

**KU KLUX KLAN**

**PART 1**

**FULL SCRIPT**

**10 :00 :02 :00 / CREDITS**

ARTE France  
and  
ROCHE PRODUCTIONS

**10 :00 :06 :00 / COMMENTARY**

The Ku Klux Klan is the oldest terrorist group in the United States.

**10 :00 :11 :00 / SUBTITLES**

*For five thousand years, the white man has been the supreme race. We the knights of the Ku Klux Klan intend to continue.*

**10 :00 :20 :00 / CREDITS**

With the participation of  
FRANCE TELEVISIONS

**10 :00 :24 :00 / COMMENTARY**

It's a secret society of white supremacists that preaches hatred of black people and which has lasted for decades, always managing to reinvent itself.

**10 :00 :33 :00 / CREDITS**

Produced by  
Dominique Tibi

**10 :00 :41 :00 / COMMENTARY**

Its crimes have caused bloodshed in America for over 150 years. 150 years of hatred, racism and horror.

**10 :00 :53 :00 / SUBTITLES**

*And I say segregation now, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever*

**10 :01 :00 :00 / SUBTITLES**

*I don't believe in segregation. I believe in slavery*

**10 :01 :15 :00 / COMMENTARY**

150 years of exclusion, violence and rage. A tale of cruelty whose ghosts still haunt the United States.

**10 :01 :19 :00 / SUBTITLES**

*White power !*

**10 :01 :22 :00 / COMMENTARY**

A tale of cruelty whose ghosts still haunt the United States.

**10 :01 :29 :00 / SUBTITLES**

*White power ! White power !*

**10 :01 :32 :00 / TITLE**

**KU KLUX KLAN**  
**An American story**

**10 :01 :36 :00**

A film by  
David Korn-Brzoza

**10 :01 :40 :00 / SUBTITLES**

*Klansmen ! We're the Ku Klux Klan !*

**10 :01 :44 :00**

**Part one**  
**Birth of an Invisible Empire**

**10 :01 :56 :00 / COMMENTARY**

1865. The United States. The Civil War finally came to an end. After four years of deadly combat and more than 700,000 deaths, the pro-slavery Southern states were defeated by the abolitionist North.

**10 :02 :21 :00 / COMMENTARY**

General Lee surrendered to General Grant at Appamattox. Several months later, slavery was abolished. Nearly four million of the South's nine million inhabitants were enslaved, and at last they were free of their chains.

**10 :02 :46 :00 / COMMENTARY**

For plantation owners, this revolution was unbearable.

**10 :02 :56 :00**

ITW – Elaine FRANTZ

So a shock to their identity because our identity was very much tied up in being masters to being a class of people who are masters to slaves, even if they had not themselves been slave owners;

**10:03:08:00**

ITW – Linda GORDON

Slave owners were of course terrified by the end of slavery. They were terrified economically that they would lose their very cheap labor force. But they were also terrified that African-American people would start to demand the rights of citizenship.

**10:03:30:00 / COMMENTARY**

In 1865, a handful of Confederate veterans of Scottish descent decided to create a secret society in the town of Pulaski, Tennessee.

**10 :03 :46 :00**

ITW – Chris BUCKLEY

It was originally designed to be a fraternal order. It was designed as a joke. It was literally designed for a bunch of guys to have a reason to hang out and drink beer and just take care of each other.

**10 :03 :58 :00**

ITW- Félix HARCOURT

If we were to ask why they created the Klan, they claimed always that it started as a fraternal drinking society.

**10:04:07:00**

ITW- Mark POTOK

They were young men. They were bored. They lived in a small town called Pulaski, Tennessee. And they decided to form a little secret society.

**10 :04 :17 :00 / COMMENTARY**

The veterans initially wanted to share stories of battle and the good old times for the slave-owning South. They gave their group a mysterious name: Ku Klux Klan.

