



Manifestations of White Supremacy in the USA: A Case of the Ku Klux Klan

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ABSTRACT

This research paper carries the overlying objective of exploring Christian identity and the religious foundations of White Supremacy ideology, which promotes violent hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Christian theological principles were employed to explore the religious domain of white supremacy. It was discovered that Christian identity was incorporated as a tool to fuel white supremacy and justify violence against the black plus Jewish community of the United States (US). In accordance with Christian principles, Anglo-Saxon individuals were the lost biblical Israeli tribes and the chosen people of God. On the other hand, Jews were claimed to be the offspring of Satan that employed manipulation for gaining dominance over the world's finances and promoted the destruction of Aryan civilizations. Moreover, it was stated that, amidst the second coming, a war between the children of light (Christians) and darkness (Jews) will institute the Kingdom of Christ. Hence, hatred was fueled against the Jewish community, and justification for violent crimes was undertaken. Further adding on, Christian identity was further employed for the justification of racial segregation. White individuals and Aryans are stated to follow in line with Adam and Eve, while, non-Aryans or black individuals were regarded as children of Eve and the serpent. The Christian school of thought argues that racial mixing was the original sin resulting in the expulsion of the "white man from the Garden of Eden". Henceforth, racial segregation and racism against the black community were justified on religious grounds. The violent manifestations of these narratives were witnessed under the KKK. The hate group induced organized terror against African Americans and Jews on the basis of theology, and their implications are witnessed to this day. American society is still struggling with racism and anti-Semitism, which explains religious rhetoric in militant organizations has lasting implications on the narrative of communities.

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1. Introduction

In the late 1860s, the emergence of organized white supremacist groups was witnessed across the United States. One of the prominent terror hate groups were deemed as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), and its existence is categorized in three distinct eras (W, 2020). The ideological foundations of each era promoted the notion of white nationalism through the manipulation of Christian principles and identity. Actions like terrorism, assault, and murder were employed to purify white supremacy from the external influences of the black community and religious principles that differed from Christianity (Jenkins). Scholars largely agree with the notion that; religious fundamentalism plays a dominant role in the ideological framework of terrorist organizations (Jenkins). Nevertheless, the scholarly perspective is limited to the Islamic world and despite the religious foundation of the KKK, little emphasis is laid on the violent tendency of Christianity across the globe (W, 2020). Henceforth, this research paper

carries the purpose of understanding the religious foundations of white supremacy and the emergence of the violent hate group KKK. This research paper carries the overarching objective of exploring Christian identity and the religious foundations of White Supremacy ideology, which promotes violent hate groups like the KKK.

Literature present on white supremacy explores the social dimensions behind its prevalence, rather than theological. Meaning, white supremacy is regarded as social construct pursuing racism and anti-Semitism. Henceforth, this research paper will explore the religious dimensions of white supremacy, through establishing its profound link with Christian identity. Along these lines, this research paper will aim to answer the following questions:

- What is the role of Christian identity in the promotion of white supremacy?
- How has the KKK manifested white supremacy in the United States of America?

Christian identity was employed as tool to promote the notion of white supremacy across the US, as a result, the black and Jewish community was subject to organized violence and hate crimes.

2. Research Methodology

Numerous methods of research carry the ability to be employed at the topic at hand. Meaning, application of both qualitative and quantitative research can be taken into account. However, based on lack of resources and time constraints primary quantitative research cannot be conducted. Instead, this research paper will utilize qualitative research methods, and document based research and secondary data research will be employed to achieve the research objectives.

3. History and Background

The origins of the KKK can be traced back to the civil rights movement (Jenkins). Where, the US congress imposed a series of laws promoting the rights and citizenship of Black individuals. This included the Enforcement Act and the Colored Vote (Rupert, 2019). Upon Blacks claiming those rights, they were encountered by white supremacist groups like the KKK. It is claimed that the organization was formed in the US state of Tennessee, and entailed former confederate soldiers, members of the Democratic Party and individual's resistant to Congress's plan of reconstruction of the South (Rupert, 2019). The Republican party was deemed to be in majority with respect to Congress, and civil rights were pushed for the black community against the will of the white residents (Rupert, 2019). As a result, violent measures were adopted to limit the freedom of black individuals.

