

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

Tom, thanks for coming down. Oh, my pleasure. Um, let me start off first. I just want to go to the, from the general, the specific, your specific areas that he pertains to the KKK gay candidate in the Detroit area. What, what time period?

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

Uh, my interest is the 1920s with the clan.

Speaker 1 ([00:00:18](#)):

What, what, what's significant about the Klan in the twenties?

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

Um, well, it's here to begin with and it's powerful. It's strong. It essentially elected the mayor of Detroit in 1924. He would have been, mayor had, um, many of those ballots not been disqualified. So the fact that it's, uh, it's here, it's strong, maybe 70,000 members, uh, that it, um, essentially elected the mayor of Detroit in 1924. Um, of course it peaked. And by the end of the decade, it's, it's no longer the power that it was. Um, but I think it, it also, uh, fits in well with the, uh, the nativist move, uh, the, the one, the 100% Americanism of the post world war one period. So I don't think you can really understand Detroit, which I think is a fascinating city to look at in this time period without knowing something about the class.

Speaker 1 ([00:01:03](#)):

Yeah. What was it about that native this movement coming after world war one? That's significant. How are the two related?

Speaker 2 ([00:01:10](#)):

Yeah, well, I mean, I guess the clan feeds off of, um, a nativist tradition. That's been, uh, certainly the Detroit area since the 1840s and fifties when, uh, uh, Protestants, um, rebelled against the presence of Catholics in Detroit. Um, and it's, it's been here and it's come out very strongly at certain points in Detroit history. Um, the, in the aftermath of world war one, it's not only a nativist tradition, which has long standing and anti-Catholic tradition, which is longstanding, but it's also fueled by the, uh, the hysteria over Bolshevism, over communism, uh, of the, of the insurgent labor movement of the world war one and postwar period, the strikes, the strike waves after world war one, uh, a sense of a breakdown of law and order, uh, of a sense of among white Protestants that their civilization was coming undone, coming unglued, that they were being overwhelmed, um, by an influx of foreigners and Catholics and knew of course from the world war on period on is African-Americans. I mean, there've been very few of them before world war one in Detroit, uh, large numbers came during world war II and they continue to come throughout the 1920s. Um, and so all of these things combined, some are relatively new, the nativist tradition traditions a much longer in duration and sort of like sort of the ground bed, the seed bed, I think of what the clan feeds on it sort of as a cultural base

Speaker 1 ([00:02:30](#)):

Does that movement of African Americans into the city and the immigrants and another Adam, as you mentioned, does that, that continues throughout the 20th to the thirties, doesn't it? Yeah.

Speaker 2 ([00:02:38](#)):

Yeah. Well, um, you say African Americans and immigrants. Yes. Yeah. Um, well the story really about the two there's this sort of, um, the Gulf in different directions, the, um, I'm trying to think of what, what the figure is. I think during the, um, the period from 1900 to 1920, I think the, the immigrant population of Detroit, the foreign born population, like about 200%, and then during the 1920s, it's down to about 20%. And what essentially happened was that after world war one, the post, the pre-war immigration, uh, does not reoccur, uh, it w what really clamps down on it is the federal government and the 1921 and 1924 immigration acts, uh, severely limit a form, you know, uh, immigration, especially from Eastern and Southern Europe, which was essentially Catholic as well as Jewish, um, what's occurring in the 1920s because Detroit is growing. The auto is booming.

Speaker 2 ([00:03:29](#)):

These, you know, industrial is still need labor and for the auto industry and its supplier networks, uh, they're relying on domestic sources, uh, Canadian sources. And to some extent, Mexican sources, because Canada, Mexico were not excluded by the immigration, uh, acts. So the, um, what industrialist makeup for, in terms of a labor supply is the use of domestic labor, uh, from small towns and farms of the Midwest and Michigan, but also from the South. And so that they, the world war one migration of southerners, including African-Americans continues during the 1920. So that in, you know, before world war one, there are only about 4,000 African Americans in Detroit. And by the end by 1920, but the 1920 census is up to 40,000 and it triples again during the 1920s. And so the rate of increase of, uh, of the population of Detroit, there's a significant increase of population in the 1920s.

Speaker 2 ([00:04:23](#)):

Uh, it's mainly based on domestic sources and not a foreign war, not through immigration, but yet the, the interesting thing of course, is that the Klan is, you know, it has many enemies. There's probably not a section of the population that doesn't hate, you know, um, including Catholics, uh, and, and the foreign born. And that seems to really propel it and drive into Detroit. Um, but yet the fact is that in the 1920s, there's little new Catholic, uh, immigration coming into the United States let alone Detroit. And, um, it just sort of a rather interesting situation that they would go so crazy over this population yet their numbers really don't seem to be growing. I think the answer of course, is that Catholics are starting to come into their own by the 1920s, uh, they're coming to voting age, and you really see that in the later twenties.

Speaker 2 ([00:05:11](#)):

And you see that during the new deal, with this creation of a new deal coalition involving Catholic immigrant workers and their families voting democratic, um, and really becoming a powerful force, a political force. And I think partly that's what the Klan is fighting against in the twenties. It's already seen it, or those elements of Detroit who support the clients see that, that the, that, uh, Catholics and immigrants represent not only some, something different terms of cultural, um, uh, differences and that they're allied to this foreign power in Rome, but that politically, they represent a challenge to their positions, their power in Detroit and Michigan. And, you know, and beyond when you say they represent a challenge to their power, you mean that the, the power that the clan and the people that they, that they purported to represent might've had in the middle twenties. Well, basically, you know, the, the white middle class Protestant elements ran the show, uh, they were the dominant power.

Speaker 2 ([00:06:12](#)):

Um, of course the, you know, the, the poor Protestants, you know, uh, the lower class, the lower middle class types, you know, they, they weren't in charge. The industrialists were, but as a, as a cultural formation, I guess this, uh, the white middle class Protestant section of Detroit, they, they ran Detroit. And what they see occurring is the influx of, of other people, especially these large numbers of, uh, of Catholic immigrants who are, who are organized. They have an institutional base in their churches and their neighborhoods. They have multiple organizations out there have a whole, it's officially a whole Catholic world, whole Catholic society they've carved out and created to sustain them. And, um, they're capable of acting politically. And I think that's one of the things that really concerns the climate. So it doesn't so much, I think that the Klan is fighting, um, sort of a cultural war.

