

Hate Groups and the Ku Klux Klan

Teacher Introduction:

A “hate group” is an organized group or movement that, based upon their official statements, principles, or actions, advocates hate, hostility, and violence towards an entire class of people. This hate is typically based upon people’s immutable traits, such as their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity. When a hate group commits a criminal offense against a person or property as a result of their bias against these traits, it is considered a hate crime.

It is important to understand and acknowledge that hate groups have existed in the United States for centuries, creating a pattern of historical bigotry that has gained mainstream attention more than once. One of the oldest and most famous hate groups in U.S. history is the Ku Klux Klan or the KKK. Founded in 1865 in Pulaski, Tennessee by former Confederate veterans as a social club, the Ku Klux Klan began to wage underground campaigns of intimidation and violence against newly freed African Americans and any whites who would help them attain political and economic equality, especially through the Republican Party’s Reconstruction-era policies. Examples of their most prominent targets were black legislators elected during the first few years of reconstruction, white republicans (who were derided as “carpetbaggers” and “scalawags”) and black institutions such as schools and churches (which were symbols of black autonomy). By 1867, other local Ku Klux Klan branches had arisen and met in an organized convention to establish what they called an “Invisible Empire of the South,” (History.com). Their first leader was Nathan Bedford Forrest, a former Confederate general, and he was given the title of “Imperial wizard”. Other outlandish titles (such as exalted cyclops, kleagle, or terrors), their white sheet costumes, violent “night rides”, and the notion that the group comprised of an “invisible empire” created a mysterious nature that only added to the Klan’s popularity and intimidation. Lynchings, tar-and-featherings, rapes, burning crosses, and other violent attacks on those challenging white supremacy also became a hallmark of the Klan.

By the 1870’s, the KKK had branches in nearly every southern state. As the years past, their power and influence varied in strength, but was most prominent in three peak time periods in history: post the Civil War, the 1920’s, and the Civil Rights era. Before, during, between, and after these time periods, the Ku Klux Klan was hard to suppress, and creating opposition against the Klan was no easy task. Local law enforcement officials in regions where KKK activity took place were either a part of the Klan themselves or declined to take action against it. Even those who did take action and arrested accused Klansmen often found it difficult to find witnesses willing to testify against them. Additionally, many leading white citizens in the southern

communities chose not to speak out against the Klan's actions, giving the KKK tacit approval. As the 20th century played out in history, the separate KKK branches often struggled to follow a clear structure or leadership. However, the local klan members who acted on their own did so while continuing to support the common goals of the KKK: defeating Radical Reconstruction and restoring white supremacy in the South.

Since the 1970's, the Ku Klux Klan has been weakened through internal conflicts, court cases, public backlash, and endless splits or infiltrations. It might be easy to imagine that groups such as the KKK have been pushed down and diminished in society due to progress and greater education, but the truth of the matter is that many hate groups are still just as active as they were a century earlier. Some of these groups include the KKK, neo-Nazis, white nationalist, black nationalists, racist skinhead, anti-muslim, neo-confederate, and anti-LGBTQ. While some present day factions have maintained an openly racist and hateful approach, others have tried to enter the mainstream, cloaking their racism as "civil rights for whites." Though it is imperative to demand the halt of openly prejudiced groups, such as the hater in a white sheet, it is just as important to stop the wolf in sheep's clothing. Hate breeds more hate and to end this harsh cycle, kindness and tolerance must be embraced.

Teacher's Note on This Lesson:

This lesson hopes to encourage students to look at these groups through the standards of the period and to understand the evolution in hate group activity that took place during the late 19th century, 20th century, and into today.

Social Studies Georgia Standards of Excellence:

Grade 5: **SS5H1** Describe how life changed in America at the Turn of the Century.

Grades 6-8: **L6-8RH1** Cite Specific Textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Grades 6-8: **L6-8RH2** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

Grades 6-8: **L6-8RH8** Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g. loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts.)

Grades 6-8: **L6-8RH8** Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

Grade 8: **SS8H6** Analyze the impact of Reconstruction on Georgia.

Grade 8: **SS8H7** Evaluate key political, social, and economic changes that occurred in Georgia during the New South Era.

United States History: **SSUSH10** Identify legal, political, and social dimensions of Reconstruction.

United States History: **SSUSH13** Evaluate efforts to reform American society and politics in the Progressive Era.

Lesson Objectives:

- Understand the decisions and social beliefs that led to the creation of certain hate groups, the Ku Klux Klan in particular.
- Analyze the three key time periods in which the KKK was on the rise and why that was the case.
- Understand that hate groups have not gone away and are still an unfortunate reality of modern society.
- Interpret period photos from the late 19th-early 20th century.
- Analyze primary and secondary documents that portray American life during the late 19th-early 20th century.

Lesson Duration: One class period or one hour. *This can be modified to fit your class period length.*

Lesson:

1. Ask you class introductory questions to get them thinking?
 - a. What is a hate group?
 - b. Who has heard of the Ku Klux Klan?
 - i. What do you know about them?
 - ii. Are they still around?
 - iii. Do you know of any other hate groups?
2. Summarize the information related in the Teacher Introduction above. Have them make connections between the introduction information and certain exhibit items, explaining how they relate to each other.
3. Split your class into three groups. Assign each group to one of the Ku Klux Klan peak time periods for them to explore.
 - a. Post Civil-War Period
 - b. 1920's Period
 - c. Civil Rights/Mid-20th Century Period

Once the students have analyzed and understand their respective time periods, they should present their findings through the text and pictures provided to the class. *Keep in mind that the materials in this lesson include the use of period terms that are not in good taste today. The terms “colored,” and “negro” were used by both races when referring to African Americans during this time period. Please let your students know that though the meanings of these terms have changed today and are not appropriate to use in a normal setting, they are left in this lesson for historical accuracy.*

4. Once the students understand the peaks in KKK activity, show them the example of the KKK at the Georgia’s Old Governor’s Mansion in the 1940’s. Explain how hateful actions did not stop when these peaks ended, but continue to happen before, between, and after these peaks.
 5. Discuss the current hate group reality in the United States today with the example you can find online. There are unfortunately many to choose from.
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Group A: Post Civil War

The Civil War had come to an end, the Emancipation Proclamation was passed, Reconstruction was beginning, and great fear began to arise in the southern white community in the post Civil War era. Afraid of how their dominant and biased lifestyle would change, some southern whites banded together and formed the Ku Klux Klan. The Ku Klux Klan was a hate group that employed intimidation and committed violent raids, destruction of property, assault and murder against the newly freed African Americans and any whites who would help them attain political and economic equality, especially through the Republican Party's Reconstruction-era policies.