**10 :04 :32 :00**

ITW Elaine FRANTZ

We don't know why they chose the name Ku Klux Klan. People say it's because that's the sound a shotgun would make when it was cocked: cluck cluck, ku klux, like that. The one that is most broadly accepted is meant to be named after the Greek word for circle, kuklos. And that makes a certain amount of sense when you realize that the people who founded the Klan were educated in Latin and Greek and did use Latin phrases in particular in some of their other writings. They were very invested in the fact that they were well educated.

**10:05:10:00**

ITW – Linda GORDON

They harked back to Greek mythology, Greek names. It was really in many ways like a very adolescent fantasy of a kind of a medieval bunch of warriors.

**10:05:30:00 / COMMENTARY**

They added the word “clan”, a common term in Scotland, to the Greek phrase Ku Klux, and started each word with a K. The Klan was born. Their first appearances in public in Pulaski were peaceful. But soon, harassment and intimidation of former slaves became daily rituals.

**10 :05 :55 :00**

ITW - Mark POTOK

The very first Klan group in Pulaski was essentially a group that kind of played pranks. They would dress up in very elaborate costumes, not the white sheets that we see today, and they would go around and try and scare people or play pranks. They often would try and frighten freed slaves who they thought were so superstitious that they would believe they were ghosts and so on.

**10:06:22:00**

ITW – Elaine FRANTZ

Sometimes they changed their voices during the attacks. So they will make animal noises and hoots and things like that but they'll also speak really high or really low or one guy will speak high and the other guy will speak low or they'll take on a fake German accent. They're somehow being playful with their violence, they're performing.

**10 :06 :51 :00 / COMMENTARY**

Rumours spread that the masked men were ghosts of Confederate soldiers killed in combat and back for revenge. Fear spread among former slaves.

Soon, “brotherhoods” began to emerge across the South with names like the Knights of the White Rose, the White League, and the Red Shirts. They all used the same intimidation tactics.

Klansmen would stake out territory in front of voting booths to keep black men from participating in elections. The South had to stay in white hands.

**10 :07 :34 :00**

ITW – Mark POTOK

They became a kind of paramilitary organization or more properly said, a bunch of little paramilitary organizations which very quickly, in the course of a year or so, became the violent enforcers of what black people could do and could not do.

**10:07:55:00 / COMMENTARY**

African Americans resisted, sometimes armed, but the murders and lynchings continued.

**10 :08 :06 :00**

ITW – Elaine FRANTZ

Whippings were very common and that was a legacy of slavery. These men... And one thing you notice is that when these Klan, when these Ku Klux whip people, they know how to whip people, they know what kind of tree branch to use to get whatever effect that they want. You have to remember that whipping can be deadly, particularly in this era where you don't have the antibiotics, you get an infection. A couple of weeks later, out of terrible agony, you die, you know, from just the open wounds caused by these whippings.

**10:08:44:00**

ITW – Linda GORDON

It's very important to understand that in lynching an individual, their goal was to intimidate the whole mass. That is what terrorism is. And to a very large extent, they succeeded because while slavery was abolished, the complete subordination of African-Americans continued. Unable to vote, unable to get decent jobs. Unable to have education, unable to have health care. It was a very successful campaign by a small terrorist organization.

**10:09:22:00 / COMMENTARY**

The Klan and its so-called men of justice began to get a reputation. Groups sprung up across the South, and recruitment exploded. The Klan still needed a charismatic leader to lead the fight. For the role they chose a military man, a hero to Southerners from the war of secession: General Nathan Bedford Forrest.

**10 :09 :54 :00**

ITW – Chris BUCKLEY

They come together, they say: "OK, who's going to be our leader?" And they took a vote and they all voted for who they thought should be a leader. Nathan Bedford Forrest got the most votes and they come to him and are like: "Hey. we started this thing, it's called the Ku Klux Klan or the Ku Klux, and we're... we made you our leader." Nathan Bedford Forrest didn't even realize that he was voted as the... He wasn't even in the KKK.

**10 :10 :18 :00**

ITW – Elaine FRANTZ

Nathan Bedford Forrest was a romantic figure. He was a celebrity. He was just kind of known as kind of like a man who's going to do what needs to be done. So he was sort of... he had that reputation. And he was happy to have the space put on it. He clearly indicated that he was the head of the Klan.