Speaker 2 ([00:07:02](#)):

There's enough of a cultural war going on, Protestants objecting to drink and to booze, they get prohibition that prohibition act, um, and resisting that. And of course, Catholics are against that, uh, that, that, uh, that kind of legislation. Um, but I think there's also, there's a political drive behind the client as well. It isn't just purely a cultural struggle at their waging. Th the clan grew slowly in Detroit at first, um, by 1923, though, it began to increase its membership became more active, and it began to see that in the terms of its willingness to, uh, um, do more public events. And the one that I found rather interesting was that on Christmas Eve, 1923, uh, the Klan held a rally involving several thousand, uh, members on the grounds of the Wayne County building in Detroit. And, uh, they cited the Lord's prayer burned across, and they had a good time and went away, but it just seemed to me to indicate that in a heart of Detroit, that they would be there, they were capable at that point, or willing enough to be able to kind of put on that effort.

Speaker 2 ([00:08:10](#)):

Uh, they were denounced though by the newspapers and many people, they announced the organization for its hate-filled violence and so forth, but the, uh, it seemed to indicate the, the growth of an organization. It was becoming more daring. I'm more than willing to undertake these kinds of public activities. The clan, uh, became a business, um, and a great part of it was selling robes and Klan paraphernalia. And, uh, it became a money making operation. And it's, I think it's that drift in the clan that, uh, alienated people from the organization. I simply know that in Ohio, that in 1924, 25, when doc shepherd, um, uh, was in Ohio, a cleanse a leader in the clan, he already began to sense that the Klan was losing its vitality. That'd be, had to become nothing more than a racket. Uh, wasn't reaching its true potential and, uh, created in him that's desire to create, um, a clan with some vigor, with some vitality, uh, that would go back to the true roots of the clan.

Speaker 2 ([00:09:15](#)):

And that's what became the black Legion. What were those true roots of the claim? What doc Shepard sought was a, was an organization, a truer type clan that was an idealistic organization committed to this mythical paths of, uh, of white supremacy, white domination, a Protestant land, a harmonious society, uh, good families, you know, 100% Americanism. And without the presence of aliens, alien forces, things that didn't fit in, uh, things that threatened all this great harmonious society. And, uh, what he saw of course was that this was failing in 1920s, America, the clan represented an effort to combat those forces. Uh, but the Klan peaked, it turned into mere hucksterism. And so he was committed to created a more vital organization, a clan with a land that a, um, a client with teeth, uh, and somehow is captivated by the romance of the South of night riding and really fuse them together, uh, outfitted his colleagues in new robes that he created, uh, black robes, uh, black hoods.

Speaker 2 ([00:10:27](#)):

He created a whole new set of rituals, including an initiation ritual, a very bloodcurdling ritual that we don't really get a clue of until 1936 when the black Legion is exposed, but it was a multistage ritual. Um, that took initiates from not even knowing where they're going at a midnight rally to ultimately having a revolver pointed to the back of their head as they're kneeling swearing, to never reveal the oath or reveal the secrets of the black Legion, being presented with a bullet, being told that this one is for you. And there's another one waiting for you, if you should, somehow, uh, you know, reveal the secrets of the black Legion. So he creates this almost bloodcurdling organization, uh, the black robes with the red trim, uh, really an elite. And, you know, I guess if this was a comparable to the Nazi movement, you know, you had your Brown shirts, right.

Speaker 2 ([00:11:18](#)):

And there was a thought for something more right. Of an elite within it, which, you know, is the SS, the black, the black shirts, you know, um, so I think that may be, is kind of what he was going to do. There's a lot of, um, it seems to be a master of psychology in terms of being able to invent as well as package this new organization, but it was fairly small doc shepherd really didn't significantly expand it beyond the, uh, the area in Ohio, not far from wheeling West Virginia, it's kind of in that area of Ohio that he began. Other people took it further to other cities and then throughout the region, but doc shepherd is the one who apparently got the, uh, uh, the rituals, the, uh, the initiation, the uniform, the regalia put all that together and, you know, created the mission, uh, of night riding the tradition of night riding for the black Legion

Speaker 1 ([00:12:10](#)):

Relative to this tradition of night writing. And you see, he had a fascination or rather he romanticized this particular activity with the South. This would have been the night riders immediately after the civil war. Yeah. Okay. Right. Can you elaborate on, on their activity,

Speaker 2 ([00:12:25](#)):

Post war, civil war, the night riders? Uh, not tremendously, not in any great detail, you might have to find someone else to fill in it. I mean, this simply with doc shepherd, there was simply a romance about the South. And in fact, there has been some suspicion that maybe the black Legion was much larger of an organization than it was in the late thirties. I mean, we know of it in Ohio where it began, it's, it's spread to Michigan in the early thirties, as well as into Indiana. Um, there are other fascistic like organizations in the United States in the, in the 1930s. Um, there's some suspicion that the black Legion may have had actual branches under different names and other States, uh, may be in fact, uh, in the South. I think doc shepherd liked to tell the story, in fact, that I come in, I'm starting to remember it now.

Speaker 2 ([00:13:11](#)):

Uh, doc shepherd used to like to tell the story that his organization not only admired, uh, this, the Southern tradition of Knight writing, but was a direct continuation of, uh, of, of a descendant of people, of nightriders from the 19, um, from the civil war period, that was a direct continuation. So he wasn't inventing it. He was not, he was simply, um, continuing this noble tradition of a night riding. So he's, he's what he does is he invents a tradition. He invents a tradition. He, he propagates it to, to his, uh, to his, you know, to the black Legion and they, you know, it's sustains it.

Speaker 1 ([00:13:48](#)):

So the black Legion is started by Doc Shepherd, daddy, eventually, if you will have organizations or presence in Michigan.

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

Oh yeah. The key guy in taking the black Legion from what Doc Shepard created to something bigger. The key organizer is a guy from Lima, Ohio by the name of, uh, Virgil Burt F. Finger. And, uh, it looked like a thug. You see photos of him, it looks like he has no neck. You know, it looks like it reminds me of the Ernst, Rome of the who helped build up the Nazi movement. He was, it all Fittler was the propaganda, but the guy that got the rank and file together, you know, who had real fire in his speaking and his oratory violence in his oratory was Finger. And so based in his little office in his home in Lima, Ohio, he took the organization throughout Ohio and then spread it into Michigan as well as into Indiana in a way he did it. It seems to me.

Speaker 2 ([00:14:49](#)):

And from what I've been able to do a basis of documentation is that he reactivated the remnants of the clan. The clan had disbanded or collapsed after the late twenties, it fallen into disuse. Many members simply got out of it. And he had, and he had been a clansman. He had been a clansman, uh, of some rank and he reactivated those networks and those men then became further organizers in their respective areas. Uh, but he did it with little in the way of a bureaucracy, the clan, the pardon me, the Legion develops nothing real in a way of a, of a bureaucracy. Uh, there isn't really much in a way of a dues paid system of a paperwork system, F. F. Finger's offices. Um, it's just a little cubby hole in his house in Lima. So, um, that's probably one of its weaknesses. It never develops a capacity to sustain itself as, as a powerful force.