By the 1870's, as violence continued to increase, republican state governments in the South turned to Congress for help, which resulted in the passage of the three Enforcement Acts, the strongest of which was the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871. The Ku Klux Klan Act gave the president, who was Ulysses S. Grant at the time, the power to declare martial law and impose heavy penalties against anyone or any group who tried to deny others equal protection or privileges under the law, specifically the 14th Amendment. It also gave the president the ability to use military forces to accomplish such penalties, and some even believed he could deprive citizens of the right to hold office or serve on juries.

Though Congress passed the legislation to curb Klan terrorism and end white supremacy acts, the overarching federal power actually ended up spurring more fear than success. This expansion of federal authority—which Ulysses S. Grant promptly used in 1871 to crush Klan activity in South Carolina and other areas of the South—outraged Democrats and even alarmed many Republicans. As a result, from the 1870's onward, white supremacy started to gradually reassert its hold on the South as support for Reconstruction dwindled and Democratic victories and state legislature increased. By the end of 1876, the entire South was under Democratic control once again.

Ku Klux Klan presence and activity in the South continued on for years, but it began to decline as the United States entered the 20th century and Jim Crow Law took its hold on society. Jim Crow laws were any state or local statutes that enforced or legalized racial segregation. These segregation practices affected every section of daily life, and became so intense in certain areas, it was not uncommon to see signs posted at city or town limits warning African Americans that they were not welcome there, effectively legalizing the goals of terrorist groups like the KKK.

Group A: Pictures and Letters

- 1: "Two members of the Ku Klux Klan in their disguises."
- 2: Interview with Sarah Ann Ross Pringle

3: A letter to Hon. Charles Sumner, with “statements” of outrages upon freedmen in Georgia, and an account of my expulsion from Andersonville, Ga., by the Ku-Klux Klan. By Rev. H. W. Pierson ...

4: Ku Klux Klan Threat Letter

A1: “Two members of the Ku Klux Klan in their disguises.”



This image appeared in the newspaper Harper’s Weekly on Dec. 19th, 1868, and it demonstrates an early example of the white hooded attire that has become a prominent symbol of the hate group. The guns represent the violence they could, and often did, partake in against African Americans during this time period.

A2: Interview with Sarah Ann Ross Pringle, (White Pioneer) Marlin, Texas

“When we came to Texas following the close of the war, the state was going / thro' the reconstruction period. The state was under military rule and Pease was Governor. Congress passed a law that every white man in the South must take an oath whether he had held any state or Federal office before the war and if later he had aided the cause of the Confederacy. Those who had done these things were disqualified as voters in the election's. This naturally barred most of the leading white citizens of the state. This gave the negro the right to vote and hold office. So [as?] you know the effect was [to?] [place?] the government in the hand of what we called the “carpetbaggers” [white?] men from the North and the freed negroes.

“I am telling you just what I remember, when we had to go to town during this time we [never?] went without some of our men with us, the negroes were [stationed?] at all the cross roads and bridges when there was any thing of importance taking place. If they spoke or [?] said insulting things to us we went our way and ignored them, but dared [not?] let our men whip them. Finally it got so bad when E.J. Davis was governor that the KuKlux-Klan was organized. It was told by the carpet baggers that it was to intimidate the negroes and take away their voting privilege.

“But I can tell you this that it certainly did help to make it safer for the white women. When a negro had been insulting they soon learned that he was to give an account to the Klan. It is also true that they had their meetings in secret mostly in secluded places, and they discussed the things that were unjust and that the Klan only , could right by their 5 acts of righting these wrongs. I never knew of the Klan doing unjust things until long after the reconstruction times, when unprincipled people hid behind the name of the Klan. I do know that the way was made much better for us after the Klan began to operate. It is a well known matter of historical record that the rule of Governor E.J. Davis was unjust and he became very unpopular.

“In the campaign of 1873 when Richard Coke of Waco ran against Davis we had some real exciting times. I remember when my brothers went to Marlin to vote. The white men from all over the voting box were instructed to come armed and to vote, if necessary, at the point of the gun's. The Judge of the election was a white man he calls the “carpetbagger Judge”, he had been ' lectioneering to the negroes all up and down the Brazos bottom and they came in droves on election day.

“The white men also came in droves and if any of them came unarmed they were furnished something to sh shoot with and were told if they were refuse the privilege of voting, to commence shooting. Some man decided to try shooting to scare the negroes off and so he started shooting, I think, on the Court House lawn. When the negroes heard this they piled into their wagons and buggies and left town. Then the white men went ahead and had their vote. I

remember that we were so uneasy about my brothers when they did not return that night, we were afraid there had been some trouble, but when day break came they returned and said they had to stay to celebrate the victory at the polls.

Miss Pringle was a white woman who remembered the Ku Klux Klan as those who protect white women from African American men - a racist belief that was unfounded. This letter, while portraying the side of the Klan story that is supportive, also provides evidence of the violence and intimidation that the Klan took against African Americans to limit their rights and advancement in society. In an attempt to swing the vote in the direction the white men wanted, they came armed to the polls and “Some men decided to try shooting to scare the negroes off.” The threat is clear, and speaks to the hateful actions of the Ku Klux Klan from early on in its history and during this peak time period.

A3: LAWLESSNESS IN GEORGIA. Washington, D. C., March 15, 1870.

My Dear Sir: It would not become me to express an opinion upon any of the legal questions involved in the Georgia bill now before the Senate, but I respectfully call your attention to the following “statements” of facts. I certainly am not surprised that Honorable gentlemen [???] whom I greatly esteem, should express their belief that the outrages committed upon the Freedmen and Union men in Georgia have been greatly exaggerated in the statements that have been presented to Congress and the country. I know that to persons and communities not intimately acquainted with the state of society, and the civilization developed by the institution of slavery, they seem absolutely incredible. Allow me to say, from my personal knowledge, and profoundly conscious of my responsibility to God and to history, that the statements that have been given to the public in regard to outrages in Georgia come far short of the real facts in the case. Permit me to add that I went to Andersonville, Ga, to labor as a pastor and teacher of the Freedmen, without pay, as I had labored during the war in the service of the Christian Commission; that I had nothing at all to do with the political affairs of the State; that I did not know, and, so far as I am aware, I did not see or speak to any man who held a civil office in the State, except the magistrate at Andersonville; that a few days after my arrival there I performed the first religious 4 services, and participated in the first public honors that were ever rendered to the 13,716 “brave boys” who sleep there, by decorating the cemetery with procession, prayer, and solemn hymns to God, as described in Appendix A.