The first wave was categorized by the American civil war and rights for the black community. They were recognized through their colorful robes, masks and hats (Rupert, 2019). The second Klan developed in Georgia in the year 1915 (Rupert, 2019). During the mid 1920's, it flourished in north and south to maintain white supremacy against the Catholic plus Jewish community. They obtained their funds through a designated initiation fees and selling of their white costumes. By employing Christian theology, cross burnings and mass parades were justified against targeted communities (Rupert, 2019). The Klan declined amidst the second half of the 1920's. The contemporary Klan grew subsequent to 1950. Localized groups were initiated under the name of KKK, and strides for opposing the civil rights movement, and Jewish plus Catholic rights were undertaken. The emergence of violence resulted in the KKK being deemed as a hate group by the Anti-Defamation League and Southern Poverty Law Center. The KKK carried traits of being well-organized unit. Their national leader was named the Grand Wizard, and the established local groups were known as Klaverns (Schaller, 2014).

The members were recognized through their white robes, and American, white, protestant and at least 16 years old (Schaller, 2014). The group employed various methods for threatening and intimidating the Black community and Jews. For instance, individuals of the KKK carried violent banners of the streets for the purpose of inciting violence (Schaller, 2014). Adding on, they carried out the action of burning wooden crosses close to the residency of their targets. Fear was utilized to prevent the black community from voting, and actions were carried in the form of lynching. Lynching referred to the violent actions of whipping, mutilation, murder and kidnapping against groups seemingly endangering the American lifestyle (Farivar,

2021). The KKK gained extensive followers by 1920. A reason for the increased support was unemployment. Unemployment was equated to the rising number of immigrants in the US. Furthermore, several black individuals started residing in northern cities subsequent to World War 1 (W, 2020). As a result, the housing and jobs of the white community were challenged. Every wave of the KKK was fueled by hatred for specific communities, and individuals with similar ideologies extended their support.

3.1 White Supremacy and Christian Identity

Hate groups like the KKK were assembled under the ideology of white supremacy, whereby black individuals and Jews were deemed as illegitimate in American territory. Contrary to popular belief, white supremacy is not limited to being a social concept, and Christian identity plays a critical role. The Christian identity movement was introduced by John Wilson (Zeskind, 1987). According to him, the Anglo Saxon nations migrated from Palestine into northern Europe, and were the lost biblical Israeli tribes. This notion regarded Anglo Saxons as the chosen people of God; thereby, presenting as superior beings destined to dominate the world.

White supremacy claimed Jews to be the offspring of Satan, that employed manipulation for gaining dominance over the world's finances and promoted the destruction of Aryan civilizations (Perliger, 2015). Accordingly, the narrative of Jews threatening Christian identity plus beliefs was formulated. Furthermore, a belief of white supremacy revolved around apocalyptic perceptions. Preparation for the second coming is promoted, whereby, the supremacy of the true people of Israel shall be reestablished (Perliger, 2015). Accordingly, true believers are guided to compete with the evil forces, i.e. Jews. A war between the children of light (Christian) and darkness (Jews) will institute the Kingdom of Christ (Perliger, 2015). Moving forward, White supremacy fueled by Christian identity further pursues racial segregation for preserving the ascendancy of the Aryans. This notion is a reflection of the biblical story of Genesis, where Adam is stated to be the first white man, rather than simply the first man (Perliger, 2015). Individuals with less capability were created before Adam. Along these lines, white supremacists have distinguished between individuals in accordance to decadence. Aryans are stated to follow in line to Adam and Eve, while, non-Aryans were regarded as children of Eve and the serpent (Zeskind, 1987). The Christian school of thought argues that, racial mixing was the original sin resulting in the expulsion of the "white man from the Garden of Eden" (Perliger, 2015). Henceforth, racial segregation and racism against the black community was justified on religious grounds. Overall, ethnic and racist attitude are a part of theology, and white supremacy is promoted on the basis on Christian identity.

3.2 Characteristics of the White Supremacy Ideology

The conception of white supremacy presented race identity as being determined on biological grounds. In accordance to that, culture was regarded as a function of the biological race, where the Western civilization of Aryan descent is associated with superiority (W, 2020). Western civilization is associated with a unique cultural legacy unchallenged by the inferior races. Accordingly, black individuals were regarded as the inferior race and the concept of slavery was introduced.

3.3 White Supremacy, KKK and its Manifestations

The narrative of White Supremacy gained political and social discourse through the emergence of hate groups. Being a prominent hate group, the KKK induced violent manifestation of the Christian identity through attacks against the black community and Jews. The targets were placed on these groups, since, Jews were regarded as the offspring's of Satan and racial bias against the black community is justified through the biblical story of Genesis.