Speaker 2 ([00:15:44](#)):

It's, um, it's, it's a night riding tradition. It's sort of action, but it doesn't have the structure to sustain it through to challenge, to take power aspired for power, but it wasn't sophisticated enough to know what it had to do to actually take power to challenge power. Does that then explain for the, the, the more limited presence of the black Legion it's, it's brief existence, it's brief existence. It's explain, I think by the fact that it doesn't have staying power, it, uh, it's a secret organization. It never could organize openly. It could never organize publicly, even though it supported certain people for elections. Uh, it had to do it from behind the scenes. It can never outrightly go out there and do what well, let's look at the Nazi movement, which has empowered at that point. You know, they're the, the, the mass rally is the, is this, you know, the essence to success and fascism, and, uh, Nazi-ism the black Legion went a different route.

Speaker 2 ([00:16:40](#)):

It shows the route of absolute secrecy. And so it had mass rallies, but there were nighttime midnight rallies out in the boonies with, uh, with torches burning and, um, and an initiation rituals involving hundreds of men, but it could never outrightly present itself, you know, in, uh, in, in, uh, in public. And, um, that limited its ability to, um, to sustain itself. It couldn't have a director. It couldn't have a, um, let me think, let me think of how I'm gonna say this. Um, uh, the black Legion couldn't have a, or didn't have really much in a wave of political program, or certainly a very sophisticated political program. It had enemies and it aspired to something in general called seizing power, you know, um, but how that would occur, nothing was ever really thought out. And I think it's because it's very unsophisticated not

being able to be an open organization and open political organization, challenging power running for office. Um, it could not, um, it couldn't develop the sophisticated tactics and strategies needed to sustain itself again. So when it became exposed in the spring of 1936, the amazing thing is how an organization involving perhaps tens of thousands of men, um, in Michigan and Ohio and in Indiana, how so quickly it collapsed. And despite the connections it had with, with people in power, uh, connections with corporations, and despite some of the dirty work it had been involved in when it was exposed, they all run like scurry ants heading for the nearest hole.

Speaker 1 ([00:18:16](#)):

And why was that? Was that because of the tradition of secrecy obvious, simply because people are simply trying to protect themselves?

Speaker 2 ([00:18:23](#)):

Well, I think what happens in 19, what happens in 1936 is that the black Legion was exposed because of a murder. And so to be linked to a murder, to end, to be linked to a conspiracy involving murder and the murder involved, one of their own, what the, what brought the black Legion down in, uh, in the spring of 1936 was the discovery by the Detroit, by Detroit police of a body on the Western edge of the city. And I believe what is now Dearborn and the, uh, the body was that of a chart of a guy by the name of Charles pool. Uh, the body had been dumped. And as far as the police knew, it was, you know, it was one of those gangland murders. Um, so they investigated it. Well, one thing led to the next and it led to the, to the murderers and the murderers happened to be members of the black Legion.

Speaker 2 ([00:19:11](#)):

Now they're sworn to an oath to secrecy, not to reveal the Legion, but what happened was Dayton Dean. In fact, the trigger man who had been apprehended began to squeal, and he poured everything out about the oath of secrecy about who was who, and the organization started naming names. So the police began to round them up. And before, you know, it, there was a, there's a network of guys, maybe about a dozen guys who are wrapped up by the police for Charles pool's murder. Now pool again, he was a black Legion member. And the irony of the thing is that what brings the Legion down is the discipline or murder that committed against one of their own that they had killed, or certainly had also, um, mutilated other people and people on the left, the communist and others had throughout the 1930s bank complainant took the police about vigilante action by rightwing elements, not knowing there was a black Legion, but knowing there was something out there and the police refused to investigate, um, you know, these are people on the left and the police isn't typically terribly sympathetic to them.

Speaker 2 ([00:20:16](#)):

And so the irony of course, is that the police department does investigate a crime, but, uh, and it leads to the unfolding, the black Legion, Charles Poole was a member of the Legion. Uh, and apparently what killed the reason they killed them was that, um, his brother-in-law, who was Al, who was also a black Legion member, uh, spread a rumor that Charles was beating his wife and indeed that she was in the hospital. And so they took them out to work him over and Dayton Dean killed him while his wife indeed was in the hospital, but she was giving birth through their, to their first child. And, um, so it was a tragedy in that sense. Um, the other story sometimes you hear was that they discovered that he was a Catholic and, uh, they decided to discipline him or eliminate him for, for that reason as well.

Speaker 2 ([00:21:02](#)):

So I've heard a number of different stories as to why they actually decided to eliminate Dayton Dean, but the point is they discovered the body, they investigated, it led to the, to the discovery of a new, real conspiracy. You know, we hear so much about conspiracy theory and history that it's something that you don't want to do, you know, a conspiratorial view of history, but sometimes there indeed are conspiracies and the black Legion was, was a conspiracy. Um, it was, uh, it was, uh, it was organized. Um, it was large. Uh, it had infiltrated various levels of government administration. Uh, although they don't have much in a way of a political program, they don't have much in a way sophisticated political strategy. And they have little in the way of a political bureaucracy to sustain the organization. Uh, they do know where they want to go, and that was to infiltrate, uh, political organizations or the main parties, especially the Republican party, uh, and to also infiltrate, um, uh, law enforcement, uh, the Sheriff's departments of, uh, uh, in, uh, in Oakland County, uh, the Detroit police department, the chief of police was a member Heinrich Pickert is a member of the black Legion.

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

Uh, the, the, uh, the, um, the, the Wayne County prosecutor is also, uh, uh, McCray, I think is his name is also a member of the black Legion. Um, and so they knew where they wanted to go. They also infiltrated, uh, Jackson prison, uh, guards. They were organized among the prison guards. So in that sense, that's, to me the real danger, the black Legion, they were infiltrating, uh, law enforcement, uh, the repressive apparatus of government, if you want to call it that. And in that sense, we're beginning to function. We're creating sort of a D they're trying to create some immunity around themselves, create people who would protect them for the dirty things they wanted to do, that the police might not want to get directly involved in. And so in that sense, they were evolving as a death squad, and we know for sure they killed several labor organizers and communist organizers in Detroit from 1933 through 35, 36, they committed our sin against various left wing, um, buildings.