My time and labors were sacredly given to the Freedmen. In addition to the usual Sabbath services I visited them in their cabins around the stockades, and in the vicinity of the cemetery, reading the Bible to them, and talking and praying with them. It was in the prosecution of these labors that I saw and heard more of sufferings and horrible outrages inflicted upon the Freedmen than I saw and heard of as inflicted upon slaves in any five years of constant horseback travel in the South before the war, when I visited thousands of plantations as agent of the American Tract society, the American Bible Society, and as President of Cumberland College, Princeton, Kentucky. As illustrations of the sufferings of these oppressed, outraged people, and of their utter helplessness and want of protection from the State or Federal courts, I give a few of the “statements” that I wrote down from their own lips. I know these men, and have entire confidence in their “statements.”

STATEMENT OF GEORGE SMITH.

George Smith now resides five miles from Ellaville, in Schley county, Georgia. He says:

“Before the election of Grant, large bodies of men were riding about the country in the night for more than a month. They and their horses were covered with large white sheets, so that you

could not tell them or their horses. They gave out word that they would whip every Radical in the country that intended to vote for Grant, and did whip all they could get hold of. They sent word to me that I was one of the leaders of the Grant club, and they would whip me. I saw them pass my house one night, and I should think there were thirty or forty of them. They looked in the night like Jersey wagons. I supposed they were after me, and I took my blanket and gun and ran to the woods and lay out all night, and a good many other nights. Nearly all the Radicals in the neighborhood lay in the woods every night for two weeks before election. The Kuklux would go to the houses of all that belonged to the Grant club, call them to the door, throw a blanket over them and carry them off and whip them, and try and make them promise to vote for Seymour and Blair. The night I saw them they went to the house of Mr. Henry Davis and ordered him out. He refused to come out and they tore down both of his doors. He fired at them and escaped. I heard a good many shots fired at him. He lay out about a week in the woods, and then slipped back in the night and got his family and moved off. He had bought a place and paid \$250 on it; but he could not get a deed, and he has gone off and left it. They then went to the house of Tom Pitman and Jonas Swanson, called them to the door, threw blankets over their heads, carried them off and whipped them tremendously. They told them that they were damned Radicals and leaders of the Grant club, and that they would whip every one that voted for Grant, and would not give any work to any but Democrats.

Bob Wiggins, a preacher, was whipped all most to death because they said he was preaching Radical doctrines to the colored 9 people. It was supposed for a good many days that he would die, but he finally recovered.

I attended the election at Ellaville. None of the Radicals that had been Ku-Kluxed tried to vote; but a good many Radicals did try to vote, but the judges made them all show their tickets, and if they were for Grant they would not let them vote I saw how they treated others and did not try to put my vote in. I went early in the morning, and the white and colored Democrats voted until about noon, when I went home.

Andersonville, February 7, 1869.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD REESE.

Richard Reese, President of the Grant club of Schley county, confirms the statements of George Smith in regard to the treatment of the Radicals in Schley county. He says:

“When the Ku-Klux commenced riding about the country I was at Macon attending the colored convention. When I got home some white men, Democrats, who were friends of mine, told me that the Ku-Klux would certainly kill me if I staid at home at nights. I took my blanket and hid in the woods. I have never had a gun or pistol in my life. I lay in the woods every night until after election. Day times I came home and worked my crop. One day, as I was in my yard, Mr. Jack Childers, a Democrat, came along from Americus, and said to me, ‘Where is old Dick, the

damned old Radical?’ I said, ‘Here I am.’ He said, ‘Well, you will be certain to be killed.’ I said, ‘Well, if they kill me they will kill a good old Radical, and I haven't got much longer to live noway.’ He then started to get out of his buggy and come at me, but the man with him held him in and drove on. I had the Grant tickets in my house, and went to the Bumphead precinct, but there were more Radicals than Democrats there, and they would not open the polls at all. We staid there till twelve o'clock, then started for Ellaville. The white and colored Democrats were voting, but they would not let a Radical vote until about two o'clock, when Charley Hudson got upon a stump and said no man could vote unless he had paid his taxes He then got down, and he and nearly every white man there went around to the colored voters and told them that if they would vote the Democratic ticket their tax was paid. I offered my ticket, and they said my tax was not paid, and if I put in my ticket they would put me in jail, and send me to the penitentiary. I had already agreed 10 with a white man, who owed me \$50, to pay my tax, and he said he had done it, but when I fonnd him, and he found what was the matter, he said he had not paid it They demanded \$4.50 poll-tax, and I paid it and put in my vote. They were determined that I should not vote, and I was determined that I would vote for Grant any way, as I was the president of the club They told me if I would vote for Seymour and Blair I need not pay my taxes. After I got my vote in I took all my Grant tickets and scattered them among the crowd, and told my club they need not try to vote, it would do no good. Grant would be elected without Schley county, and we all went home.

“Last spring we built a school-house, and hired a white lady to teach our school for several months. We held meetings and schools every Sunday. Friday night, February 5, 1869, our school-house was burned up.

“Last night we had a meeting to see what we could do about building another house. We have a deed of one-and-a-half acres of land, but there is no timber on it, and the owners of the land around have put up a paper forbidding us to cut a stick on their's, and see how tight they have got us. We want the Government or somebody to help us build We want some law to protect us. We know that we could burn their churches and schools, but it is against the law to burn houses, and we don't want to break the law or harm anybody. We want the law to protect us, and all we want is to live under the law.”

Andersonville, Feb. 7, 1869.

This letter provides the other side of the Ku Klux Klan story, which is one of resentment and frustration towards the hate group instead of support. It is clear from the tone and content of this piece that the events which took place in this document are only part of the harsh reality that African Americans faced with the Ku Klux Klan.

Notice

To Teems, Davie, you must be a good boy and quit hunting on Sunday and shooting your gun in the night. You keep people from sleeping. I live in a big rock above the Ford of the Creek. I went from Lincoln County to County during the war. I was killed at Manassus in 1861. I am here now as a Locust in the day time and at night I am a Ku Klux sent here to look after you and all the rest of the radicals and make you know your place. I have got my eye on you every day. I am at the Ford of the Creek every evening from sundown till dark. I want to meet you there next Saturday tell Platt Madison we have a Box for him and you. We nail all radicals up in Boxes and send them away to K K K there is 200 000 dead men returned to this country to make you and all the rest of the radicals good Democrats and vote right with the white people you have got it to do or leave this country no nigger is safe unless he joins the Democratic Club then you will be safe and have friends. Take heed and govern yourself accordingly and give all your friends timely warning.