### **10:10:43:00 / COMMENTARY**

For a group as violent as the Klan, Forrest was an ideal leader. His reputation preceded him. A former slave trader, he had committed a number of war crimes during the war.

**10 :10 :57 :00**

ITW Mark POTOK

During the Civil War, Bedford Forrest presided over the massacre of three to 400 black men who were surrendering. They were actually Yankee troops, they were surrendering to Forrest's troops, but Forrest allowed his troops to run rampage and in fact encouraged them to, and murder all of these people. I think that really tells you what the Klan was all about. Nathan Bedford Forrest was a slave trader, a war criminal and the first leader of the National Klan at its most violent moment.

### **10:11:33:00 / COMMENTARY**

With Forrest in the lead, the Klansmen began to take more punitive action. The violence reached its peak in 1868. With the presidential elections approaching, dozens of courthouses, churches, and polling places went up in smoke.

More than a thousand murders were committed in four weeks. Former slaves could not be allowed in any case to exercise their rights. Doing so would upset the system of white dominance.

**10 :12 :12 :00**

ITW – Adam GREEN

The main thing that the first Klan was trying to accomplish was the deactivation, the politicide of African-Americans within the South. So they particularly targeted African-Americans who voted. They even more so targeted African-Americans who held office and in many cases, they didn't go to the African-Americans who held office in order to say: "You need to resign your office, or we're going to be back." They went in and they killed them outright because they understood that these were people that were already established as leaders. They understood that these were people that others in the community looked to as individuals who could kind of exemplify what it meant to assert oneself as a citizen within this society. And those people needed to be neutralized.

**10 :13 :03 :00**

ITW – Félix HARCOURT

The reconstruction era Klan was also happy to target white Republicans, those that they saw as acting in the political interests that would further African-American power.

**10 :13 :19 :00**

ITW – Adam GREEN

And so, this reminds us again that what we're talking about here is not only disorganized violence. It's not only depravity. It's not only terrorism. It's politics.

**10 :13 :33 :00 / COMMENTARY**

In Washington, plans were made to take down the invisible empire, whatever it took. Congress adopted a series of laws to dismantle the Klan. Martial law was declared.

The federal army, still deployed in the South, was mobilized to fight the Klan and ordered to protect black voters. Slowly, the clampdown began to take effect. In 1872, the Klan was officially declared destroyed. But it was too late. White supremacists didn't need them anymore.

**10 :14 :23 :00**

ITW – Mark POTOK

When free black slaves and their sympathizers were pushed away, when black people became more and more afraid to vote because it could cost them their lives, the work of the Klan was essentially done.

**10 :14 :38 :00**

ITW – Elaine FRANTZ

White southerners are managing to get back legitimate power. Once they control the sheriff's office, the trial justices... once they are in charge of those things, they don't need the Klan anymore. And in fact, if you have legitimate power, you really don't like a bunch of young men running around deciding to attack people. You don't want to have to deal with whatever their priorities are, you want to be in charge.



### **10 :15 :10 :00 / COMMENTARY**

In 1877, the federal army pulled out of the South with mixed results. The end of slavery was meant to give way to a regime of equality. Instead, it was slowly replaced with segregation, which lasted nearly a century.

Blacks and whites wouldn't mix in daily life: schools, shops, transportation, hospitals and more were all affected. African Americans would be separated from the white population, which kept all the power. Black people remained second-class citizens.

### **10 :15 :10 :00 / COMMENTARY**

The values of the Klan's invisible empire had spread among the general population. Lynchings of African Americans became more common. The federal government turned a blind eye.

### **10 :16 :09 :00**

ITW – David CUNNINGHAM

Photos from lynchings would be sold and used as postcards. There would be souvenirs from these sorts of events. People would want to take pictures in front of someone who was victimized in a lynching. So these are acts that involved directly or indirectly tacitly broad swaths of the white population.

### **10 :16 :33 :00**

ITW – Félix HARCOURT

Lynchings often went far beyond the stereotype of simply hangings. People may be shocked. They could be burned alive. They would be tied to the back of automobiles, by the time we get to the 20th century, and dragged through the streets, and then have their body displayed publicly.