Speaker 2 ([00:23:10](#)):

And, um, there was a firearm out in Farmington Hills that the left used to meet at and mysteriously burned down. And it turned out to be, uh, an activity of the Legion. People disappeared for a while and were found, having been beaten and flogged. So they were a death squad is what they were, and, um, having infiltrated the police to me is probably the greatest danger that they represented politically. And I don't think they represented a real direct challenge to the power of the state, the constitutional order, uh, despite the crisis in the United States, during the depression decade that the constitutional order holds. So this is definitely, this is not a replay of Italy or Germany. We don't have that political crisis. Uh, but yet we have class tensions. We have the rise of the labor movement, the growth of the communist party, the growth of the left, that scares industrialists.

Speaker 2 ([00:23:58](#)):

They're looking for ways of stopping labor, and they basically take care of it themselves. They have labor spies, they violate the Wagner act and they get away with that. Um, some of them seem to be willing to play with the black Legion, um, Hudson motor car company in the personnel office. They seem to be willing to work with the black Legion, but this is on sort of a hit or miss basis. Basically the black Legion was willing to offer its services of eliminating and fighting reds, troublemakers, labor, activists. It was willing to do that on its own. And if it could get the backing of a personnel department or of a corporation, you know, so much the better. So I think one of the mistakes that people on the left hand back in 1936, 37, once the black Legion wasn't covered to them, it was a classic model of fascism.

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



Fascism is nothing more than organized big business, creating this fascist group and using it against the working class. Um, well, it's clear there is class tension and class conflict in Detroit and throughout the United States in the thirties. Um, but the corporations are, are capable of fighting their own battles. And the fact of the matter is that the black Legion, um, isn't a puppet of the industrialists, it's sort of, um, a loose cannon. It has a similar agenda with certain industrialists, but it's an independent force. And, uh, I think probably some corporations were rather hesitant to get in bed with the black Legion for fear of, you know, such a, you know, such a force being unpredictable, uh, not under the control. It might've been more too dangerous to really get involved with. So my sense is that the, again, the black Legion, isn't a puppet of the employers. Uh, it's an independent force, their interests may coincide. Um, but, uh, it's definitely not a puppet.

Speaker 1 ([00:25:43](#)):

You mentioned that the black Legion was very active against those attached to the labor movement, their focus, as far as whom they might have identified as an enemy is not so narrowly defined though. Is it in other words, who else, besides those involved in labor organizing people who would have been assumed to be part of the left with the black Legion have considered as enemies? Yeah.

Speaker 2 ([00:26:08](#)):

Yeah. My sense is that, uh, the, the enemies that the black Legion are essentially the same enemies that the clan had, uh, the foreign born Catholics Jews. Um, what you add in the 1930s is a, especially from 30, 1933 on was the revival of the labor movement, especially sections that are connected to the communist party. And that represents a real difference in the situation that the black Legion faces as opposed to the clan. Um, you know, by the mid twenties that the left of the post world war one period had shot its bolt. I mean, it just, it didn't make it. And so by the time you get to, uh, the 1930s, you're dealing with a different political force at work here. And so I think there's more desperation, the clan, the anti Bolshevism, it's much more strong, uh, in the, uh, in the, uh, I think with the, uh, with the Legion than you saw earlier with the clan, but it's essentially the same enemies. It's essentially the same enemies. Um,

Speaker 1 ([00:27:11](#)):

Okay. You mentioned also that there were a number of people at police chiefs and people in law enforcement and some in politics who are part of the black Legion. How did these individuals become a part of the black Legion if the Legion itself was so secretive? In other words, how did they find out about the Legion to become a part of it or,

Speaker 2 ([00:27:28](#)):

Yeah, well, that is a good question as to how the Legion actually managed to make these, these connections with people who were significant people who were political creatures, you know, how did the Legion do that? We know for the ordinary rank and file, what seemed to have worked as that, um, uh, a guy who was part of the black Legion would invite one of his workmates or a couple of workmates to go out with them that night, uh, to, to a meeting, to, um, Oh, he would make up something and they would drive out some distance outside of Detroit, late at night, 2:00 AM to a place. And it would turn out to be a black Legion induction ritual induction ceremony. And what tend to happen was that those guys that were brought along were inducted into the organization sometimes against their will. But, um, and that creates the problem is you end up conducting people against their will, and then you gotta really force them to stay in and to maintain the discipline.



Speaker 2 ([00:28:23](#)):

So a lot of the dynamics in the Legion, the secretive organization, a lot of its violence. In fact, it was directed against its own a Dayton Dean. The trigger man against a pool was in fact beaten badly, uh, by the, the Legion, um, for, uh, I believe he committed a rape against his, uh, his, it might've been a stepdaughter. And so they decided to punish them for that. Uh, but in terms of how you brought in, for example, the former governor of Michigan Wilbur Brucker was the governor of Michigan in the early 1930s. And he ran for us Senate in 1936, and he kicked off the first speech of his campaign at the Wolverine Republican club, which was located in the West side of Detroit. Well, the Wolf were the Wolverine Republican club is the front of the black Legion in Detroit Rucker doesn't know, or he doesn't know, um, how that connection was actually made.

Speaker 2 ([00:29:19](#)):

I'm not quite sure, um, police chiefs in, uh, in Oakland County and Sheriff's offices. Those folks are also brought into the black Legion. As I mentioned, the police chief of, um, uh, Detroit Heinrich Pickert, uh, very reactionary, uh, was brought in and became a member of the black Legion. And so we had a lot of high profile members of the Legion secret. Of course, nobody knows about this, uh, this network of people who could offer backing and support to the Legion and its, you know, this general quest for power, um, and protection when it needed, if things got bad. Um, the problem is the Legion can't depend on them when things got bad and when things did get bad, they went off in different directions, picker, disavowed having been a member, the Wayne County prosecutor said, well, I know you have my signature card. They found a signature card, his membership card with his signature.

Speaker 2 ([00:30:14](#)):

He said something like, well, you know, a lot of things come across my desk and I just sign them, you know? Uh, but he remained, he remained, he remained the Wayne County, uh, the, uh, the, the, uh, County prosecutor, uh, despite this and in fact prosecuted the black Legion, but one suspects that perhaps the judges were also maybe brought into the Legion. And that is one of the stories of the black Legion. Why, um, I guess the story is why there wasn't a further investigation. The black Legion, uh, people involved in the murder of pool, people involved in the murder of a fellow by the name of Coleman, an African American, who was lured out into Livingston County and then shot to death as he ran through a swamp and his body left there. Uh, those involved in that murder were also brought to trial.