Ku, Ku, Klux, Klan

A4: Transcription

To Jeems Davie. you must be a good boy. and. quit. hunting on Sunday and shooting your gun in the night. you keep people from sleeping. I live in a big rock above the Ford of the [f] Creek. I went from Lincoln County [] County during the war [.] i was killed at Manassus in 1861. i am here now as a Locust in the day Time and at night [.] i am a Ku Klux sent here to look after you and all the rest of the radicals and make you know your place. i have got my eye on you every day, i am at the Ford of the Creek every evening From Sundown till dark. I want to meet you there next Saturday tell platt Madison we have, a Box. For him and you. We nail all radicals up in Boxes and send them away to KKK there is 200000 ded men returned to this country to make you and all the rest of the radicals good Democrats and vote right with the white people you have got it to do or leave this country [.] No nigger is safe unless he Joins the Democratic Club then you will be safe and have friends. Take heed and govern yourself accordingly and give all your Friends timely warning.

Ku, Ku, Klux, Klan

This is the point of view of someone on the inside of the Ku Klux Klan, and his threatening words further demonstrate the fear white individuals felt over the idea of African Americans attaining political influence and the overarching power the Klan tried to execute as a response to this fear.

Group B: 1915-1920's

By the early 20th century, Jim Crow segregation laws had permeated legal, political, and social ways of life in the South. These segregation practices continued to separate the races, failing to enforce the “separate, but equal” status they stood upon, but instead giving those of the white race implicit approval of a superior lifestyle. Despite the foothold Jim Crow had in society, in 1915, white Protestant nativists organized a revival of the Ku Klux Klan as a result of two things: their romantic views of the Old South provided from the film *The Birth of a Nation*, and an influx of immigration in the United States.

The Birth of a Nation was a controversial film from 1915 that depicted the Ku Klux Klan as valiant saviors of a post-war South that was ravaged by Northern sympathizers to the African American race, or “carpetbaggers,” and immoral freed blacks. The film showed Radical Republicans urging equality for African Americans, who are represented in the film as dangerous, intellectually inferior, and predators to white women. Despite these complete falsities, the racist narrative was widely accepted during this time period in the South as historical fact, and it was hard to argue with what was on screen since it was also what was taught in schools. The film was even shown in the White House by President Woodrow Wilson, which provided a national endorsement of the film, and led the Klan to align itself with the movie’s success and use it as a recruiting tool.

However, this second generation of the Klan was not only anti-black but also took a stand against Roman Catholics, Jews, and others they considered “foreigners”. This additional hatred was fueled by growing hostility towards the surge in immigration that America experienced in the early 20th century. The Ku Klux Klan made a burning cross its symbol and held rallies, parades and marches around the country. One of these parades even took place in Washington D.C., with a larger showing than any other organized meet before. At its peak in the 1920s, Klan membership exceeded 4 million people nationwide.

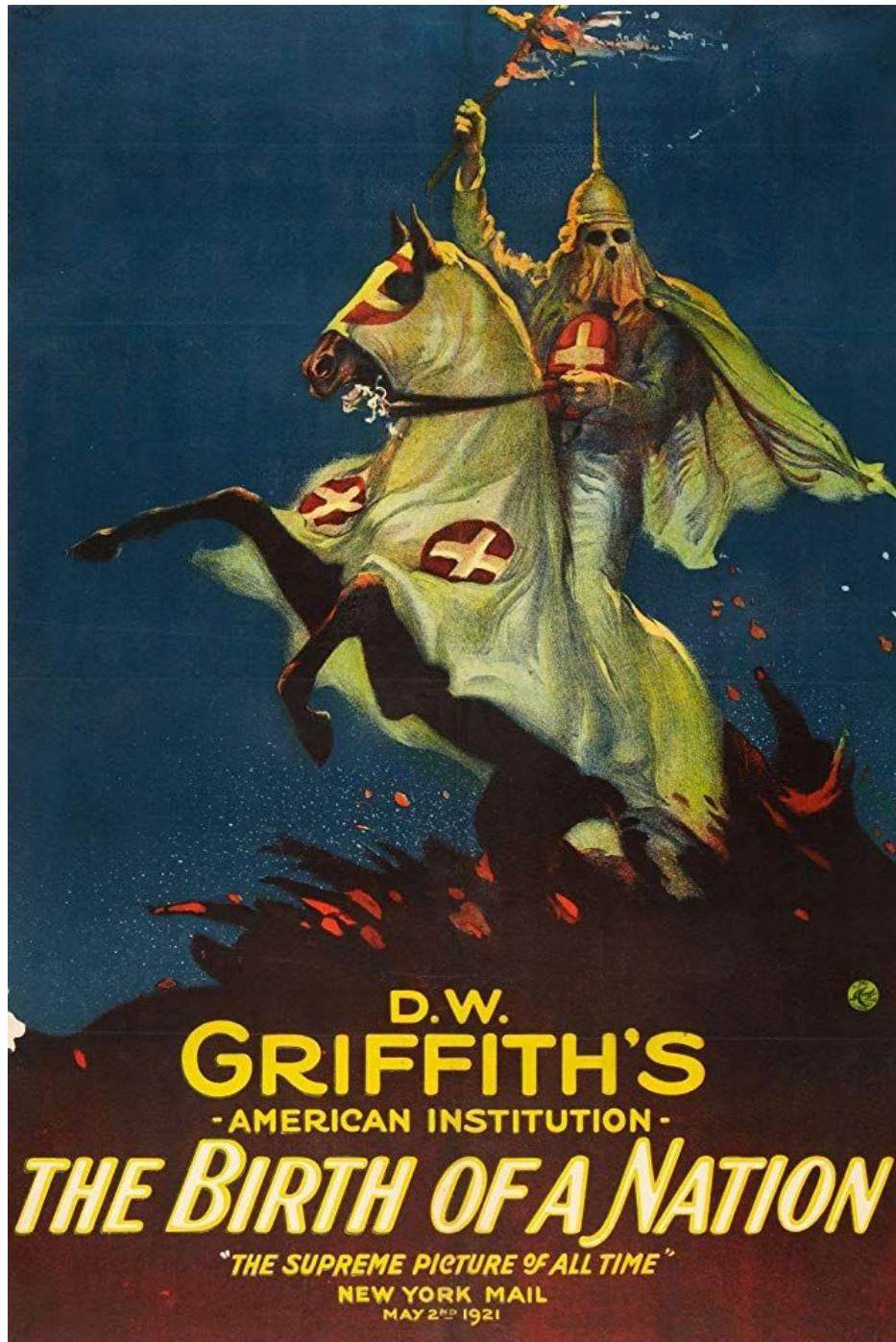
The poverty of the The Great Depression in the 1930s deepened resentment towards African Americans from the KKK, but it also depleted the Klan’s membership ranks, and the organization temporarily disbanded in 1944. However, they never fully disappeared, and individual members continued to practice intimidation and hatred practices hidden in the mainstream.