### **10 :16 :55 :00**

ITW – Linda GORDON

And what you often had in some of these lynchings was the actual molestation of the body of the lynched person. To be crude about it, one of the things they loved to do would be to cut off a man's penis and stick it in his mouth. Some of that was so sexualized that there also might seem to be some kind of white anxiety about black sexuality.

**10 :17 :31 :00**

ITW Adam GREEN

It was a ritual that was meant to publicly demonstrate to both blacks who heard the stories and whites who witnessed the crime that racial domination was something that would be enforced within society. So it was a cultural process. It was a performance, a very macabre performance, as much as it was a kind of attempt to take legal matters into the hands of vigilantes. And in that sense, it meant to organize society in the same sort of way that a book or a speech or a sermon at church is meant to tell you what your values are.

**10:18:24:00 / COMMENTARY**

At the beginning of the 20th century, a new world was taking shape. Vertical cities emerged, and America became a country of immigration. Millions of Europeans – Catholics from the south, Jews from the East – disembarked for the world's leading industrial powerhouse and the promise of a better future. The Klan had fallen into obscurity. 50 years after the Civil War, it was born again from its ashes.

**10:18:58:00 / COMMENTARY**

In February 1915 *The Birth of a Nation* by D.W. Griffith came out. The film was an adaptation of a successful play called *The Klansman*. A long feature film, it looked back at the Civil War and the Reconstruction. Griffith was an innovator: there were wide shots of battle scenes, realistic décor, and swelling music. *The Birth of a Nation* was a major cinematic show that broke with the silly home-made skits that were typical of early cinematography.

**10 :19 :46 :00 / COMMENTARY**

In the second half of the film, Griffith depicted scenes from the post-war era. Klansmen were shown not as criminals, but as justice-doers.

**10 :20 :03 :00**

ITW – Linda GORDON

Scholars of film look at it as a very innovative and progressive in terms of its use of lighting, use of acting, and so on. But the core of this was the understanding in the movie that these black men are really threatening to kidnap and rape white women all over the place. And the culmination, the denouement of the film is quite terrifying because it shows all these black people who are like barbarians, savages, just running wild across the land, and the brave Ku Klux Klanners are defending morality and white womanhood and that position about defending white womanhood is very very central to the southern Klan.

**10:21:03:00**

ITW – Adam GREEN

It presented the Ku Klux Klan romantically. It presented the Ku Klux Klan as justified. All of this means that someone has to ride literally in on a white horse, and not only restore order but restore honor.

**10:21:21:00**

ITW – Linda GORDON

And this is very important in terms of why people were attracted. Because for a certain kind of man, it made you feel good. You were kind of heroic. And a super patriot, doing something to protect your society and country.

**10:21:42:00 / COMMENTARY**

The righters of wrongs in the Klan did their version of justice... and the audiences wanted more.

**10:21:48:00 / SUBTITLES**

*Trial*

**10:21:58:00 / SUBTITLES**

*Guilty*

**10:22:00:00 / COMMENTARY**

The film roused new curiosity for the Ku Klux Klan.

One man in particular took advantage of it: William Joseph Simmons.

The former lay preacher, born in Alabama, was a member of fraternal orders.

In November 1915, he organized a climb of Stone Mountain near Atlanta.

Simmons dreamed of reestablishing the Ku Klux Klan to capitalize on Confederate heritage and making some money along the way.

### **10:22:00:00 / COMMENTARY**

Hiding his face in a skull mask, Simmons created a ritual, secret ceremonies, and coded words.

Charity begins at home. He proclaimed himself the Grand Imperial Wizard and Emperor of what he called the Invisible Empire.

He wrote the “Kloran”, the Klansman’s Code of Honour.

A new KKK was born, with a leader and laws.

### **10:23:07:00 / COMMENTARY**

While *The Birth of a Nation* was spreading its venom, Simmons made announcements in the press announcing the rebirth of the Klan. The film thus became a 180-minute advertisement glorifying his movement. Simmons’ hooded horsemen could be seen on film posters and in newspapers throughout the country.