Speaker 2 ([00:31:01](#)):

So there were several trials involving the black Legion in 1936 into 1937. Um, but yet there was no, there was never any general investigation either locally, um, or by Congress, which at this point is investigating, um, violations of the law against the labor. Uh, there are no investigations into the black Legion that would reveal the political connections of the organization or who was involved in it. And so to this day, this still remains one of the mysteries of the black Legion as to how high up in the political structure or how high up in the social structure you've found members of the black Legion, people who avoided detection, you know, you suspect, but we never could really prove it, uh, an investigation at that point, might've been able to clear it, but there was no will in Congress to expand the Lafonda committee hearings from the narrow jurisdiction was chosen to vet to investigate, uh, what employers were doing to labor, to looking at other elements like the black Legion vigilante groups and what they might've been doing against labor.

Speaker 2 ([00:32:10](#)):

There was no will to go to take that next step, which seemed logical that you would do it, but there was just simply no will there, there were some grand jury investigations and Wayne County McComb County, um, Oakland County, uh, the, the Wayne County grand jury was a one man grand jury by a judge. And the results of it were never revealed, uh, the McComb County grand jury investigation. I think Peter almond found out that the grand jury investigation report exists, but it hasn't been revealed, but the grand jury investigation in a, um, by the judge in Oakland County was revealed and we have that it was published and we have that, and it lays out in immense detail names that people dates, um, uh, uh, uh, uh, black Legion growth and infiltration throughout Oak, throughout Oakland County in the 1930s. And, uh, so Oakland County is probably the one we know most about. And in that, in that regards,

Speaker 1 ([00:33:07](#)):

You mentioned that the black Legion, um, disciplined Charles pool because of rumors about him beating his wife and that, uh, the other guy was trigger man Dayton, Dean Dean, right. That they came out to him because of some,

Speaker 2 ([00:33:25](#)):

I think he raped his, a stepdaughter. Yeah.

Speaker 1 ([00:33:29](#)):

That, that suggests something about the, uh, inner code within the Legion. Well, exactly. Why, why would they have been in, why would they have been involved or even being interested in those kinds of domestic related affairs?

Speaker 2 ([00:33:43](#)):

Well, you know, I think the client, as well as the black Legion style themselves as protectors of the family, as well as, you know, 100% Americanism. And so there's a certain sense of what is proper, believe it or not, despite all this hate-filled talk, you know, they have a sense of propriety and, uh, I guess they're, they seem to be willing to, uh, take it out on some of their own when they seem to cross certain lines. Um, you know, clearly, you know, in any political movement, you're not going to always have the best characters. And so it's hard to, on a basis of a couple of characters, you know, you know, characterize an entire organization. Um, I think the best way to understand an organization is politically, what is it trying to do? Um, but, um, but the question is, why is it, why did they seem to be bothered by what its own members are doing their private lives?

Speaker 2 ([00:34:28](#)):

Yeah. I don't know. Does a communist party worry about such things? I don't know at the time period, maybe the right, uh, know certain elements of the right do and the left doesn't I really don't know. I don't know if I, I never thought about that question. I don't know if you have a theory yourself or no, not ready. Well, the black Legion operated under a number of names. Um, if you look at the FBI documents that we have available on their website, in fact, they're 900 pages of FBI documents. You can look at on the black Legion. Uh, and most of them are about why the FBI specifically, why Jaeger Hoover would not authorize an investigation of the, of the black Legion, uh, before the pool murder. Alright. And then why after it was discovered why he wouldn't authorize investigation, it wasn't in his mind.

Speaker 2 ([00:35:12](#)):

It wasn't, there was no federal crime committed. This was all local, you know? Um, but, uh, the FBI Reaper reports refer to in Ohio in 1935, 1936 two, it may refer to a black Legion, but it refers to a number of other different organizations. The bullet club has one name that comes to mind. The bullet club was a name that had operated under. And so it operated on a number of different names. So it's like secrecy compounded by secrecy is the black legend still going out, as far as I know, as far as I know it, um, they scampered and a folded, you know, there wasn't much of an organization to collapse. It was just a collection of individuals who seem to be linked together in a, in a common enterprise. Um, there is this, uh, I seen a newspaper clipping from like 1938, suggesting that the black Legion was being reactivated in well McComb County.

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

And a Butterfinger was saying, at that point, we've learned our lesson. We're not gonna do anything like we did before. None of this, none of this violence, none of this murder. And, you know, we're just not going to go down that road again, F finger by the way, was never investigated. Uh, there was a request that he'd be brought back to Michigan for, uh, for trial or to be, uh, you know, for investigation. But, uh, he was never turned over and, um, a person you would think would be a perfect candidate for let's go after the top. You know, we got a murder going on in Michigan. We have this conspiracy, why don't you bring in a finger? The one guy they didn't get was eyes. Oh, I should have mentioned this guy's name. Yeah. I love this guy's name. Yeah. The one guy they didn't get was Isaac Peglegs white.

Speaker 2 ([00:36:42](#)):

He was the guy that F finger contacted in 1933. He was a former Klansman. Uh, also been a former Detroit police officer who in the, in, during his service, um, was wounded and lost a leg. So, you know, peg leg white was, is, uh, was his nickname. And, uh, I've seen a photo of him. He looks real gruff, you know, real, real tough looking guy. Um, but he's the main organizer of the black Legion in Detroit, Isaac peg white. And, uh, so even more directly, would he be responsible for what was going on around the pool mortar around the, uh, the murder of others as well. And, um, he, he flees the area and the last I had seen about him was that in late 1936 or 37, he had died in Holland, Pennsylvania. He died outside of the state of Michigan from some illness.

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

And so they never got there hands on him either. So, you know, it's the local guys get it, uh, the, uh, the key org, you know, the key guys, the key organizers, uh, avoid any punishment or any trial, uh, doc shepherd is down in Ohio. He disavows those crazies up there in Michigan. Yeah. Had no connection with them and probably didn't have much of a connection anyways. And yeah. And some of the key people in Michigan who may have been involved, a former governor who is running for Senate police, chiefs, sheriffs, you know, those sort of people, uh, never, um, they're not put on trial. Now. We should note that some people who were involved in Legion were fired from their jobs in, in, in Detroit, as well as an Oakland County. Some of these people lost their jobs because of their connection to the black Legion. A lot of them seem to have been involved with the water department and in Detroit, a lot of them had connections with the water department, a number of municipal agencies in Detroit. It seems like you'd get a black Legionnaire in a certain office or certain of employment in here recruit his fellow mates. And, uh, that seemed to be their, their, their mode of operation.

Speaker 1 ([00:38:41](#)):

You mentioned that they had that they were connected politically and also in law enforcement. Did they ever exert any kind of economic influence?

