

Ku Klux Klan Collection (AC83)

Introduction and Content Warning:

The Ku Klux Klan, also referred to as the KKK or the Klan, is an American hate group focusing on racism towards Black and Jewish people. Researchers are advised that the collection contains objects and documents that related directly to, or were produced by, the KKK, and that researchers may experience negative emotions while viewing the objects and documents. View with caution.

Descriptive Summary:

Creator: unknown

Title: Ku Klux Klan Collection

Date Range: 1924-1991

Bulk Dates: 1979-1991

Size: 2.5 linear feet (3 boxes+1 Oversize Folder)

Collection Number: AC83

Donor Information:

Found in Collection

Citation Note:

Ku Klux Klan Collection (AC83), Black Archives of Mid-America, Kansas City, Missouri.

Administrative Information:

Reproduction Restrictions: Unrestricted.

Access Restrictions: Unrestricted.

Language Disclaimer:

Researchers may encounter descriptive language, which often includes verbiage that contains obvious bias, or outdated and stereotypical terminology, and/or content. Contemporary readers and researchers might find this language harmful or offensive.

Historical Sketch:

The Ku Klux Klan, also called the Klan or KKK, is an American hate group. It has gone through three distinct phases of existence. The original Klan was formed shortly after the end of the American Civil War in 1865. The group's chief aim was to prevent Black people from entering politics in any way through intimidation and violence. This first phase of the KKK disappeared after the rise of Jim Crow laws.

The second phase of the Klan came about around 1915, during World War 1. Part of why this rebirth happened was the premiere of the film *The Birth of a Nation*, a film which glorified the KKK. This phase of the KKK initially had large growth, growing to a few million members over several years. The Bureau of Investigation, which would later become the Federal Bureau of Investigation or FBI, tracked the group and assisted with investigations into crimes committed by Klan members. After peaking in membership in 1925, the group slowly dwindled owing to numerous scandals and internal fighting in the organization.

The third phase of the Klan came about in the 1950s and 1960s in response to the Civil Rights Movement. This phase of the Klan used violence as part of its goal, including the infamous Birmingham Church Bombing in 1963. The FBI was sent in to investigate and take down the Klan, which they did over the course of many years.

The Ku Klux Klan is still active today. They also have some ties to neo-Nazi organizations. However, they are not as strong today as they were in the past, due to losing funding sources and training camps for Klan paramilitary operations, as well as splintering groups creating many tiny Klan groups.

Scope and Content Note:**Series 1: Newspaper Publications**

This series contains newspapers and newspaper clippings focused on the Klan. The vast majority of these present the Klan in a negative light. There is also one newspaper produced by the Klan.

Series 2: Correspondence

This series contains correspondence related to discussing the Klan. Some of the correspondence was to Horace M. Peterson III, some was related to news organizations doing research for shows and articles, and some of it was correspondence to governmental workers discussing the Klan.

Series 3: Magazines

This series contains magazines found in the collection. The magazines discuss the Klan as well as different racial issues that people were facing.

Series 4: Miscellaneous Documents

This series contains miscellaneous documents from the collection. It contains books on the Klan, photocopies of reports on national reactions to the Klan, as well as documents from the creation of a show that discussed the Klan.

Series 5: KKK Reports

This series contains reports on the Klan. There are reports on Klan activities from the federal government as well as news organizations.

Series 6: KKK Propaganda

This series contains propaganda produced by the KKK. There is a mixture of anti-Black and antisemitic propaganda, an interview with a head of the Klan, and even applications to join the KKK and/or a neo-Nazi organization.

Series 7: Images

This series contains various images in the collection. Some of these are photographs, while others are political cartoons that discuss the Klan in some way.

Series 8: Audio/Visual

This series contains two objects. One is a beta tape of a series on the Ku Klux Klan. The other is a film reel of a news report from August 13, 1978. This series is contained in its own box.

Series 9: Clothing

This series contains a KKK robe, a KKK hood and a hood cap.

Series 10: Posters

This series contains two posters. One is a charter for a chapter of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. The other is an enlarged photo of a patronage card for the Klan. This series is contained outside of the rest of the collection in the Flat Files.

Collection Inventory**Series 1: Newspaper Publications**

- f. 1 Marches and Protests
- f. 2 Klan Legal Battles
- f. 3 Miscellaneous Newspaper Clippings

Series 2: Correspondence

- f. 4 Correspondence

Series 3: Magazines

- f. 5 Magazines

Series 4: Miscellaneous Documents

- f. 6 Miscellaneous Documents

Series 5: KKK Reports

- f. 7 Reports of Klan History and Status

Series 6: KKK Propaganda

- f. 8 Klan Propaganda

Series 7: Images

- f. 9 Images

Series 8: Audio/Visual

- f. 10 Beta Tape-Ku Klux Klan Series, Black Archives Copy
- f. 11 Film Reel-KCKN-08/13/1978

Series 9: Clothing

- f. 12 KKK Outfit

Series 10: Posters

- f. 13 Posters [OS]

Processed by David Rocha, AmeriCorps VISTA, April 2024. Updated by Laura Darnell, Archivist, July 2024.

Sources:

“KKK Series.” FBI. Last modified May 18, 2016. Accessed April 15, 2024.

<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/kkk-series>.

“Ku Klux Klan.” Southern Poverty Law Center. Accessed April 15, 2024.

<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/ku-klux-klan>.