### **10:23:36:00**

ITW – Félix HARCOURT

The popular image of the Klan as we often think about it is fundamentally created by Griffith's *Birth of a nation*. That is the film that creates the image of the white hood and robes that then gets adopted by the second Klan.

### **10:23:53:00**

ITW – Linda GORDON

The Klan didn't make the film *Birth of a nation*, but it used it to great effect. One of their major recruitment techniques was they would go into a new town. They would have a showing of the film, and you have to remember that for most people, film was very new and very thrilling, in the early 1920s. I was sure many people had never seen a film before until they saw this.

Furthermore, the Klan would charge money for people to come and see the film. In a small town, this could be a really major exciting event.

### **10:24:37:00 / COMMENTARY**

*The Birth of a Nation* is considered the first Hollywood blockbuster. More than 50 million Americans went and sat in awe at this racist film. For most viewers, the spectacular battles, Lincoln’s assassination, and (of course) the Klan’s heroic victories were seen as truth.

**10:25:01:00**

ITW – Félix HARCOURT

There was a narrative fiction film that D.W. Griffith had constructed specifically to convey the idea of historical authenticity. That he has title cards, drawing on quotes from popular academics and historians, to try to convey the idea that this was the truth of reconstruction, and it was a truth that was widely accepted at the time.

**10:25:32:00**

ITW – David CUNNINGHAM

This movie was seen as, in effect, telling the story of the South after the Civil War. It really becomes the predominant way that people in America understand Southern history, which of course is bound up in our national history.

**10:25:56:00 / COMMENTARY**

African Americans organized to fight back against this propaganda. The NAACP, a group created to defend their rights, tried to get the film banned. And some cities boycotted it. But people in power remained unmoved. Griffith's work was the first feature film to be shown at the White House for a sitting president, the Democrat Woodrow Wilson.

**10 :26 :23 :00**

ITW – Mark POTOK

We think of Woodrow Wilson as being essentially a progressive president but, when Birth of a Nation was shown in a private showing in the White House to Woodrow Wilson, he infamously said: "It's like writing history with lightning.", that's how incredibly good this movie was.

**10:26:43:00**

ITW – Linda GORDON

President Wilson praised it, he thought it was great. He was absolutely a (racist genocide segregationist). That doesn't mean that he would necessarily have approved of Klansmen going around and lynching people. It's also important to understand that Wilson was himself a Southerner. He depended on votes from the South for his position. In the south, you had basically an electorate that was only white, and Woodrow Wilson could not afford to contradict them.

**10:27:20:00**

ITW – Mark POTOK

So Wilson's, essentially, endorsement of Birth of a Nation, and therefore of the idea of the Klan, helped popularize the Klan enormously.

**10 :27 :32 :00 / COMMENTARY**

*The Birth of a Nation* gave the Klan a nation-wide audience. Joseph Simmons was ambitious. He understood that his little business had a big future. That meant advertising.

So, the Grand Wizard hired two marketing experts: Elizabeth Tyler and Edward Clarke. The two advertising specialists understood how to help the organization make money. They concocted a pyramid scheme.

**10 :28 :03 :00**

ITW – Linda GORDON

If I recruit you to be a member of the Klan, I can keep 40% (inaudible) of your initiation fee. You can then go and recruit him, and you can get his 40%, and that goes on and on until you run out of people to recruit. The initiation fee at the beginning was 10\$, and 10\$ is worth well over 120\$ today. This is not an organization of poor people.

**10 :28 :35 :00**

ITW – Chris BUCKLEY

There is a business to the Klan, and it's called Klan members. They pay a membership fee and all the money that you pay every month, your dues, go to the imperial wizard, and he uses that money to travel around and party with everybody at these damn Klan lighting ceremonies, these cross light ceremonies. It pays his bills, he uses it to buy alcohol... He just... he doesn't work. He doesn't have a job. We have jobs. It's just a scam, man, the whole thing is a scam.

**10:29:06:00**

ITW: Mark POTOK

They built this up. They also forced the clan members to rent their robes, you were not allowed to sew your own robes, and so on, they standardize the robes as these white sheets that we see today, with the cross with the blood drop on the front and so on. Ultimately, the Klan grew incredibly quickly.