Speaker 2 ([00:38:50](#)):

Hm. I don't think the black Legion ever exerted any economic influence. Um, you know, we don't know absolutely for sure. How many numbers they involved nowhere near the 70,000 that the client is reputed to have had it its high point in Detroit in the mid twenties. Um, thousands of members, no doubt, no doubt. Thousands of members, uh, in the Detroit area. Um, but they could never undertake, uh, say what the Nazi regime undertook in 1933, a boycott against Jewish shops. They could not do that here because they, they can't act publicly. They can't act openly and that greatly limits their, uh, you know, that kind of economic leverage. So I don't know of any other economic influence that they would have, um, other than a boycott. And they just don't simply have the numbers on their own to make it, to make a real dent on things.

Speaker 1 ([00:39:37](#)):

Any instances of the clan or the black Legion ever cooperating with intent, aside from the fact that they more or less had the same enemies and might've been involved in that they kinda had the same agenda. Did they ever purposely cooperate together? You know,

Speaker 2 ([00:39:53](#)):

The interesting thing is when you read about the, uh, and he studied the Legion and the 1936 37 period, uh, it's almost as if the client doesn't even exist. And so I don't really see much in a way of interaction between the two organization, the remnants of the clan that might still be clan. And this new force, the black Legion, obviously the black Legion is a new force in town. And if you were a Klansman, why not? No. You know, it makes sense to probably join this growing more successful organization. And everybody else seems to be joining the black Legion seems to collapse. And then there are still other right wing elements organizations around in Detroit, in a late thirties into there, into the world war II period as well. Um, and the Legionnaires, the black Legionnaires are still around as individuals. And so I would suspect they would have flowed into some of these other organizations if they decided to join an organization.

Speaker 2 ([00:40:41](#)):

Uh, so as individuals, they, you know, most of them weren't apprehended, um, didn't get in any trouble and were still capable, given their thinking, still capable of joining other organizations. So the right continues, the black Legion may have been crushed, uh, or collapsed really. Um, but, uh, the right wing elements continue, uh, despite its failure, it may have learned a lesson as well. Uh, the limits of, uh, organizations like the Legion to me, I can think of a number of cases involving justice that justice never occurred, you know, after the hunger, March massacre, uh, on Ford Miller road in 1932. And you see it in the great depression episode one, um, where the communist party there late in the unemployed out to a March on Ford motor company to petition for jobs and they were shot down, you know, four of them, five of them were killed and a bunch of wounded and it's portrayed in the newspapers as a riot.

Speaker 2 ([00:41:33](#)):

Well, you know, it was Ford security with Dearborn police, no investigation, no grand jury investigation. To the extent there was one, it was just simply whitewashed, you know, um, there's no real going after and throughout the thirties, there were these disappearances, these murders that never really get

investigated. The police simply aren't interested in the disappearance of labor organizers, you know, it's good for them, right? And then, uh, then when the black Legion unfolds, uh, it's a very, it's a very narrow mission to go after murderers, the, the crime of murder and to go after those who involve in it. But the broader political investigation never occurred, which is what an investigation would have involved. Uh, there might not have been a political crime, uh, but certainly Congress could simply have investigated a political organization, I guess. Um, but, um, there was something more and clearly after the 1943 race, right, there is an investigation of the race riot of 1943, but it's conducted by law enforcement.

Speaker 2 ([00:42:33](#)):

And of course they have no interest at all in explaining what the role that Detroit police department played during the riot. You know, uh, the fact that everybody they killed happened to be black, you know, you know, explain that. Um, um, and so Mr. Investigations in Detroit history, I think you could write a little book on it. And in fact you might, Oh, I don't know. I have students, I have students do papers on these investigate the aftermath of the 43 race riot investigate the, the grand jury investigation after the 32 hunger March massacre. And tell me that story, what, what didn't occur, you know, justice seems rather important to you. Yeah, yeah. It's um, what's the politics of justice, I guess, is what it is. The politics of law enforcement, the politics of how laws get made laws get enforced, um, investigations occur, investigation, investigatory committees get assembled put together.

Speaker 2 ([00:43:28](#)):

I mean, after the 43 race, right, the investigation committee is made up, it's called the governor's committee. It's made up of the Wayne County prosecutor, the chief of police of Detroit. It's made up of the attorney general in Michigan and the chief of police for the state of Michigan. None of these have in their job description, something that would incline them to very seriously investigate the role of law enforcement, certainly Detroit police department and its behavior during the, during the race riot. They just don't simply have that perspective. And so that's been a criticism of that investigation ever since. And essentially what they did is they blamed the NAACP for its militancy, uh, demanding rights for having stirred up African Americans and therefore having precipitated the race. Right. That's essential. The governor committed the governor's committee, a report.

Speaker 1 ([00:44:14](#)):

You, you mentioned also though that, um, the, the 1943 race riot there was that there was a tendency maybe on that occasion and other occasions, different instances, or maybe racial conflict or conflict of any type for people to, for people to automatically blame it on the Klan.

Speaker 2 ([00:44:32](#)):

Right. Well, I think the Klan is a terribly convenient for us to have, I mean, the Klan is, there is no doubt about it and, uh, they have an agenda and they're trying to expand, they're trying to get, you know, more powerful. Uh, but the fact of the matter there is also, uh, a white working class population, well, white industrialist population for that matter, that isn't, uh, necessarily terribly enlightened, uh, despite, despite the fact that they're upper-class and apparently better educated. Um, but these people see the world in racial terms, um, and religious terms and cultural terms, and they fight on those on those battle lines. And, uh, the problem is for elements of the left, certainly the communist party is to romanticize the, uh, romanticize the working class, um, and to see, uh, when white workers do violent things, when they're involved in race rights to somehow attribute it, not so much to the innate good potential the working class, because obviously they, you know, they're off to the revolution.

