because it's the population tilt has definitely now come toward Wayne County.

Speaker 1 ([00:14:38](#)):

Are there any instances of towns that had a, had a Klan presence, saw them as a problem and tried to get rid of them?

Speaker 2 ([00:14:44](#)):

Yes, I, in fact, you know, that's one of the interesting things because, um, some towns try to chase them out actively really, um, make an effort. Newspaper. Editors will say, we don't want you here. Everybody here is getting along just fine. Uh, we don't need outside agitators or trouble on the issues of particularly, they would say in places like the P uh, religion, but, uh, the Klan would often take advantage

of this and use it as, um, almost a propaganda tactic look how afraid they are of us. And they are trying to drive us out of town, but places like Travis city, for example, was taking a stand against the Klan at the same time that the Klan is beginning to take hold there. They would deny them a meeting places. A number of towns would say, you know, you can't meet in, in the, the hall, whatever hall they ask for, but then they would find someplace else to go.

Speaker 2 ([00:15:49](#)):

They'd find somebody who would rent them their farm, or a vacant lot in traverse city. That was exactly what was happening. And they were trying to, um, you know, there was, uh, a lot of back and forth discussion in the newspaper there. And one night in the summer of 24, there was, uh, there were series of bombs that were, um, let off in, in town, downtown on a Saturday night and the people of Travis city plus, uh, the person who was known to be the Klan organizer there said, it's an outside agitator. That's what they would always say. It's not somebody from here. It's not a, not a, you know, goodKlans person from here. It's an outside agitator. And then the local Clint in Trevor city would help cooperate bringing in the person that they identify as having done this bombing, put him on trial in Travis city, he got off. They couldn't find enough evidence where they as prone to

Speaker 3 ([00:16:50](#)):

Violence.

Speaker 2 ([00:16:53](#)):

You know, maybe you'll find this out. I have not found lynchings. Do you know if there are any lynchings in Michigan?

Speaker 3 ([00:17:03](#)):

Yeah, there were, there were six or seven lynchings in Michigan, but they were not necessarily clay unrelated. There were two in Menominee. Michigan was an equal opportunity swing in state a, you were more likely to be hung if you were Irish than if you were black, but not, not unrelated.

Speaker 2 ([00:17:21](#)):

That's that's I couldn't find anything like that. What they, um, there are some episodes, cross birthing is, is the common thing. People get notes. There are warning notes. There was a builder in port Huron who would not join theKlan. He was fairly prominent person. Wouldn't join theKlan. And he was warned. He got notes from theKlan and then a bomb was set off in front of his and also, um, fuel oil was poured down his coal shoot and lit and his, his house burned. Um, there were other episodes of, uh, notes, particularly written this to a doctrine Muskegon, but nothing, nothing of the magnitude that you think the Klan is involved in, like in the South with lynchings, does this mean that they're more of a benign organization there? As far as I can tell they're focusing on politics. I think in Michigan, they had learned the lesson in the, uh, prohibition campaign. And then in 1920, one of the big boosts for the Klan is the Everett in 1920 to require all children to attend public school who were between the ages of six and 17, or to go, am I right about that age? Uh, or to go through the eighth grade, you want me to stop and find that age? So when I should really know, um,

Speaker 4 ([00:19:06](#)):

I don't want to have it

Speaker 2 ([00:19:09](#)):

Initially it's six and 16 and then it's seven and 16, I think, but to back up there's, um, a proposal put on the ballot in Michigan in 1920, that if it had passed, would effectively have closed all the parochial schools, whether Catholic, which was one of their major target, or there are Lutheran schools, German Lutheran schools, there are Dutch reform schools. There are a few other groups who had schools and finished schools finish Lutheran schools. And the ballot proposal was one of the most heated contests, um, around any place. And it, what it did was to mobilize the opponents of it and mobilize the supporters of it and gave him a sense of how important politics could be in getting what they wanted. And there were more signers for that petition than there had been for the prohibition petition and Catholics got together with Jewish leaders and with the Lutherans and with the, um, the Dutch on the West side of the state to try to block the amendment.

Speaker 2 ([00:20:20](#)):

And in the process of it, one of the things that they did was to almost make their case worse. The Catholics in Detroit had a mass meeting at Navan field, which was the baseball field. And they brought out thousands of school, children, 1500 nuns, all marching to show how, how clean, upright, decent God-fearing and American they were. And they had a rally and a mass to show their support, uh, for continuation of their schools. Well, one of the things it did was to make other people say, look at how many of them there are, we had no idea there were that many. So the 20 amendment failed, but it really raised people's political consciousness. And it brought a lot of people to vote who hadn't voted before people were encouraged to come out and vote women, especially this is the first time women could vote. And excuse me, one of the things that resulted in was that failed campaign didn't cause people to say, well, it failed. They came back again in 24. So the momentum continued and there was an effort that the KU Klux Klan then got into in 23 to try to help get that amendment through. Let me, sorry. I probably should stop and get something I've had. Okay. That's right. Never care about this again.