Group B: Pictures and Letters

1: The Birth of a Nation Movie Poster

- 2: "Ku Klux Klan parade, 9/13/26" and "Ku Klux Klan marching down Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C"
- 3: Letter from Charles D. Levy to President Calvin Coolidge Requesting Protection for Jews from the Ku Klux Klan
- 4: Letter from Arthur James Mann to President Warren G. Harding Asking Him Not to Disband the Ku Klux Klan
- 5: Letter from W. E. Ryan to the Honorable Calvin Coolidge Calling Attention to the Violence Performed by the Ku Klux Klan

B1: The Birth of a Nation Movie Poster



This is also in your traveling exhibit. The Birth of a Nation movie poster gives a visual representation of not only the attire and symbols of the hate group, but it also their power and influence. This Klan member has brought his horse in the air in a show of intimidation, as if he is about to storm the battle field. Many Klan members did hold rallies

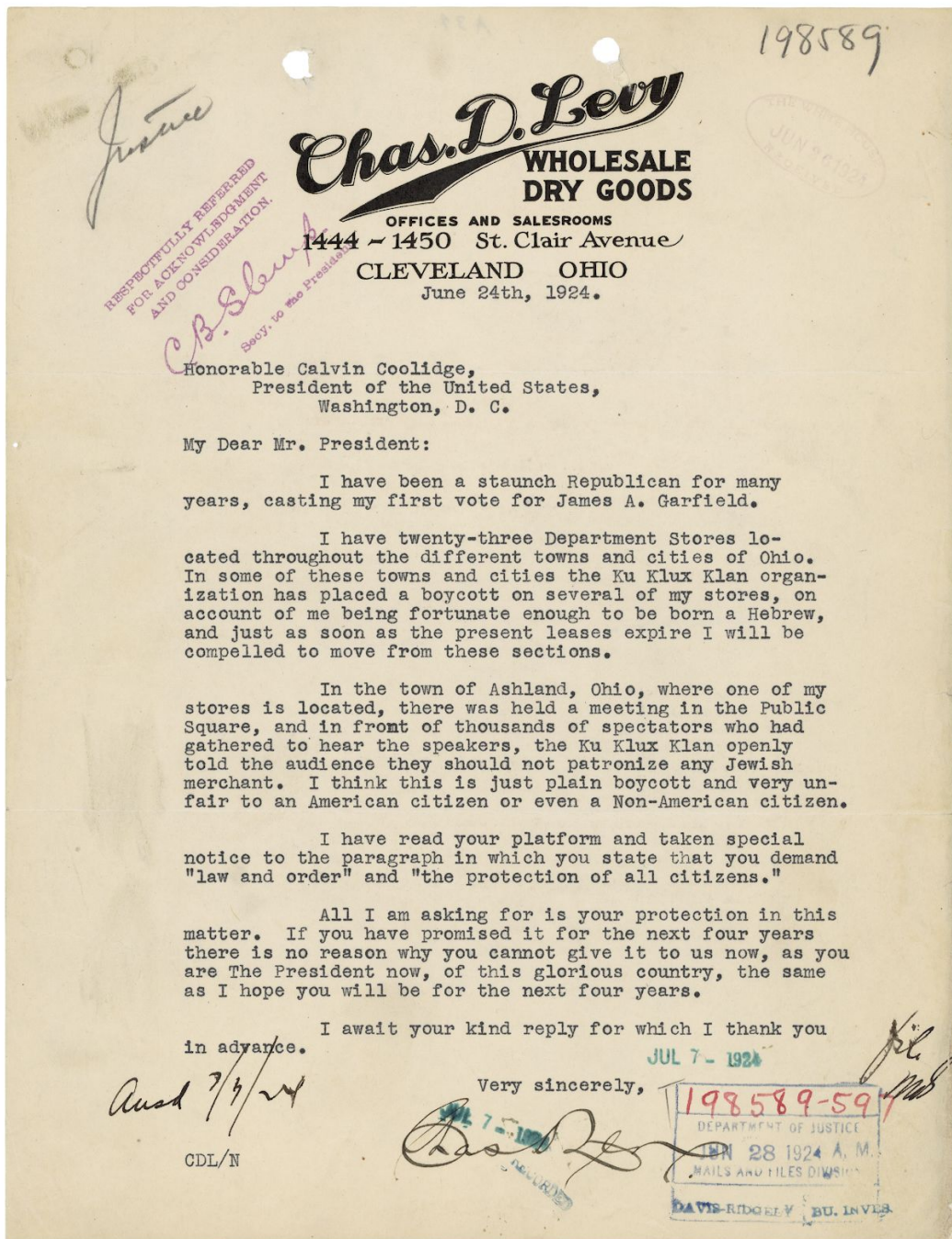
and raids in the dark of night to bring fears into those they were against. This movie poster only helped spread this fear, and the movie itself became a symbol of Klan influence.

B2: “Ku Klux Klan parade, 9/13/26” and “Ku Klux Klan marching down Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C”



Depicting the rally in Washington D.C., one can see the massive growth in number that the Ku Klux Klan gained in the 1920's. This rally was not only accepted in Washington, but was watched by hundreds of bystanders, as if they were waiting for candy to be tossed out by the Klan instead of worrying about the violent acts of hate that the group committed. This show and location also demonstrates the overarching influence, power, and acceptance the KKK received from white America in the 1920's.

B3: Letter from Charles D. Levy to President Calvin Coolidge Requesting Protection for Jews from the Ku Klux Klan



This letter from Charles D. Levy asks the president of the United States for protection from the Ku Klux Klan. Mr. Levy is a white man, but he is Jewish, and the letter demonstrates how the Klan's focus for hateful acts has expanded beyond just African Americans. Additionally, Mr. Levy is asked for help as an American citizen, which highlights how the Klan conversation has become about more than just race in the 1920's.

B3: Transcription

Honorable Calvin Coolidge,
President of the United State,
Washington, D.C.

My Dear Mr. President:

I have been a staunch Republican for many years, casting my first vote for James A. Garfield.

I have twenty-three Department Stores located throughout the different towns and cities of Ohio. In some of these towns and cities the Ku Klux Klan organization has placed a boycott on several of my stores, on account of me being fortunate enough to be born a Hebrew, and just as soon as the present leases expire I will be compelled to move from these sections.

In the town of Ashland, Ohio, where one of my stores is located, there was held a meeting in the Public Square, and in front of thousands of spectators who had gathered to hear the speakers, the Ku Klux Klan openly told the audience they should not patronize any Jewish merchant. I think this is just plain boycott and very unfair to an American citizen or even a Non-American citizen.

I have read your platform and taken special notice to the paragraph in which you state that you demand "law and order" and "the protection of all citizens."