Speaker 2 ([00:45:28](#)):

Um, but really because they're being led astray by more diabolical elements, like the Klan or the Legion. And so it's very convenient to have them around if you're on the left in order to more noble the working class, uh, to explain their behavior by blaming it on others it's. So the Klan understood and serves that function of being the outside agitator that well industrialists blame when the workers strike and are militant, well, it must be due the Bolsheviks or labor organizers when in fact it might not be, in fact, it's due to the industrialists on policies. Uh, and so there's simply a tendency for people not to look at people for who they are and what they're doing and not excuse their behavior. I mean, there's a tendency to excuse people's behavior by blaming on other, on other forces

Speaker 1 ([00:46:13](#)):

In the 1943 riot in Detroit would have been an instance,

Speaker 2 ([00:46:16](#)):

Well, the 43 race riot, I don't think had anything to do with the Klan or Klan propaganda. Uh, it's fueled by well w basic racism that is there to begin with, but also the tremendous tensions, um, and pressures that are in Detroit during the war. There's a massive influx of people during the war for war industry. And there is no place to house. These people, uh, facilities are at a minimum. And, um, it's just simply a very tense, a very intense environment. In addition, you throw in a police department that is brutal, um, and you have the makings you have, I mean, we just simply know there are the makings of a race riot, you know, you know, American history has had race riots going back decades before that of Detroit in 1943. So it had all the elements there that could cause it, and you simply had a political leadership that, um, Detroit, I guess, that simply wasn't aware of, or really paying close enough attention to what was under their feet, uh, yet before the 43 race riot, right there, there were newspaper articles out and about referring to the tensions in Detroit, because there had been race riots before this one in late June in Detroit, just to begin on the, I think the first day of summer is what it was.

Speaker 2 ([00:47:24](#)):

So in a sense, it's like a, there there's like a, there's like a tidal wave of these things crossing the land, and Detroit has all the makings of it. And, uh, it erupted here.

Speaker 1 ([00:47:35](#)):

So, and what I'm going to ask, I is gonna probably cover as a speculation, but in an environment like that, why do you think it seems like it would have been ideal recruitment time or territory for organizations like the Klan? Why would that, why did that not occur?

Speaker 2 ([00:47:55](#)):

No, actually I think that the Klan and other right wing organizations are in Detroit, there are, they are organizing. Uh, but I don't think you can explain something as explosive as this race riot, um, on, um, on those organizations or their propaganda. I just, I just don't think that's enough. Um, simple, simple as that, I guess, you know, either you believe it or you don't, you know, I, just, to me, it's just too easy of an answer to blame it on the Klan or any right-wing organization or the I'm forgetting his name. Who's the great orator at that period. The religious guy, M Smith, not Coughlin, uh, Smith, the Pratt, he's a Protestant, um, came out of Louisiana. Um, God

Speaker 1 ([00:48:39](#)):

At Louisiana back in the 1940s,

Speaker 2 ([00:48:42](#)):

It comes down to late thirties, early forties comes here and he sets up shop, um, something, something there's like initial Smith. I forgot his name. Um, well, he's another one of these guys, you know, great speaker. You have Coughlin of course, as a Catholic and that's well, going back to the black Legion, one of the things that's really interesting is the fact that the right wing never really could coalesce in Detroit in the late thirties. So you have the black Legion representing this Protestant force, and then you have in Detroit, this great order in a, in a, in a person, a father Charles Coughlin up in Royal Oak, um, a mass following extremely anticommunist, uh, by the late thirties antisemitic and has a huge following. And it would seem to be a natural combination to have the black Legion forces and the cog forces joined together, but it's Catholic and Protestant.

Speaker 2 ([00:49:37](#)):

They can't, uh, the Catholics would wouldn't have been accepted. And in the minds of the Legion, these guys are enemies. And so, uh, I guess it's good that they didn't, but it's a it's, I guess it's one of the problems on the left, but you also see it on the right, the inability of organizations to coalesce and to, you know, rally behind a, a single leader, a single organization. There's so much competition, turf jealousy, and you see that in all the right wing movements, you saw it after the first world war in Germany, you know, and then the buddy Nazi movement had to compete with a multitude of other organizations. And then finally was able to emerge as sort of the dominant one

Speaker 1 ([00:50:15](#)):

In the immediate post world war two environment. You have American serviceman service personnel returning to the States. There's a big push to deem to demobilize. President Truman will eventually the military in 1947, 48. There's a lot of changes as the country's going through. You have a huge influx of black people who are still here in the North end and Detroit, does that have an impact on Klan activity, expansion of the clan? What can you comment upon that period? Well, you've reached my limits

Speaker 2 ([00:50:49](#)):

Cause I, you know, I, you know, I, I know enough about, um, for example, white resistance to, uh, African Americans in, in fighting neighborhood battles in Detroit, after world war II, um, competing with African Americans for jobs, um, it, you know, African Detroit after world war two, where there's nothing known about that, but what role the clan is playing in any of this in fueling these neighborhood organizations, these, uh, neighborhood associations of homeowners, of white homeowners. Um, I really haven't seen anything on that. I think white homeowners are capable of doing this on their own. They know what they want, and they don't need the client to come in and tell them how to do it. You know, they're, they're capable of doing it. And, um, would they be inspired by the clan? I guess they could be, but, uh, I think they're capable on at a very basic level of doing this on their own.

Speaker 2 ([00:51:38](#)):

Um, and so it may be different other parts of the country. Um, but I don't quite see it as an explanation or any of the reading or the research I've seen about Detroit after world war II, that the client is playing this, you know, a significant role. It may be there. Maybe you need to talk to somebody else who may be, who may, you know, be able to comment more about it. You know, I was thinking of, they was thinking my grandfather's story about this was the, what was it? I don't know what year it occurred. It



might've been in the sixties, fifties, sixties. I don't know. My grandfather was a carpenter and, uh, a friend of his invited him to, um, this was out of McComb County, invited him to a, um, a meeting summit one evening. And so he went there and he heard this guy speak about, Oh, how, I don't know, maybe it said something about how Eisenhower was a communist and it was this, all this stuff.

Speaker 2 ([00:52:24](#)):

And it's turned out to bend the John. I think it was a John Birch society is what it was, but that's how he was alerted to the meeting. A friend from work, took him there and he just, he didn't want to be there ever again, you know, and it made me think when he told me that story, well, you're lucky it wasn't the black Legion, because you probably would not have gotten out of that meeting, you know, without, you know, coming out with a, with a, with a uniform, you know, in a silver bullet, you know, signifying your membership in the organization.

Speaker 1 ([00:52:48](#)):

You've mentioned that the black Legion started in Ohio, but it did eventually migrate to Michigan in the head representation or a presence in Indiana, right. Where those three mid Western States, the primary region or region of activity, or did it eventually get to the East coast, West coast and down South as well?

Speaker 2 ([00:53:06](#)):

No, my understanding, my understanding is that the black Legion is pretty much confined to, uh, the States of Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana. Um, simple as that, there are any number of right wing fascistic organizations in the United States in the 1930s, uh, the silver shirts, one of them, um, Pelli was the organizer of that organization. Uh, as far as I know, he doesn't have any connections with the black Legion. Um, I've, haven't run across any connections between the two organizations. Uh, you have any number of right wing groups that seem to be going off in different directions. And, um, maybe we were fortunate that they weren't able to get their act together to coalesce behind, you know, one common force, one common program, one common leader, um, some seem to be very much so, uh, imitative of, uh, of, of Nazi-ism, uh, there's the German, there's the ballooned movement, you know, in the United States, among German Americans, a very strong pop, you know, the very strong first there's a lot of German Americans.