Speaker 1 ([00:21:50](#)):

Yeah. Can you say anything more about, what's a good time

Speaker 2 ([00:21:55](#)):

Ages, five to 16? I just found it.

Speaker 1 ([00:21:57](#)):

Okay. Um, can you say anything more about the Klan activity and its relationships and its relations to father, father Coughlin?

Speaker 2 ([00:22:09](#)):

You know, there's a story which is probably not provable. Um, but it's been repeated so many times from Coughlin saying it on that. It's part of the lore that Coghlin gets his start because the Klan burned, uh, or was burning crosses in front of the church that he took over at st. Mary's on a wooden Royal Oak. And certainly there's a lot of Klan activity in that area. Klan is in South Oakland County, um, heavily concentrated. They have a lot of rallies there. So Coghlan's claim that he, you know, had to rally this church and take to the airwaves, to take mass to the people who couldn't get to the church because they were being menaced by the Klan. If it's not true, actually was possible. It could have happened. Um, but the times that Coughlin comes in, he's initially talking about religion. He goes on the air.

Speaker 2 ([00:23:13](#)):

And for the first few years he gives Sunday and Saturday night, um, sermons, really, and he's talking about religion. Then he veers into politics by the, by 31 32 with the depression and comes out to support Roosevelt. And at that time, Coughlin is anti you know, he, he is a, an American, he sort of what the Klan, everybody to be a 100% American, even if you are a foreigner, as he was in a Catholic priest. And he believed very much in America and he believed that America could do a better job. And so in that sense, he dovetails with the aims of the Klan, oddly enough, but see the Klan misunderstood immigrants anyway, all along, because that's what most of them wanted. And most of the Catholics to want to be Americans, they want those things, Coughlin appeals to that desire in Americans initially, or in Catholics rather.

Speaker 2 ([00:24:22](#)):

And he appeals to the, um, the, the religious, uh, needs that they have as well as then their concerns about the depression. He starts explaining to them. What's caused this depression. He picks up on the antisemitic line late. TheKlan is pretty much gone by, you know, by this time because theKlan starts to peter out as an organized function, not in men's minds, not, not in people's souls and hearts who believed in it, but in an organized way, theKlan has gone by the time Coughlin becomes antisemitic. He became antisemitic, I think out of his disillusionment with Roosevelt. And then he, he moves to the more antisemitic line as time, you know, as we get closer to 36 election, but that's when Coghlin starts to lose his base,

Speaker 5 ([00:25:18](#)):

What makes theKlan lose its following? You know,

Speaker 2 ([00:25:23](#)):

Some people would say that no, no group like this can sustain itself. Not even a reform group can sustain reform for very long, but theKlan runs into a number of things. They were active in politics and they did begin to lose. They lost again in the 24 school parochial school amendment issue. And by that time, the Supreme court was

Speaker 5 ([00:25:48](#)):

So ruling that

Speaker 2 ([00:25:50](#)):

That was not a, they could not outlaw parochial schools by amendment. And so they lost on that one. They were disappointed in politics in places where even they would get somebody elected sometimes, uh, such as in Flint, they helped get a mayor elected after he gets in on his own. Right? The next time he becomes very mainstream and, and starts to turn away from theKlan. The scandals in theKlan begin to, to catch up with them. The nationalKlan, there were local scandals in theKlan. They have no money. Um, they were fighting, they fought a lot internally the local chapters versus the Atlanta chapter, because it was really like we were talking about the automobile. The Klan is a modern 20th century corporation. There was money to be made. And it was a, a chain, um, down which the money passed. And they begin to feel at the bottom levels of the chapters that the, um, home office in Atlanta is bleeding them. And so I think it's a variety of things. Plus the economy. Um, once the depression hits, people are worried about, about certain other things,

Speaker 3 ([00:27:08](#)):

Any indication, any idea of the level of Klan activity in the grand Rapids area?

Speaker 2 ([00:27:12](#)):

I don't know about grand Rapids. I know that there is, um, calendars talks a lot about in his articles, the media notion that the Klan swept through the West side of the state and pulled in a lot of the Dutch, um, population there who would be grand Rapids, Holland, Muskegon, grand Haven. And he pretty conclusively, uh, puts that to rest by matching up Klan members, that he has the numbers with the names and their backgrounds. There is not very much interest. In fact, the grand Haven Klan, which is one of the places there are lists for is, is a small Klan. They never managed to attract enough people to even move to a chartered status. Uh, they're just a provisional Klan. And the grand Haven Klan also is different than the Mecosta and then a wiggle Klans. And that grand Haven does not attract any important people.

Speaker 2 ([00:28:13](#)):

They don't get businessmen, they don't get ministers. They don't get lawyers. It's much more blue collar Klan from that factory town of grand Haven, unlike the farming Mecosta and the Waco area where you've got the school superintendents, the newspaper editors, the ministers, the doctors, the dentists, the bankers. And so it doesn't look like the Dutch are really joining the Klan. There's no good reason for the Dutch to join the Klan. It's a secret fraternity, a secret society. And they've had splits internally over that already. They also have their own schools and the Klan is a big supporter of the anti parochial school amendment.

