

Ku Klux

The Ku Klux Klan, often abbreviated KKK and informally known as the Klan, is the name of three distinct past and present far-right organizations in the United States, which have advocated extremist reactionary currents such as white supremacy, white nationalism, and anti-immigration, historically expressed through terrorism. Since the mid-20th century, the KKK has also been anti-communist. The current manifestation is splintered into several chapters and is classified as a hate group.

The first Klan was founded in 1865 in Pulaski, Tennessee, as a terrorist organization by veterans of the Confederate Army. They named it after the Greek word 'kuklos', which means circle. The name means "Circle of Brothers."

Although there was no organizational structure above the local level, similar groups arose across the South, adopting the name and methods. Klan groups spread throughout the South as an insurgent movement during the Reconstruction era in the United States. As a secret vigilante group, the Klan targeted freedmen and their allies; it sought to restore white supremacy by threats and violence, including murder, against black and white Republicans. In 1870 and 1871, the federal government passed the Force Acts, which were used to prosecute Klan crimes. Prosecution of Klan crimes and enforcement of the Force Acts suppressed Klan activity. In 1874 and later, however, newly organized and openly active paramilitary organizations, such as the White League and the Red Shirts, started a fresh round of violence aimed at suppressing blacks' voting and running Republicans out of office. These contributed to segregationist white Democrats regaining political power in all the Southern states by 1877.

Second KKK

In 1915, the second Klan was founded and remained a small organization in Georgia. Starting in 1921, it adopted a modern business system of recruiting (which paid most of the initiation fee and costume charges to the organizers) and grew rapidly nationwide at a time of prosperity. Reflecting the social tensions of urban industrialization and vastly increased immigration, its membership grew most rapidly in cities, and spread to the Midwest and West out of the South. The second KKK preached Americanism and purification of politics, with strong racism, anti-Catholicism, anti-Communism, nativism, and anti-Semitism. Some local groups took part in attacks on private houses, and carried out other violent activities. The violent episodes were generally in the South.

The second Klan was a formal fraternal organization, with a national and state structure. At its peak



in



Klan

the mid-1920s, the organization claimed to include about 15% of the nation's eligible population, approximately 4–5 million men. Internal divisions, criminal behavior by leaders, and external opposition brought about a collapse in membership, which had dropped to about 30,000 by 1930. It finally faded away in the 1940s.

Third KKK

The "Ku Klux Klan" name was used by many independent local groups opposing the Civil Rights Movement and desegregation, especially in the 1950s and 1960s. During this period, they often forged alliances with Southern police departments, as in Birmingham, Alabama; or with governor's offices, as with George Wallace of Alabama. Several members of KKK groups were convicted of murder in the deaths of civil rights workers and children in the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham.

Today, a large majority of sources consider the Klan to be a "subversive or terrorist organization". In 1999, the city council of Charleston, South Carolina passed a resolution declaring the Klan to be a terrorist organization. A similar effort was made in 2004 when a professor at the University of Louisville began a campaign to have the Klan declared a terrorist organization so it could be banned from campus. In April 1997, FBI agents arrested four members of the True Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in Dallas for conspiracy to commit robbery and to blow up a natural gas processing plant.

The modern KKK is not one organization; rather it is composed of small independent chapters across the U.S. The formation of independent chapters has made KKK groups more difficult to infiltrate, and researchers find it hard to estimate their numbers. Estimates are that about two-thirds of KKK members are concentrated in the Southern United States, with another third situated primarily in the lower Midwest. KKK members have stepped up recruitment in recent years, but the organization grows slowly, with membership estimated at 5,000–8,000 across 179 chapters. These recent membership campaigns have been based on issues such as people's anxieties about illegal immigration, urban crime and same-sex marriage. Many KKK groups have formed strong alliances with other white supremacist groups, such as neo-Nazis. Some KKK groups have become increasingly "Nazified", adopting the look and emblems of white power skinheads.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has provided legal support to various factions of the KKK in defense of their First Amendment rights. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ku_Klux_Klan]