Speaker 2 ([00:54:06](#)):

So they're very strong force and very consciously, uh, imitating Nazi-ism, uh, the silver shirts. I think the mere fact that called themselves a silver shirts suggests a very close connection modeling themselves after the black shirts of Italy or the, uh, the Brown shirts of Germany, the Nazi movement. Now the fact that our organization I'm talking about the black Legion refers to themselves as a Legion, suggest maybe another tradition, another right-wing tradition coming out of nativism, uh, as opposed to a more, well, this, this, this force immersion of the twenties and thirties based on European models of fascism. And Nazi-ism, this seems to be a couple of different directions that the right is following in the 1920s and thirties. And I think you see the difference between the silver shirts and Allegion in that respect

Speaker 1 ([00:54:51](#)):

As a, um, well, what's one of my last questions. There's always been this perception that the KU Klux Klan or violent organizations like that an organization is committed to violence such as the Klan would be pretty much a, a creation or a, a creature of the South. Yeah. And yet you've mentioned that the, that

the black Legion had most of his representation in Ohio, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and then obviously there's a Klan presence in, in the North. Yeah. I'm glad you mentioned this. Any, any, any commentary about how people have traditionally perceived that, uh, that, that regional attachment of KKK and associated organizations as being only in the South, in other words, how's the North have managed to get away this long without having the truth be unveiled? Yeah.

Speaker 2 ([00:55:44](#)):

Well, the, the stereotype most of us have about the clan is that, well, of course it begins in the South after the civil war, and it's a Southern organization that has strong rural roots, but it's not even in the South after the civil war, it's not entirely a rural phenomenon. There's, there's an urban base to it as well. Um, and, um, there's a revival of a clan just before world war one continues after world war one when it reaches its height. And there still is a perception that that was essentially a Southern organization. It does have Southern roots, but it's also very strong in the American Midwest and the North, uh, Indiana being the base of operations. Um, it also had strength in Northern, and I think that's the thing that people really haven't appreciated. Uh, cities like Chicago, Indianapolis, uh, Detroit, very strong 70,000 members probably at its height in 1924, 1925, nearly electing the mayor of Detroit in 1924.

Speaker 2 ([00:56:38](#)):

So I think this has been a great miss P uh, misconception that people have had about the clan that somehow it's purely a Southern phenomenon or that if it arrives in the North, well, what explains it? Well, you blame it on southerners. Again, it's very helpful to have other people. You can blame these things on some other force, some outside force, they brought it with them. Well, the fact of the matter is that it wouldn't have grown. Had there not been some recipe. If there hadn't been a base to receive it in Detroit and that basis, isn't just a Southern base. It isn't just southerners in Detroit, we're welcoming it, or are rallying to the clan. There are many others because what sustains the clan in Detroit in the 1920s is anti Catholicism. It isn't so much the fight against African Americans. You know, there's enough, there's some of that going on, but I mean, the real problem Protestants are facing it. It's the Protestants, the Protestant Catholic white that's essentially to me, the way I see it, the main, the main fight that's going on. And so, uh, and that's, that's in Detroit soil, you know, that isn't something that's transplanted from the South.

Speaker 1 ([00:57:40](#)):

Why, why, um, Indiana, why is Indiana such a, such a Indiana is such a focal point. Um, wow.

Speaker 2 ([00:57:51](#)):

I think actually I'm not sure why Indiana becomes a real strong base for it. Um, except for, I don't know, I can't really answer that one question is why it doesn't become stronger in Michigan. I mean, we have in Detroit, the fourth largest city in the United States in 1940, all the tensions you would have in a growing city in that period, you know, change and dislocation, you would seem to find there. And you would think that Detroit and Southeast Michigan would have offered tremendous opportunities for the clan. And yet, uh, Michigan certainly, you know, Detroit has a sizeable presence of the Klan. And in fact, it's one of the largest clients cities in terms of clan membership, very close to Indianapolis, but as a whole Michigan, doesn't quite have the presence of the client as you do in Indiana and in Ohio. And it seems that probably the clan organizers didn't see a lot of potential in Michigan. And for some reasons, strategically decided to invest most of their energies in Ohio and Indiana, maybe because it was closer

to the South closer to the Southern border. Maybe they thought it was an easier Pickens and in those States, and it would be in Michigan too far, too far North, perhaps it I'm just, I'm just hypothesizing.

Speaker 1 ([00:58:59](#)):

Did the black legionary of Michigan was being and having a lot of potential. Um,

Speaker 2 ([00:59:05](#)):

I think the black Legion with F finger in Ohio saw in, uh, he basically went up [inaudible] before there was an [inaudible]. I mean, it was just straight North. I think there was just in his mind, a natural progression to, uh, to Detroit. Now the D in the black Legion really get going in Detroit till 1933. So it takes the crisis of the great depression and really the depression has at its height in 1933. Uh, it, it takes that moment for him to decide, to decide to, to spread it to Michigan and to strike up connections with a former Klansman in Oakland County who come down to see him and then go back to Oakland County and start up the black Legion or some version of it. Might've been called the bullet clubbers under some other name. And he also makes connections with, uh, Isaac peg white, this former Detroit cop, uh, who helps to spread the organization in Detroit.

Speaker 1 ([00:59:56](#)):

Do you have any kind of, any kind of observations about the, the existence of either of these organizations today in Michigan in Detroit, their influence? Oh,

Speaker 2 ([01:00:10](#)):

I don't know. You know, I don't hear much about, well, the black Legion is gone, so it's simply a historical phenomenon now, but it's part of a long tradition of, uh, of, um, well vigilante right-wing action organization in, in Michigan and Detroit history, going back to the 19th century, since the know nothing movement and the nativism of that period on, and these organizations have one name or the enough or another are still with us today. Um, more interest has been spoken lightly and things like the Michigan militia and the militia movements more generally, uh, the Christian identity movement, the Christian right movements that are there national as well as in Michigan, um, Michigan has had in recent times, of course, a Klan presence, uh, how a Michigan is, the name is a city that comes to mind for most people. When you think of the clan, uh, which was the base of operation for Robert Miles, uh, Klansmen were responsible for the, the arts and against, uh, school buses in Pontiac in the early 1970s when integrated one integrated, uh, busing, uh, was, was ordered. And it was discovered that miles and his people responsible for that. So the, uh, the client has had a presence in, uh, in recent times in Michigan as well.