Speaker 3 ([00:28:58](#)):

Okay. What's that, that Whoa. Yeah. Oh yeah, exactly. On a business. Um, just in comp ed pass some, uh, certainly Davis David Stevenson and, and his, uh, his, his murder and abduction trial. I mean, this guy was as divisive on the claim. He was the reason that the Georgia Klan fell apart, right. Stevenson was just, you know, all over the, all over the place. And he was trying to push into Michigan and he didn't have as much success in Michigan as he thought. So I guess I, I wonder if you could tell Fred, uh, how did Michigan compare to places like Indiana, if you know, in numbers? Well, in terms of, of, of willingness to join, I know that at one point 30, a one out of every three, uh, men in Indiana who was white, was remembering client in the twenties, but recruiting for Michigan versus other places. If you know that

Speaker 2 ([00:29:53](#)):

Then the numbers for Michigan are certainly never as great as Indiana. I mean, Indiana is way up there on top, and it's hard to get an exact count of the numbers for obvious reasons. And they vary all the way from one source has Michigan numbers at 70,000, all the way up to about 265,000. I suspect if you added in women and the junior Klans members and fellow travelers, you know, they're always anxious to add fellow travelers when they're talking about communists. If you added those in with the KU Klux Klan, I'm pretty sure it's more toward that high end of two 65,000. If you start to try to work from the numbers who would have been eligible to join the Klan of whites over the age of 21, and then you take out the pool of foreign born Catholics, blacks, and then try to figure from there, probably in some areas, at least one in every 10 in Michigan was a KU Klux Klan member in S in certain places, it would have been higher.

Speaker 2 ([00:31:02](#)):



I think in the Waco County, it was higher than one in 10, probably. Um, it just depends on where you are, but it was a significant number of people who were eligible to join, did join. And the women of course, are right in there. The women are right in there. Um, where we do have a few lists, again, a new Wagga County, it's quite clear that they joined early as they went to meetings along with their husbands. Sometimes they organized even apart or ignoring the central offices that of the WKK and they run their own shows. Uh, the women are for the most part married, but that's sort of a profile of, of women, um, in the state at that point, who would have been interested in theKlan anyway, they are also though a number of them are working women in the new Lego County list. About a quarter of those women are working women. A lot of them are school teachers, which again is interesting because that would be a group who are pro patriotism concerned about, um, you know, American values and citizenship, and also concerned about public schools, maintaining public schools.

Speaker 3 ([00:32:27](#)):

I want to go back to 1915 birth of a nation. Uh, we've talked with Kenya, Kevin at CMU who went out extensively about the importance of birth of a, I wonder if you might be Ann and Fred, I'm going to ask you to slide back in front of me. So she doesn't look at me when I'm watching the screen. What was the importance of, of, uh, of DW Griffith's movie?

Speaker 2 ([00:32:50](#)):

It simply it dramatize it, it gives people a sense that direct action is a good idea and that it, it's worth the effort. And I think it just is the right movie at the right time. It, the Klan would have taken off without this movie. I really believe, but it helps make people feel good about what they're doing and it energizes them. But ironically, a lot of people are watching a birth of a nation who are the targets of the Klan. One of the places they were showing birth of a nation in the twenties was Hamtramck and Hamtramck was the Detroit. Um, it's, it's an enclave. It's a separate city surrounded by Detroit. That's almost all Polish and Hamtramck was often the place that the Klan, uh, rhetoric was directed at those, those, you know, Catholic, Polish, um, people who don't speak English, they just drink away their paychecks.

Speaker 2 ([00:33:51](#)):

They live in slums. Well, they're showing the birth of a nation. There have people are going to look at it until a local black group comes to them and says to the police chief, we wish you would make them stop showing the birth of a nation in Hamtramck. And so then they do, but birth of a nation, it has a different impact. I think during the time, then we see it as now. It was, um, you know, it was one of a kind, when it came out, it was exciting. It was dramatic. It was good guys on white horses. Um, it feeds theKlan, but it feeds, it fits in more with world war one, I think with the whole patriotic, um, let's ride and make America safe.

Speaker 3 ([00:34:46](#)):

By the same token, there was a tremendous rise of paternalism at this time. I wonder if you could, could you tell me about, about this, about this fraternal movement that seemed to sweep the country?

Speaker 2 ([00:34:59](#)):

People are joining everything, you know, not just the, the masons, the odd fellows they're joining the boy Scouts, reading clubs, self-improvement groups, literary societies. There's a desire, I think, in the twenties to find order in things, Robert Weeby talks about the search for order that's going on and people find order and a sense of community in these like-minded groups. So, um, the odd fellows and

the masons Knights Templar are, are big organizations and their sister they're Rebecca's, uh, the Eastern star, the women, and then they've got junior affiliations for the, for the kids. So there's a lot of parallelism with the KU Klux Klan in the, um, the words, the secrecy, the oath, and there is crossover from these fraternal organizations over into theKlan Mecosta, new Lego counties. It's clear that, um, a number of the people in theKlan are Masonic members, one order or another and fraternal members, I should say. And one of the things that is also clear though, is there a lot more members of fraternal orders in those counties who don't join the Klan? So why don't they join the Klan? It's not wholesale movement from the fraternal orders into theKlan. Some people self select out and that's that's one of the mysteries is why do some masons decide to join theKlan, but far more masons don't.