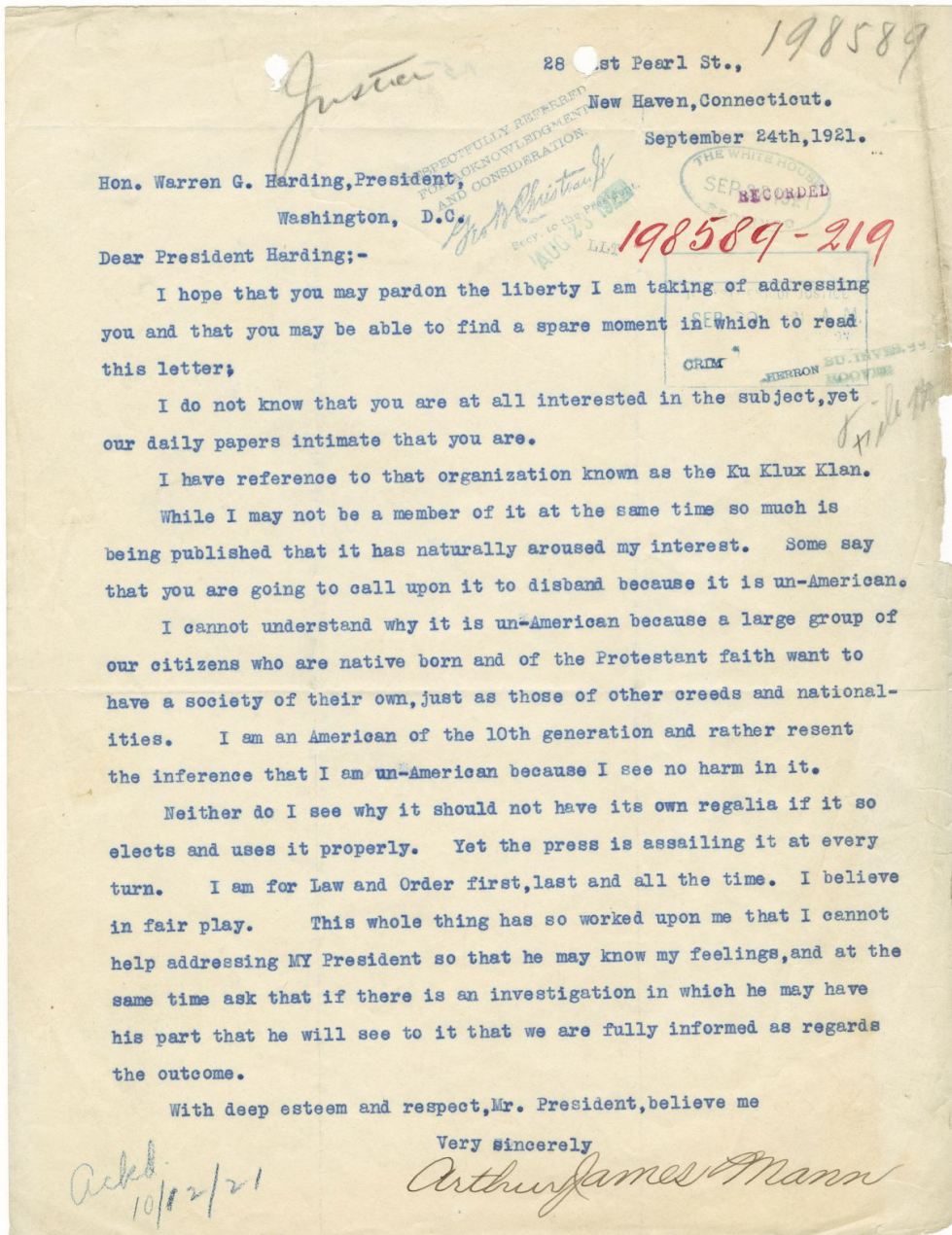
All I am asking for is your protection in this matter. If you have promised it for the next four years there is no reason why you cannot give it to us now, as you are The President now, of this glorious country, the same as I hope you will be for the next four years.

I await your kind reply for which I thank you in advance.

Very Sincerely,

CDL/N

B4: Letter from Arthur James Mann to President Warren G. Harding Asking Him Not to Disband the Ku Klux Klan



Though the previous letter demanded protection as an American citizen, Mr. Mann feels that the KKK are acting as true Americans because the Klan are, in Mr. Mann's eyes, "native born" and individuals of a christian faith. He feels they have every right to do what they are doing, which is very different from Mr. Levy.

B4: Transcription

28 []st Pearl St.,
New Haven Connecticut.
September 24th, 1921.

Hon. Warren G. Harding, President
Washington, D.C.

Dear President Harding: -

I hope that you may pardon the liberty I am taking of addressing you and that you may be able to find a spare moment in which to read this letter;

I do not know that you are at all interested in the subject, yet our daily papers intimate that you are.

I have reference to that organization known as the Ku Klux Klan.

While I may not be a member of it at the same time so much is being published that it has naturally aroused my interest. Some say that you are going to call upon it to disband because it is un-American.