The first Klan emerged after the American civil war, whereby slavery of black individuals was abolished (W, 2020). This went against the ideological stance of Christian extremists, since they considered the black community as lesser beings. Accordingly, the KKK was created to reinstitute white supremacy.

3.4 Civil War and the Reconstruction of Amendments

After the Civil War the 13th amendment was undertaken in 1865, that abolished slavery throughout the United States of America (Rupert, 2019). The 14th amendment of 1868

proclaimed all individuals of US as equal citizens regardless of their race (Rupert, 2019). In addition, US citizens could not be deprived of life, liberty, and property by any state without due process of law; and state did not have the capability of denying any citizen "the equal protection of the laws" (Rupert, 2019). Along the same lines, the 15th Amendment of 1870 granted the black community the right to vote, by establishing the right that individuals could be denied to vote due to factors "race, color, or previous condition of servitude" (Schaller, 2014). The Southern White community did not tolerate the sudden emergence of rights for the black community, and the KKK introduced actions to reverse the damage.

3.5 The first Klan

The KKK originated amongst former Confederate officer in the year 1865. It rapidly spread across Southern states in 1867, and gained thousands of followers (Schaller, 2014). A mythology of oppressions of the white community by the hands of blacks was created. Accordingly, organized violence and terrorism was employed to suppress the black community and to deny them of their newly emerged rights. Due to its tactics of violence, the Klan was able to dominate local governments, and were met with little resistance (Schaller, 2014). With the KKK's tactics of black voter repression, white southerners were able to gain control of state governments by the 1870's (Schaller, 2014). As a result, the first Klan saw its decline.

3.6 Resurrecting the Klan

The years between 1870-1920 were met with large and massive immigrants. As a consequence, the foreign born portion of the US population increased by 15% in the year 1910 (Rupert, 2019). The influx was a result of massive immigration of Irish, Italian, and Eastern European individuals. Several of the immigrants also belonged to the Jewish faith, which were the descendants of Satan in accordance to the white supremacy ideology. Hence, massive resentment was witnessed amongst the US populace. The fire was further fueled by the World War I propaganda, whereby the notion of "100% Americanism" was promoted (Rupert, 2019). This rise in patriotism was deemed negative for the immigrant community. This narrative was further projected in the form of media. A movie, Birth was a Nation, was released in the 1915, and it present the KKK as saviors of the South plus defenders of white Christian America (Rupert, 2019).

3.7 Rise of the second Klan

The second Klan was a product of William J. Simmons in 1915 (W, 2020). This time around, the KKK was presented as a Christian fraternal order aiming to generate funds and members. Based on the massive Jewish immigration and free African Americans, the Klan established a narrative of 100% Americanism (W, 2020). Along those lines, an Anti- Jew and Black rhetoric was promoted. The second Klan generated massive success by the 1920's, as it was able to generate approximately 5 million official Klan members (W, 2020). Furthermore, a Klan member from Texas joined the US Senate in the year 1922; as a result, the organization gained political influence (W, 2020). In fact, the supporters of the Klan managed governor positions in 12 states, and dominated the legislators of Ohio and Indiana (W, 2020).

3.8 Decline and Fall of the second Klan

Towards the 1930s, the members of the Klan decreased. This is because, sex scandals, money scandals, corruption charges undermined the leadership of the KKK, and factionalism introduced divides within the organization (Schaller, 2014). This generation of corruption and violence generated bad publicity for the Klan, and led it towards its decline and fall.

3.9 Rise of the third Klan

The rise of the third Klan was associated with de-segregation and Civil Rights Movement in the United States. During the tenure between 1950s and 1960s, Klan groups were generated and they rapidly gained members. Violent methods of "beatings, shootings, and bombings" were incorporated to threaten black individuals and activists fighting for Civil Rights (Schaller, 2014). The hate group was responsible for the 1963 Black Church bombing Birmingham AL. The attack was responsible for the death of four girls, and threatened the black community. Adding on, the Klan murdered Goodman, Chaney, Schwerner, Medgar Evers, MLK, and other individuals fighting for rights of the black community.

3.10 Vietnam War and the Ku Klux Klan

Subsequent to the Vietnam War, the KKK emerged into a White power movement that had access to influence. This concept is evident through the Gallup pool, which demonstrated that the amount of Americans supporting the KKK increased by twice in number amidst the years between 1965 and 1979. In the year 1979, the KKK had approximately 10,000 members and 75,000 supporters. However, the Klan activism was shifted and strides to reduce racist rhetoric were undertaken. The overlying purpose of this was to enter mainstream politics through appearing more reputable. On the contrary, this reduction was only limited to the media, as paramilitary training was provided to Klan members for a race war against the black and Jewish community (Fieldstadt, 2016). As a matter of fact, Klan members seemingly developed close association with neo-Nazi groups such as the Aryan nations and The Order (Fieldstadt, 2016). The consequence of this was that, white power movements were able cooperate and cross-fertilize; thus increasing its influence and implications.