Speaker 3 ([00:36:56](#)):

Yeah. And we've heard as well that there are, there were some Oddfellows lodges that serve as just a cover for the client. Have you found that as well? That there were some organizations? Yes, no, maybe. So.

Speaker 2 ([00:37:10](#)):

I don't know. I don't know. I hope you'll tell me,

Speaker 3 ([00:37:14](#)):

Well, it's my perception, but you know, like my wife says, uh, often wrong, but never in doubt. That's good. Um, by the same token, would it be any surprise that the client was actively preached from the pulpit? Do you have any record about the faith and the client?

Speaker 2 ([00:37:34](#)):

Th there are a number of, uh, Protestant ministers who are on theKlan circuit. They come initially and try to help win overKlan members. When the Klan is for sweeping through the state in the 23 summer, spring and summer, a number of the circuit writers are ministers who joined with the [inaudible] and trying to get the message out. Then there are ministers in the state who are active in supporting the Klan aims from the pulpit. Uh, there's a minister in Adrian who was at a major church there. And then he was at before that had a major church in Lansing, and he will run as aKlan candidate for governor in 24. And he uses his pulpit in his various other, uh, activities as an Adrian good citizen to promote the KU Klux Klan. The, uh, Detroit council of churches took a vote on the Klan as what to do about it. And as you might guess, they tabled it. So there's a lot of division Reinhold lever is in Detroit at this time. And Reinhold Niebuhr speaks out very strongly against the Klan, but many of the ministers run for cover. And some of them there's one minister. In fact, who takes to the pulpit and says, well, the Klan is obviously necessary. People are turning to it out of frustration because prohibition violators are going loose.

Speaker 3 ([00:39:12](#)):

What's the reaction of theKlan to the Garvey movement? I don't know.

Speaker 2 ([00:39:17](#)):

I don't know. Do you,

Speaker 3 ([00:39:21](#)):

This is really interesting as you can see the name that I've written there, Reinhold Niebuhr. So I wanted to get to him what a brave man. That's right,

Speaker 2 ([00:39:30](#)):

Man. And, and there are a few other brave men who, who come for us. Um, and Groesbeck cousins, you know, take a stand here against the Klan. And, um, Groesbeck is one that the Klan tries to topple in the election of 24 out of the governorship. There's so many things that feed into the development of the Klan and among them an early, an earlier one, that again, relates back to the war. And the fear of radicals is the polar bear expedition. The polar bears are the group who were left up in Siberia at the end of world war one, um, to help try to bring down the communist Bolshevik regime and restore the white Russians. Most of the men from the United States force are from Michigan and all the time that they're there from the fall of 1918 through the summer of 1919, there is an increasing flow of letters in the, in the newspapers was relative saying, what are they doing over there?

Speaker 2 ([00:40:39](#)):

Uh, what's going on? Are we succeeding in defeating the Bolsheviks? And what's the government got in mind here? Should we be chasing after the Bolsheviks in their own country? So there's a lot of attention given to the Bolshevik menace in Michigan that might not otherwise have been focused on. It had not. They paid attention to these polar bears for months after the war was over. And then they come home and there's a huge rally and they have a cemetery dedication to the over 60 men that they, whose bodies, they brought back in the twenties who were Michigan polar bears, who died in action or from frostbite or something over there. So the polar bears, uh, it's, it's one more piece of, you know, the reasoning why Michigan residents would be worried about radicals and fearful of dangers at their very shores. The other thing that we didn't talk about earlier when we were talking about prohibition is the purple gang.

Speaker 2 ([00:41:44](#)):

Because as soon as prohibition settles in gang violence comes to Michigan and the purple gang is Detroit's gang. It's sort of the rival gang to Al Capone. And as Detroit becomes a center for organized crime, one of the things that's again picked up on is that the purple gang members are Jewish. And so here, you've got 400 hers who are illegally involved in a rum running and who are bringing crime and corruption to the very doorstep of Michigan and, and they're Jewish. So you've got, uh, just, uh, a whole complex of issues. People worried about the polar or the, uh, excuse me, the purple gang people across the state. There are wonderful tales about how fearful just ordinary people were that the purple gang would be coming through their little communities down along the, uh, Southeast corridor and get into a fight with Al Capone's gang in their town and murder innocent citizens.

Speaker 2 ([00:42:52](#)):

So there's a lot of fear about those sorts of things and newspapers. If you look at the newspapers of the times, the national Enquirer has nothing on them. They ran lurid headlines, um, often focused on such things as gun mall in pants, accompanies lover on murder spree. And, you know, the Detroit papers would pick that up, even if it happened in New York. So the picking up all of these immoral things, linking up with women and murder and crime and drink and bringing it home, even when it wasn't happening here, the Bridgeman rates got off. I looked at the polar bears, the Bridgeman raid, um, ties in with J Edgar. Hoover's never ending hunt for communists and dangerous radicals. It's Jager Hoover. Of course, who's sweeping through Michigan in 1920 in January rating, the Polish newspaper headquarters

and various other places and picking up radicals. And after that raid, even though attorney general Mitchell Palmer fades away, J Edgar Hoover stays on in his campaign is to try to find dangerous communist radicals.