### **10:29:31:00**

The sermons, meetings, and nighttime ceremonies drew in more and more people. In just a few months, the group went from 2,000 to 300,000 members. At ten dollars to join, the Klan became rich and powerful. Starting with its Imperial Wizard, His Majesty William Joseph Simmons.

### **10:30:02:00**

ITW – Mark POTOK

Well, for a while in the 1920s, the Klan was exceedingly powerful and had a great deal of money. William Joseph Simmons, for instance, the first leader of the second era klan, lived in a multimillion-dollar mansion. So for a while, with all of these dues coming in, it was incredibly successful.

### **10:30:25:00 / COMMENTARY**

The new world was changing and the fears of the Protestant majority did, too. You need to move with the times. The Klan grew its business of hatred. In addition to hating black people, the Klan adopted anti-immigrant, anti-urban, anti-Communist, anti-Semitic and anti-Catholic positions. It claimed all sorts of virtues for itself and naturally advocated for Prohibition.

### **10:30:54:00**

ITW – Mark POTOK

The communists were essentially Protestants. They came from Europe with their prejudice against Catholics, so-called Papists. They didn't really care about the United States. If the pope told them to go shoot the president, they would do that because they were all loyal slaves of the pope. So there was that idea. There was the idea that they drank too much, they actually used wine in the communion service. This is of course at a time when prohibition has just been passed, so Catholics were associated very strongly with alcohol. Also, Catholicism was connected to essentially poorer, darker-skinned countries in Europe. What they thought of was they thought of the Greeks and the Portuguese, and the Spaniards and the Southern Italians. At that time, those people were not really viewed as white "They're not really white, they're just kind of white."

### **10:31:48:00 / COMMENTARY**

The organization grew spectacularly. As did its bank account. The group became one of the most important political organizations in the country. It spilled out of its Southern base and flooded the rest of the country. On August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1925, more than 40,000 members paraded down Pennsylvania Avenue. It was a huge show of strength.

### **10:32:14:00 / COMMENTARY**

They were not afraid of showing their faces. And its new leader, Hiram Evans, was at the march, too. As if there were nothing to hide. The “Invisible Empire” had never seemed so powerful.

### **10:32:36:00**

ITW – Félix HARCOURT

Estimates put Klan membership at somewhere upwards of four million members, which was a really significant proportion of the country's population, especially when we consider all of the groups who were excluded from joining the Klan. You were only allowed to become a Klan member if you had been born in the United States, if you were white, and if you were a Protestant. So when we think about narrowing the population down along those lines, four million members is a terrifyingly large percentage of that population.

### **10:33:18:00 / COMMENTARY**

As the cameras focused on the march, another scene was taking place offscreen. Lobbyists for the Klan were working overtime in the background. Their influence on American political life was considerable.

In the 1920s, the Invisible Empire got 11 governors, 75 representatives and 16 senators elected. Harry Truman, the future American president, admitted in his memoirs that he had briefly belonged to the Klan in his youth for electoral reasons.

### **10:33:54:00**

ITW – Linda GORDON

When we say that someone like Harry Truman was a member, you have to remember this was a completely respectable thing to be. In many places, people joined the Klan because it brought them status. It was a highly respected community organization. Furthermore, the Klan chapters, the Klaverns, functioned to do what we today call networking. You meet other people, you meet people who might be your customers, or who could give you a job, or you could do a business deal with. There was an awful lot of economic incentive to be a part of the Klan in certain locations.

### **10:34:36:00 / COMMENTARY**

The Klan was powerful enough to make or break a career. At the Democratic National Convention of 1924, it blocked the nomination of the candidate Al Smith. For two good reasons: Smith was Catholic and an opponent of Prohibition.

But the Klan's greatest victory was getting a draconian immigration law passed.