3.11 KKK Violence in the Post-Vietnam Era

The post-Vietnam Era further increased the influence and power of the KKK, as growing American sentiments subsequent to the War promoted an anti-communist, black plus Jewish narrative. The Greensboro massacre of 1979 promoted this notion, where the KKK member were responsible for the murder of 5 individuals associated with the communist sect (Rupert, 2019). The jury of the case cleared the killers, and the KKK was deemed victorious. Lack of action by the state further compelled the Klan members to continue their actions, since there was no wear of consequences (Fieldstadt, 2016). The paramilitary wing of the KKK was also responsible for terrorizing a Vietnamese refugee family in 1980 (Rupert, 2019).

3.12 Contemporary Ku Klux Klan

Decades after the KKK time when the black community and Jews was lynched and tortured by the KKK, the group still prevails and aspires to promote white supremacy on American land. The group remains active in 41 states, and has members ranging from 5000 to 8000 (Fieldstadt, 2016). The KKK members are essentially distributed between local and national organizations. An example of local organizations refers to the Fraternal White Knights in the American state of Tennessee, and the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan are present at the national level.

Contemporary members of the Klan associated themselves with neo-Nazis, thereby promoting white nationalism. The Klan has now adopted means of marches and protests for getting their narrative across platforms (Schaller, 2014). For example, in 2017, 50 members of the KKK marched in the state of Virginia (Farivar, 2021). Through camouflaged techniques the KKK has is aiming to manipulate rhetoric and gain access to media platforms. Decades later the group is still aiming to revive white supremacy and dissent African Americans plus Jews into second class citizens.

4. Implications of the Ku Klux Klan

Implications of the Klan were witnessed across the US with respect the promotion of black and Jewish civil rights. A hostile environment was generated towards both communities, and the impacts are witnessed in the contemporary circumstances as well (Perliger, 2015). The black community is subjugated to police violence and systematic racism (Perliger, 2015). The Klan viewed black individuals as a secondary race due to Christian identity principles. Hence, the violent manifestations were successful in implementing reduced rights for the community. Adding on, with Jews being viewed as descendants of the devil, the Jewish individuals in America experienced anti-Semitism remarks and attacks. According to the Anti-Defamation League, 63% of Jewish Americans encountered Anti-Semitism in the last five years (Farivar, 2021).

5. Conclusion

To sum up everything that has been stated, the late 1860s saw a rise in organized white supremacist groups across the United States. A prominent terror hate group was deemed as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), that promoted white supremacy through the manipulation of Christian principles and identity. The hypothesis stands correct, as Christian identity was incorporated as a tool to fuel white supremacy and justify violence against the black plus Jewish community. In accordance with Christian principles, Anglo-Saxons individuals were the lost biblical Israeli tribes and the chosen people of God. On the other hand, Jews were claimed

to the offspring of Satan, that employed manipulation for gaining dominance over the world's finances and promoted the destruction of Aryan civilizations.

Moreover, it was stated that, amidst the second coming, a war between the children of light (Christian) and darkness (Jews) will institute the Kingdom of Christ. Hence, hatred was fueled against the Jewish community and justification of violent crimes were undertaken. Further adding on, Christian identity was further employed for the justification of racial segregation. White individuals and Aryans are stated to follow in line to Adam and Eve, while, non-Aryans or black individuals were regarded as children of Eve and the serpent. The Christian school of thought argues that, racial mixing was the original sin resulting in the expulsion of the "white man from the Garden of Eden". Henceforth, racial segregation and racism against the black community was justified on religious grounds. The violent manifestations of white supremacy were witnessed under the KKK. The civil rights movements and Jewish immigration fueled white supremacy in the US, and violent actions were undertaken to preserve interests of the Christian white community. The KKK emerged in three distinct eras, and had lasting implications on American society. The organized violence such as, lynching, terrorizing and bombing black and Jewish community generated a narrative of hatred for the communities. As a consequence, racism plus anti-Semitism is prevalent across the United States in the contemporary notion as well. Presenting how, religious rhetoric in militant organizations has lasting implications on the narrative of communities.

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