Speaker 2 ([00:44:16](#)):

And his first major success is in Michigan at Bridgeman, a little tiny town over on the West side of the state. In August of 1922, they have an informant who tells them that all the major leaders of the communist party are going to hold a meeting at Bridgeman and they're masquerading as a German seeing society. And, and so the FBI converges in there, and they arrested 50 of the top communist leaders in the country on the West side of the state, over in Michigan, in a little town out in the woods. And they bring in Earl broader and Williams foster, and three, um, Russians who were here for the meeting and it's big news. And so, again, there's, there's the quite obvious a message that the threat of radicals is is here. It's in Michigan. You don't have to go to New York.

Speaker 3 ([00:45:14](#)):

Okay. What about, what are you telling me about the burns and I'm ask, uh, active 1924. What was it, what was behind this? And what was the, what was the result?

Speaker 2 ([00:45:24](#)):

Uh, burns was, um, a state legislator from Detroit.

Speaker 3 ([00:45:30](#)):

I'm sure I was just kind of midway in a move. Their side

Speaker 2 ([00:45:36](#)):

Burns is a state legislator from Detroit who, uh, was a Catholic, but among other things he's concerned about the KU Klux Klan, radical activity, dangerous activity, as he is, as he sees it as being secret. And he kept trying to, um, encourage his colleagues about the danger, even though there had not been much reported trouble in Michigan, when burns comes out with this, with this proposal, they'd been picking up trouble in other States, but it's January of 1923, when burns first comes forward with the idea of the anti mask lock. And at that point, there had been little reported, uh, activity in the newspapers burns gets the mass cloth through, by, um, a very easy vote. Um, in the state legislature, two people voted against it in the house and nobody voted against it in the Senate. So the burns law just sails along and it was to take effect in August of 1923, by the time it took effect in August of 23, the Klan had swept through it's that spring of 23 spring and summer of 23, that theKlan begins to move through Michigan recruiting, speaking, burning crosses adding members to their lists.

Speaker 2 ([00:47:04](#)):

And so once the laws in place, theKlan is already so strong, they can in fact ignore it if they want to. Um, the burns law says that you can not hold a public gathering in masks or, you know, in costume with the face covered theKlan. Um, sometimes they don't even, they don't even bother to wear masks, not necessarily because they're in keeping with the burns law, but because they're proud to March without their masks, other times they get around it, they, uh, say such things as indicate. You're having a historical pageant and commemoration of the oldKlan and carry a banner saying in memory of the KU Klux Klan of the 19th century, and you can wear your masks. It's perfectly legitimate, but they, um, they

will appear in masks off as often as not anyway. And the police do nothing. They, they really don't often the police would give us their excuse, look, they're on private property.

Speaker 2 ([00:48:18](#)):

We can't go into private property and arrest people who are out here having a gathering on somebody's farm. Often the police don't care some of the time the police are Klansmen. So there's no real concerted effort to enforce the burns law. And in many places in the smaller communities, especially, uh, it was sort of a, uh, a joke locally to try to guess who was under the masks as they would March in the little towns they could tell by their shoes. Farmers always said they could tell by the, their neighbor's shoes, their horses, if they ride horses in the parades, they know each other's horses.

Speaker 1 ([00:49:02](#)):

Great. Are we ready to move to the, to the sixties, rubber miles and the knowing what you don't know you had here? Yeah. Just about you, you, you asked it, you asked the question about, uh, cause I did have, um, you ask the question relative to Indiana and I just generally, as much as you, as much as you might know, how do you, it seems like during this period that there's a tremendous amount of clinic activity in the Midwest, specifically, Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan. How do you account for that? What might've led to that?

Speaker 2 ([00:49:35](#)):

I think it's, it's everything we've been sort of talking about. I think that many of the people who joined the Klan are longterm residents. They have been here in, or at least their families have been in the United States. Often they have been in the state, uh, for one, two, three generations, and they are fearful that other types are taking over. Outsiders are taking over. I think they are definitely spurred on by all the emotion that's roused in world war one to make America safe for democracy. And I think they feel now it's up to them. And I really do think these are people who are sort of people of the land. They they're farmers, they're towns, people they're shopkeepers. And they think that they're kind of people are being threatened. And, you know, it's, it's sort of a new phenomenon in some of these States,

Speaker 3 ([00:50:39](#)):

SixtiesKlan, unless you have anything else on your list that you want to talk,

Speaker 2 ([00:50:42](#)):

Not unless there's anything I missed that you wanted to know that I might happen to know, you know, the Detroit club gets in fights too with the Atlanta group. I mean, and they form their own club and don't pay dues.

Speaker 3 ([00:50:59](#)):

That was kind of a Democrat wrote Indiana.