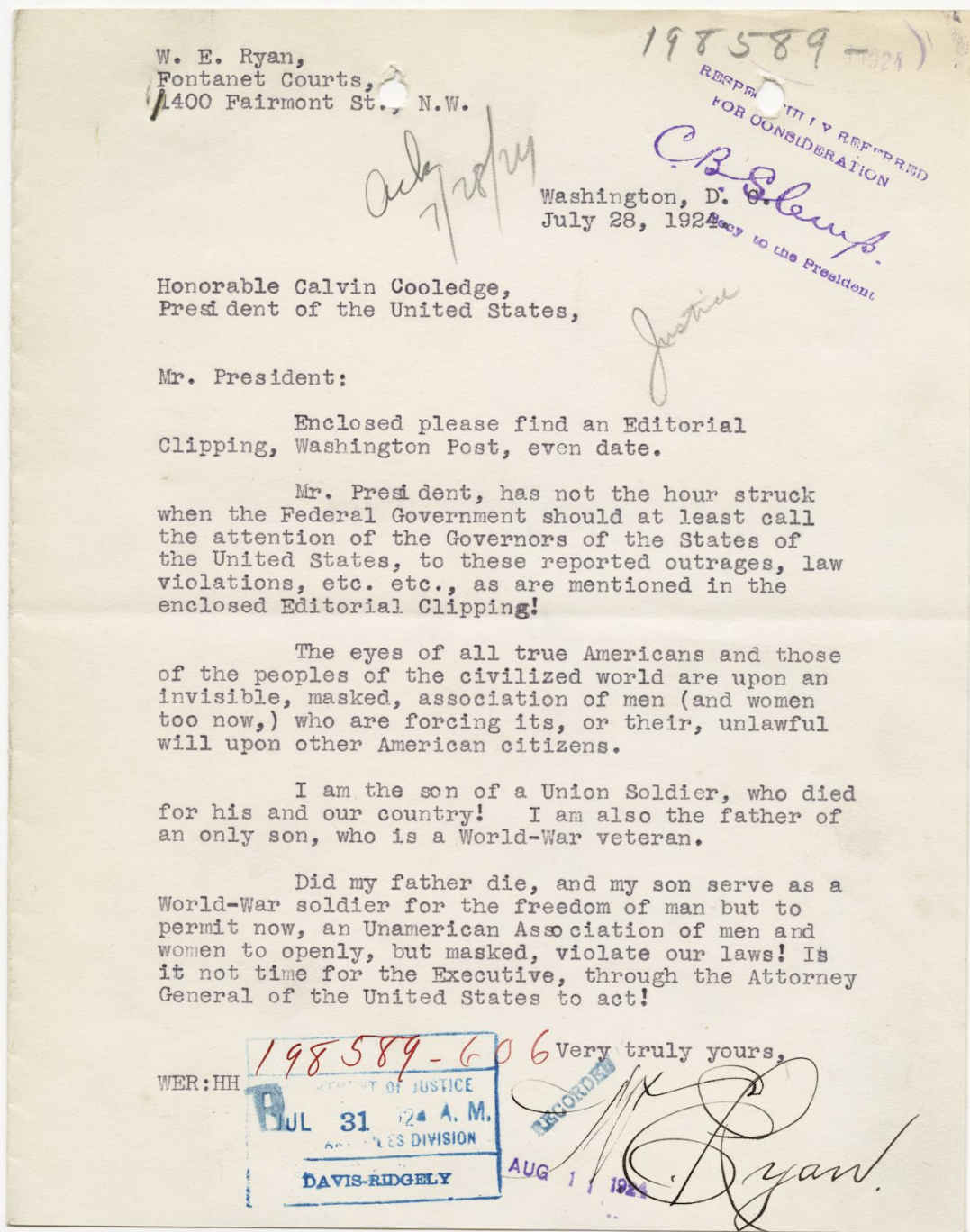
I cannot understand why it is un-American because a large group of our citizens who are natibe born and of the Protestant faith want to have a society of their own, just as those of other creeds and nationalities. I am an American of the 10th generation and rather resent the inference that I am un-American because I see no harm in it.

Neither do I see why it should not have its own regalia if it so elects and uses it properly. Yet the press is assailing it at every turn. I am for Law and Order first, last and all the time. I believe in fair play. This whole thing has so worked upon me that I cannot help addressing MY President so that he may know my feelings, and at the same time ask that if there is an investigation in which he may have his part that he will see to it that we are fully informed as regards the outcome.

With deep esteem and respect, Mr. President, believe me.

Very sincerely

B5: Letter from W. E. Ryan to the Honorable Calvin Coolidge Calling Attention to the Violence Performed by the Ku Klux Klan



Mr. Ryan feels, unlike Mr. Mann but similar to Mr. Levy, that these KKK actions are un-American. He expresses how his father and his son did not fight for a nation that would allow these hateful acts to occur and not protect its citizens from said acts. This letter, along with the others, demonstrates the contesting opinions surrounding the Ku Klux Klan

during this period, and highlights just how far reaching the Klan's influence has stretched at this point in history. Their actions affected so many different groups of people all under the “American” identity.

B5: Transcription

W.E. Ryan,
Fontanet Courts
1400 Fairmont St., N.W.

Washington, D.
July 28, 1924

Honorable Calvin Coolidge,
President of the United States,

Mr. President:

Enclosed please find an Editorial Clipping, Washington Post, even date.

Mr. President, has not the hour struck when the Federal Government should at least call the attention of the Governors of the States of the United States, to these reported outrages, law violations, etc. etc., as are mentioned in the enclosed Editorial Clipping.

The eyes of all true Americans and those of the peoples of the civilized world are upon an invisible, masked, association of men (and women too now,) who are forcing its, or their, unlawful will upon other American citizens.

I am the son of a Union Soldier, who died for his and our country! I am also the father of an only son, who is a World-War veteran.

Did my father die, and my son serve as a World-War soldier for the freedom of man but to permit now, an Unamerican Association of men and women to openly, but masked, violate our laws! Is it not time for the Executive, through the Attorney General of the United States to act!

Very truly yours,

WER:HH

Group C: Civil Rights Era

As the United States progressed towards the mid-20th century, African Americans slowly began to gain certain equal rights under the law. In 1948, President Truman issued an executive order that ended segregation in the Armed Forces, and in 1954, the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision effectively ended legal racial segregation in public schools. Despite the fact that many of these acts did not come into effect immediately and were continually fought against in the South, these limited but progressive moments in history started to create the same fear that sprouted from the Emancipation Proclamation. Just as the Ku Klux Klan came to life in the 1860's as a result of this fear, a rebirth arose a century later as well.

The civil rights movement of the 1960s saw a surge of local Klan activity across the South, including bombings, beatings and shootings of African American and white activists. One example of such Klan activity is the attacks against the Freedom Riders. When the south failed to enforce the Supreme Court decision of *Boynton v. Virginia* (1960), which ruled that segregation on public buses was unconstitutional, supporters of the Civil Rights Movement began the Freedom Rides. The Freedom Riders were Civil Rights activists who rode interstate buses across the South and often drew national attention as a result of the outrage and violence that often erupted against them. At one point, Greyhound buses were burned in Anniston, Alabama. Later, a Trailways bus carrying Freedom Riders arrived in Birmingham, and a mob of Ku Klux Klan members were waiting. They surrounded the bus, slashed its tires, and firebombed it with riders still inside. The riders escaped the bus only to be beaten with baseball bats and other weapons.

Despite the certainty of more violence to come at future destinations, the Freedom Riders continued their journey, and the Civil Rights Movement continued to make ground in U.S. history. The nation began to feel outrage towards the violence, and this outrage helped win support for the Civil Rights cause. In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson delivered a speech publicly condemning the Ku Klux Klan and announced the arrest of four Klansmen in connection with the murder of a white female civil rights worker in Alabama. The cases of Klan-related violence became more isolated in the decades to come, though fragmented groups continued to persist under the KKK name and others became aligned with neo-Nazi or other right-wing extremist organizations from the 1970s onward.

Group C: Pictures and Letters

1: Archival photos from the May 14, 1961, attacks in Anniston on a bus carrying Freedom Riders.

2: Archival photos from the May 14, 1961, attacks in Anniston on a bus carrying Freedom Riders.

3: Letter from British Embassy Washington to Foreign Office on KKK activities, 7th May 1957

C1: Archival photos from the May 14, 1961, attacks in Anniston on a bus carrying Freedom Riders.