**10:35:04:00**

ITW – Mark POTOK

The Klan helped to pass the immigration act of 1924, which for the first time created an immigration quota system in the United States that extremely much favored Northern European whites. In other words, people from Germanic countries and the United Kingdom. So from 1924 until 1965, when the immigration system was reformed, the United States essentially had a Klan devised immigration system which limited, more or less, immigration to the United States to so-called Aryans.

**10:35:45:00 / COMMENTARY**

Soon, the Klan's connections had extended everywhere. Including the cultural landscape of the Roaring Twenties.

**10 :35 :51 :00 / SUBTITLES (song)**

*Yes, we belong to the Ku Klux Klan. We belong to the Ku Klux Klan. We protect your wives and mothers, anywhere, in every land, for we belong to the Ku Klux Klan.*

**10 :36 :09 :00 / COMMENTARY**

It produced its own music, which it put out and played on its own radio stations.

**10 :36 :16 :00 / COMMENTARY**

The organization owned its own newspapers like *The Fiery Cross* and *The Searchlight*, which published the positions of its leaders. Always anti-black, anti-Catholic, and anti-Semitic. The announcers heeded the call. The KKK was king of the hour.

**10 :36 :33 :00 / COMMENTARY**

Les annonceurs répondent à l'appel.

Le triple K est à l'honneur...

**10 :36 :42 :00 / COMMENTARY**

Ads recommended the Junior KKK for 12-18 year-olds and pushed the accessories that all good Klansmen needed to own.

**10 :36 :54 :00 / SUBTITLES**

*Robe bags ! Keep your robe in a non-wrinkeable un-detectable, water-proof*

**10 :37 :01 :00 / COMMENTARY**

The organization sponsored plays written in its own honor. And it even financed films to promote its activities. The secret society had never been so visible.

**10 :37 :16 :00**

ITW – Félix HARCOURT

They are holding rodeos and jousting tournaments. They are appearing in popular novels, they are in popular films, they are in popular music, they are on the radio, and they are selling you newspapers on the street corner. So they really become a major part of American cultural life.

**10:37:44:00 / COMMENTARY**

The faction society sold well. The Klan was everywhere. Its hooded figures appeared in animated and short films. Even Harold Lloyd performed escaping from their clutches in his extraordinary adventures.

**10 :38 :15 :00 / COMMENTARY**

In 1924, it even appeared in one of the first short films produced by Walt Disney, in which kids mimic secret society members.

**10 :38 :31 :00**

ITW- Linda GORDON

The Klan was by far the biggest social movement of the 1920s. It was not only a mass organization, with somewhere between three and six million people, but it was a family organization with activities for children, for young women, for young men.

**10:38:51:00**

ITW – Mark POTOK

Klan events in the 1920s were very much family affairs. People brought their wives, they brought their children. There was a kind of festival atmosphere to much of it.

**10:39:09:00**

ITW- Linda GORDON

They had these giant picnics, we're talking about picnics to which 25,000 people came. There were games with prizes. There were beauty contests There were brass bands playing, there were dancers. You would get the impression that I certainly got that in many places, a family could spend their whole lives surrounded by other klan's people. There were particular scripts for klan funerals, for klan weddings, for the christening of children. They were really part of the fabric of daily life for a lot of white Protestant people.

**10:39:58:00 / COMMENTARY**

At the same time that the Klan was hosting wholesome activities by day, its crimes continued in the shadows.

**10:40:36:00 / COMMENTARY**

At the same time that the Klan was hosting wholesome activities by day, its crimes continued in the shadows.

**10 :40 :52 :00**

ITW- Linda GORDON

I think the most important thing to understand, perhaps the most frightening thing, is that they had achieved a certain kind of respectability. They were viewed by many people as a legitimate, fraternal political group in the United States.

**10 :41 :12 :00 / COMMENTARY**

But this golden age wouldn't last. At the end of the 1920s, several scandals weakened the movement. David Stephenson, the KKK's new strongman, the Grand Dragon of Indiana who oversaw over 100,000 Klansman, was convicted of raping and murdering his secretary.

**10 :41 :26 :00 / SUBTITLES**

*Dragon guilty of killing girl*

**10 :41 :33 :00**

ITW Linda GORDON

He kidnapped, he tortured by biting, and he raped and killed his female assistant. It was so shocking. This was covered in the New York Times, in the West Coast. I think for some people, "Well, this is going too far. We need to move away from this."