Speaker 2 ([00:51:02](#)):

Was it there too? Yeah.

Speaker 3 ([00:51:03](#)):

I don't know. We have that on tape anyplace. So would, would you be able to

Speaker 2 ([00:51:08](#)):

A little bit? I could. Yeah. Um, it's, it's part of the whole financial, um, arrangement that is tying that the local chapters to the Atlanta headquarters and that they have to give all of their dues to, or more of their dues to the Atlanta headquarters until they have chartered status. So in the eyes of the DetroitKlan leaders, Atlanta is holding off, giving them permanent chartered status and keeping them provisional so they can suck up more of their money. And so the Detroiters separate out and form their own KU Klux Klan group under the, um, S Y M w a clubs spend your money with Americans club. And it's really just, uh, a shadow or a front for the oldKlan. They met in the same headquarters. They had the same leaders, they still have connections with the, uh, theKlan in Atlanta. They just don't send them their dues.

Speaker 3 ([00:52:14](#)):

What about the sixtiesKlan and, uh, and civil rights? What little do you know and what do you, or what do you think or what, or what do you not know?

Speaker 2 ([00:52:27](#)):

I suspect that the sixtiesKlan is a much less representative group even of the pool from which it draws. I think that the sixtiesKlan is also more prone to, uh, direct action violence. They're the people who are blowing up the Pontiac buses. They are more likely to, uh, beat up and injure. And in some cases kill their opponents. They are much more, um, what shall I say? Um, they're, they're much more oriented toward the issue of race only than the oldKlan. The sixtiesKlan is concerned about racial issues about school integration. Uh, they don't have much concern about those other issues that the twenties Klan had with regard to making America safer democracy would be my guests, uh, now in their minds, if pressed, they could probably explain their movement as making America safer democracy, but I don't think that's on the top of their list or their tongues.

Speaker 2 ([00:53:45](#)):

Uh, I also think that the sixtiesKlan has much less educated leadership. People who are more fanatic, people who are more prone towards secrecy, theKlan of the twenties, we think they're secret in retrospect, but at the time they weren't all that secret and they didn't make the same kind of effort that these, thisKlan does. ThisKlan also is much more likely to be connected with extremely fringe, fundamentalist, religion, much more connected with the, um, the kind of new religion that began to emerge about that time. Worrying about the devil and worrying about, uh, various interpretations of the Bible. That's my guess. But you should ask somebody who knows,

Speaker 3 ([00:54:39](#)):

What about Robert Miles now? You know, we, we, we keep hearing how, how a hall and that's where miles was from wasn't he? So, so who was this model's character? Do, does he register on your radar at all?

Speaker 2 ([00:54:50](#)):

Yeah, if I remember the malicious stuff, uh, miles is out there, he's a pastor of a little church.

Speaker 3 ([00:54:58](#)):

Just start that one. We're just adjusting yourself there.

Speaker 2 ([00:55:02](#)):

Miles is the pastor of a little church outside of hell. And, um, he is a part of this fringe religious movement and it's miles who is worrying about, um, Satan and the fight with, I think with the, um, the devil and the forces of evil and good, but miles is a very small voice among a group of survivalists almost that are beginning to emerge too at that time. And he does not really have a very big following. It's unfortunate for the people of how he lives there because they keep getting tarred forever after, as being members of the KU Klux Klan. And the other thing that happens to them is that miles, I think incorrectly is linked with the Michigan militia. And so the Michigan militia gets labeled with having members in it who are KU Klux, Klan members, always in every one of these times.

Speaker 2 ([00:56:09](#)):

Like we talked about earlier with the overlap between Masonic orders in theKlan, there's overlap among groups, people join multiple groups in America. We all belong to a variety of things now, but it doesn't mean that the beliefs of a organization are necessarily the same as the beliefs of another organization, just because they share membership because people move back and forth. And I think that, um, the KU Klux Klan miles, these extremists among the religious fanatic, uh, right, and the survivalists are very untypical of the general population, unlike the KU Klux Klan of the twenties.

Speaker 3 ([00:57:03](#)):

Now you were talking about, so what, what are the differences in core beliefs of Klan in this day and age and the militia? Cause you, you know, the militia,

Speaker 2 ([00:57:13](#)):

The Klan in this day and age is anti-black. The militia is anti-government the, um, theKlan is anti government only when the government interferes with its goals, such as integration of schools, but the militia is basically not its its agenda is not anti-black, it's not, not at spoken agenda nor anywhere in their literature. Uh, again, they have members who are anti-black, but the militia organization in its leaders in Michigan, um, historically since they get established, which is all that long, and the terms of history are basically concerned that the federal government has usurped power from the citizen and that the constitution is being violated by federal government agents that over the last 50, 60 years, federal power has been increasing. They are particularly worried about second amendment rights. Um, you know, the, the right to bear arms is one of their issues, but taxation and I think that the militia fits into a grassroots, uh, political movement, much as theKlan does because they are targeting politics as their Avenue of action, as much as anything they really want to make changes in the political. In, in, in the political structure, they have candidates that they back, there are two of them right now who are running for governor and Lieutenant governor. Um, who've been long time tax opponents of the tax system, federal reserve issues are another thing that the militia has that the current KU Klux Klan doesn't bother itself with the malicious busy reading code, uh, law. And, you know, looking through the constitution, reading Thomas Jefferson, the KU Klux Klan, Robert Miles is not doing that sort thing. In fact, isn't isn't miles dead. He's dead, right? He's dead now.