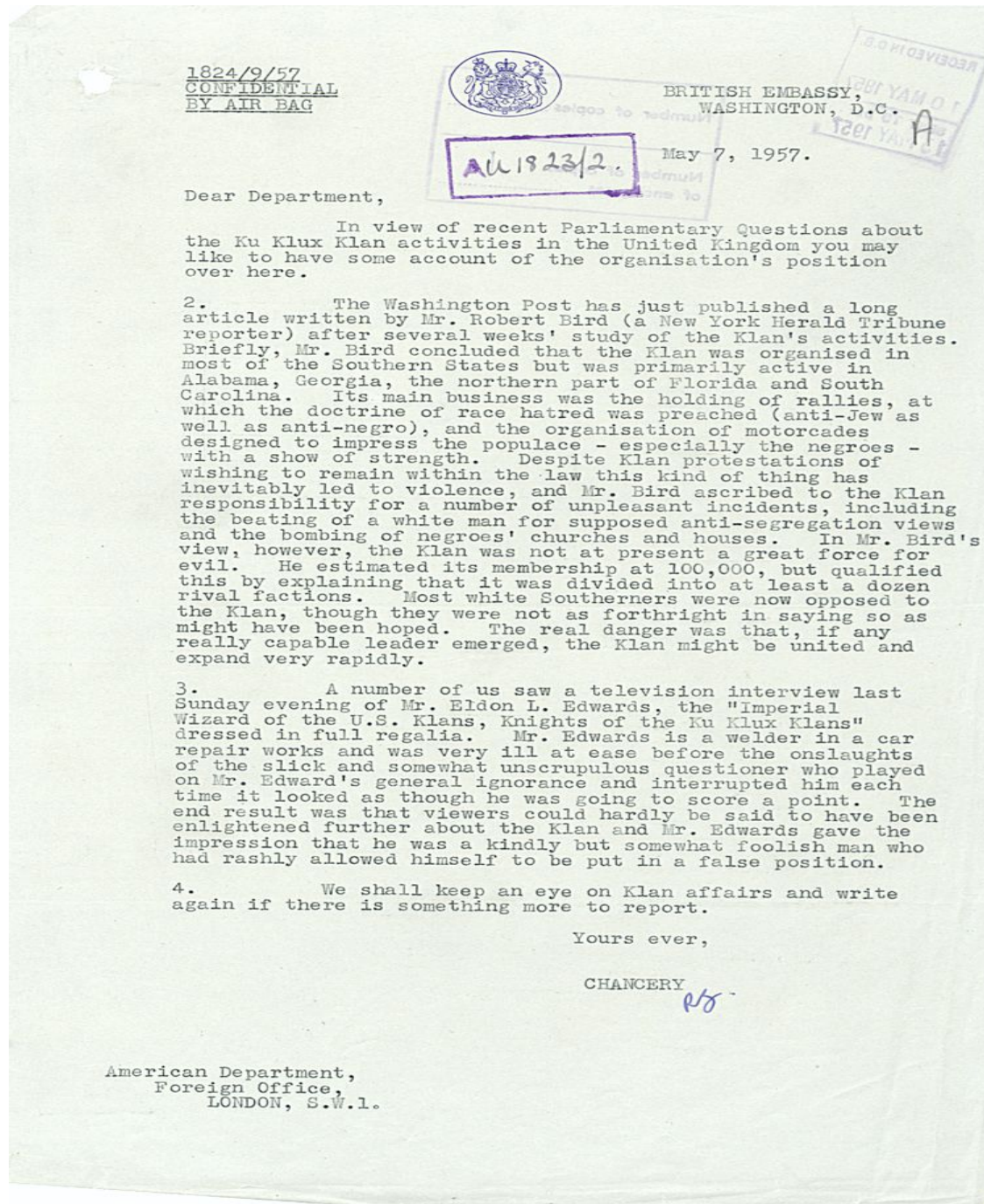
This picture depicts the Ku Klux Klan waiting outside a bus that is holding Freedom Riders in Birmingham, Alabama. The sure number of Klan members exudes intimidation against the riders, and emphasizes the surge in KKK numbers and activity during this time period.

C2: Archival photos from the May 14, 1961, attacks in Anniston on a bus carrying Freedom Riders.



This is a Freedom Riders bus after a firebomb was thrown inside. This carnage, and the possible death that could have occurred as a result of it, speak to the violence, fear, and hatred spread by the Ku Klux Klan to halt Civil Rights progress.

C3: Letter from British Embassy Washington to Foreign Office on KKK activities, 7th May 1957



This letter explains how many began to disagree with the violence of the Klan, but just as before, were too afraid to speak up and stop it. It also notes how KKK beliefs, though depleting, have gone international. This reach is still present today.

C3: Transcription

British Embassy
Washington, D.C.

May 7, 1957

Dear Department,

In view of recent Parliamentary questions about the Ku Klux Klan activities in the United Kingdom you may like to have some account of the organization's position over here.

2. The Washington Post has just published a long article written by Mr. Robert Bird (a New York Herald Tribune reporter) after several weeks' study of the Klan's activities. Briefly, Mr. Bird concluded that the Klan was organized in most of the Southern States but was primarily active in Alabama, Georgia, the northern part of Florida and South Carolina. Its main business was the holding of rallies, at which the doctrine of race hatred was preached (anti-Jew as well as anti-negro), and the organization of motorcades designed to impress the populace - especially the negroes - with a show of strength. Despite Klan protestations of wishing to remain within the law this kind of thing has inevitably led to violence, and Mr. Bird ascribed to the Klan responsibility for a number of unpleasant incidents, including the beating of a white man for supposed anti-segregation views and the bombing of negroes' churches and houses. In Mr. Bird's view, however, the Klan was not at present a great force for evil. He estimated its membership at 100,000, but qualified this by explaining that it was divided into at least a dozen rival factions. Most white Southerners were now opposed to the Klan, though they were not as forthright in saying so as might have been hoped. The real danger was that, if any really capable leader emerged, the Klan might be united and expand very rapidly.

3. A number of us saw a television interview last Sunday evening of Mr. Eldon L. Edwards, the "Imperial Wizard of the U.S. Klans, Knights of the Ku Klux Klans" dressed in full regalia. Mr. Edwards is a welder in a car repair works and was very ill at ease before the onslaughts of the slick and somewhat unscrupulous questioner who played on Mr. Edwards' general ignorance and interrupted him each time it looked as though he was going to score a point. The end result was that viewers could hardly be said to have been enlightened further about the Klan and Mr. Edwards gave the impression that he was a kindly but somewhat foolish man who had rashly allowed himself to be put in a false position.

4. We shall keep an eye on Klan affairs and write again if there is something more to report.

Yours ever,
Chancery

American Department,
Foreign Office,
LONDON, S.W.L.