Speaker 3 ([00:59:27](#)):

I mean, we went, we drove past a Klan rally in Osceola, Indiana. We were down there in, uh, in, uh, late August. And uh, so you have, the cloud members are meeting and security is being provided by the outlaw hammerskin

Speaker 2 ([00:59:46](#)):

Bunch of motorcycle people. Are they? Well, yeah. I mean, I assume that's what they are.

Speaker 3 ([00:59:51](#)):

Yeah. You could say that, but these folks hone their skills in prison. For the most part, these are the, the hammer skins and then the outlaw hammers get these outlawed hammer skins.

Speaker 2 ([01:00:01](#)):

That's what some of the militia people would say, stay away from theKlan. Those guys are, are bad. They are they're from prisons. Um, and so they don't want to associate the two movements.

Speaker 1 ([01:00:16](#)):

In fact, can any associations be drawn between the outlaw hammer skins or skinheads NazisKlan?

Speaker 2 ([01:00:26](#)):

Probably. I think so. I don't know. Cause I just haven't done enough enough work that I think they're all far out there on that same edge. Don't you? Yeah. I mean the same rallies is that right? Yeah, they do. They have crossover leadership as well as membership.

Speaker 3 ([01:00:43](#)):

Yeah. Well what's the, what's the preacher's name? Matt? Uh,

Speaker 1 ([01:00:47](#)):

Shepherd. Well, no. Oh, that's the monkey guy down in the guy down in Indiana. Yeah.

Speaker 2 ([01:00:55](#)):

The guy at the tax protester, a preacher,

Speaker 1 ([01:01:00](#)):

The guy who, the founder of the world. Church of the creator. Yeah. Yeah. I'm trying to think.

Speaker 2 ([01:01:07](#)):

I think he crosses over into the militia. Maybe. I think he does. Yeah. I think he, he used to, we're thinking about Matt swelling. No. Is that somebody else? No. Um, there's a link. I, he militia people support his tax concerns and went down to try to help him save his church.

Speaker 3 ([01:01:30](#)):

So there's shoe.

Speaker 2 ([01:01:32](#)):

I mean, it's just, it's a messy, messy part of the spectrum, but then, you know, liberals are no better on the other end. So are the Democrats pretty messy themselves?

Speaker 3 ([01:01:45](#)):



Yeah. Well, you're not covered that where we're going to kick ourselves about it. Do we need to talk about honesty and sweet? Do we need to talk about the 42 riot? Do we need to talk

Speaker 2 ([01:01:56](#)):

Awesome. Sweet. I mean, somebody will talk about Aussie and sweet Ozzy and sweet was sorta like the last hope probably for the DetroitKlan that they might use that to, to emerge again. And, um, cause the sweet cases is 25 when they're already starting to slip in their base. But the trouble for theKlan is that this week case, um, it gets resolved in court and theKlan is already slipping. The bigger worry is, even though theKlan is slipping, the suite case doesn't go away. There's, there's a book that came out a couple of years ago that said maybe a little bit longer that said the Osteon suite case opened up housing for blacks. It was a landmark, a ruling because it began to open up housing. That's not true. What, what happens is that they find new ways to, um, segregate. They begin to use the restrictive covenant more.

Speaker 2 ([01:02:56](#)):

So the, the worst thing, if you look at the timing of the demise of theKlan and the emergence of the suite case is that the Klan membership drops off. But the feeling that brought people to theKlan in the first place doesn't go away and they just, they move around into new directions. They, they haven't really resolved the fears and the concerns that they had. And so they will do restrictive covenant covenants and neighborhood civic improvement, associations and white only citizen councils and other new mechanisms will come to replace theKlan among people who maybe didn't even join the Klan, but who were sympathetic with a lot of their concerns.

Speaker 3 ([01:03:48](#)):

Do we, do we need to go to 42? I may have that pretty well covered with other folks as the, as the fight for the bottom rung of the lesson. It was yeah.

Speaker 2 ([01:04:03](#)):

Yeah. That sounds about right.

Speaker 3 ([01:04:06](#)):

Um, newspapers, uh, ignoring client activities. That was one thing that was really frequently.

Speaker 2 ([01:04:12](#)):

They do. They ignore the Klan activity surprisingly for such a long time. And even, um, the Detroit news has much less on it than the free press, even things that are going on in the city of Detroit will often be picked up by the free press and not by the news. So it's often the bias of the editor that helps decide what they're including. Most of those small County newspapers out there in the state of Michigan are Republican, um, in ownership and an editors and theKlansmen are solidly Republican. And so you run the risk of stepping on the toes of a powerfulKlan member. If you, uh, run an editorial against them, people who are advertisers, judges, um, would be my guess as to why there's not more information in the newspapers.

Speaker 3 ([01:05:07](#)):

And did you talk to your heart's content about, um, police forces who were activeKlan members, police forces, not just the, the auxiliaryKlan, but law agencies,

Speaker 2 ([01:05:18](#)):

You know, maybe you've picked this up elsewhere. There's a persistent rumor. I've heard for 30 years since I lived in Detroit and knew people who knew cops, that the Detroit city police force went South to recruit people, deliberately looking for people who would be opposed to the KU Klux Klan so that the city police force was bringing up southerners to be part of the police force in order to help keep the colored population in check and in their place. Now,

Speaker 1 ([01:05:57](#)):

Wait, wait, wait. You said who would be opposed to the KU Klux Klan?

Speaker 2 ([01:06:01](#)):

Oh, they would be, they would be. Did I say that? I'm sorry. No, let's go back over it.

Speaker 1 ([01:06:08](#)):

The part where they were you saying that you heard rumors for 30 years, that they were going to South

Speaker 2 ([01:06:12](#)):

To recruit people into the police force. Let's start all over. Yeah. Start over. Yeah. Okay. I'm sorry. I've heard rumors for 30 years and people in the police force, um, will, we'll say this is true too. That they went South to recruit Detroit police force members who were, um, specifically encouraged to come and join because they would help keep the colored population in its place. As it was growing larger people with Southern whites who had come North joining the police force, and many of them did join the KU Klux Klan, probably the, uh, deputy sheriff in Wayne County in the 1920s was aKlan member. There were allegations that he was aKlan member and that he was on the payroll in Atlanta. And he said, so, so if I am, I'm doing it in my own time and it's not taking away time from my work. And that's what was the case? A number of them mate, we're doing it in October time. We go toKlan meeting plan rallies after work. There's nothing wrong with that. And, um, it was accepted. There were, there was a jail riot at one point in Detroit, among prisoners who were angry, that they were being fed KU Klux, Klan propaganda. While they're in jail, they said, bad enough, we should be in jail. We shouldn't have to listen to KU Klux, Klan proponents preaching at us in jail. Who are our jailers?

Speaker 1 ([01:07:43](#)):

What about, you mentioned the sweeps that Hoover sent through Michigan. Did that include ever was Jager Hoover at all concerned about the KU Klux Klan?

Speaker 2 ([01:07:56](#)):

Not that I know of. Do you know? I, I don't think so. Um, I've never seen it. J Edgar Hoover was a member of theKlan, but I I've got to look this up. Don't you think I've, I've heard that Harding was a member. Do you know G ever heard that I've seen somewhere? And of course now I can't remember a picture of the KU Klux Klan in the president's office, giving the president some sort of a certificate or something. And of course, I can't remember where I saw it. Did you, do you, do you know which president it was, it was hurting that's that would be my guess. He's from Ohio. I mean, it fits he's perfect.

Speaker 3 ([01:08:41](#)):

He has all kinds of, I mean, there, there are all kinds of clients sympathies there. I'm wondering if we can do an academic, you are an academic, so let's do an academic exercise. Oh dear. Oh dear. Oh yes. I have some prognostication from the future. What do you think? What do you think is going to, as we look back, what's going to be the importance of the client and the plan movement in this lighter 20th century.

Speaker 2 ([01:09:16](#)):

I think unfortunately the importance of theKlan is that we really haven't learned very much from that whole experience. We haven't yet come to grips with the fact that Americans of all races, colors, um, ethnic backgrounds are more alike than not that people come here because they want to be Americans. And theKlan, um, was attacking those very people under that fear. And we haven't moved very far right now from that. We're still into that very same notion that the other are people other than we are. And unfortunately, um, you know, it's, it's the, the people who have come in over the generations who have themselves been targets of this now join in and they say, well, let's close the door. Now we're here. And these new people aren't like we were, and they are, um, they're, they're, they're dangerous. So I don't think we've learned very much. And I think, again, my biggest concern with theKlan of the twenties is that it had a great push from, uh, government leaders and from government rhetoric who were trying to whip up a sentiment to go to the war. And I don't see that that has fallen away as a possibility or an option for government leaders since then. So then

Speaker 3 ([01:10:56](#)):

TheKlan of the twenties, then a year estimation, while it may not have been a formal part of government, would it be a stretch to say that it wasn't institutional tool or hammer of government?

Speaker 2 ([01:11:07](#)):

I think it is in gendered by government during the war years. And it becomes in some ways a tool of certain governments, local governments, but I think all of the, uh, propaganda efforts at the time of world war one set the stage that the Klan could just then feed off all that, all that 100% Americanism, all the fear about Bolsheviks, dangerous radicals, um, labor leaders being unAmerican and unpatriotic. This espionage sedition acts, American protective association, all of those things just handed theKlan, the concerns that they acted on in the twenties,

Speaker 1 ([01:11:52](#)):

The period that that period offered theKlan, then an opportunity to become, to identify itself as a legitimate part of society.

Speaker 2 ([01:12:01](#)):

That's really what I think.