**10:41:53:00**

ITW Mark POTOK

One of the great aims of the Klan of the 1920s was protecting the chastity of white women, so they were all about 100% Americanism as they called it, standing up for white women and their honor and so on, their virtue. When you had arguably the most famous Klansman in America convicted of this incredible rape and ultimately murder of Madge Overholser, it completely destroyed first the Indiana Klan, and then in waves, the rest of the Klan collapsed.

**10:42:27:00 / COMMENTARY**

Sentenced to life in prison, Stephenson had nothing to lose and began to share secrets. In July 1927, he sent documents to the press incriminating Indiana state officials who had been corrupted by the Klan. The governor Ed Jackson and many others were implicated. A letter from John Duval, the Mayor of Indianapolis, revealed the extent of the rot.

**10 :43 :07 :00 / COMMENTARY**

Soon it was Edward Clarke's turn to be prosecuted. The Klan's communications man had regularly been seen the company of prostitutes and sipping on whisky, with total contempt for the religious values promoted by the Klan.

**10 :43 :26 :00**

ITW Linda GORDON

They used to say "If Jesus was alive today, he would be a Klansman."

**10:43:32:00**

ITW David CUNNINGHAM

One of the many contradictions associated with the KKK is the fact that the leaders are rarely, if ever, living up to the moral values that they are demanding of their members.

**10 :43 :44 :00**

ITW Mark POTOK

People all over the country saw this, and that was in a way the beginning of a kind of public awareness that this group wasn't really the heroic and patriotic organization that it claimed to be.

**10:44:02:00 / COMMENTARY**

At the end of the 1920s, the Great Depression ravaging the United States further weakened the organization. Its members no longer had the money to pay their dues. President Roosevelt's economic recovery policies transformed the rural South and created manufacturing jobs.

The Klan was no longer a social stepladder. Poor whites moved on. Following his election, Roosevelt reauthorized the consumption of alcohol. The invisible empire had lost the battle over Prohibition.

**10:44:34:00 / COMMENTARY**

It wouldn't be its last defeat. In 1939, when Hollywood adapted the bestseller *Gone With The Wind* – another panoramic tale of the Civil War – stuffed full of racist prejudice. But though the Klan had appeared in Margaret Mitchell's bestseller, it was completely cut from the film.

**10 :45 :07 :00 / COMMENTARY**

In September 1939, the world went up in flames. True to its hateful message, the Klan temporarily allied itself with an American pro-Nazi party, the Bund.

**10 :45 :19 :00 / SUBTITLES**

*Ku Klux Klan rallies with Bundsmen*

**10 :45 :25 :00 / SUBTITLES**

*Camp Nordland, owned by the German-American Bund, says welcome in German and keep out in English, as the New Jersey Ku Klux Klan rents the camp for one day. Cameramen are not permitted to photograph everything. Only a few Klansmen appear in victors, none of uniformed Bund storm troopers when giant of the Klan-, Arthur Bell (left) and Bund leader NAME shake hands.*

**10 :45 :53 :00 / COMMENTARY**

But the United States entered the war in December 1941 after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The brownshirts and the white hoods both disappeared from public life.

**10 :46 :10 :00**

ITW Linda GORDON

WWII had an impact on turning people away from the Klan because the example of Nazi policy made various kinds of bigotry less popular, but also because there was a movement to publicize the diversity of the Armed Forces, which then had so many Jews and so many Catholics fighting for America, so it was a little hard to maintain that hostility toward those groups at that time.

**10:46:48:00 / COMMENTARY**

May 8 1945: after four years of war, it was Victory Day in Europe. In September, Japan surrendered. America was victorious, but the Klan wasn't feeling festive. The IRS began bankruptcy proceedings. The invisible empire hadn't paid its taxes in the 1920s, and now they owed \$685,000. For the second time in its history, the Klan disappeared.

**10:47:28:00 / COMMENTARY**

But the hydra's hooded heads didn't take long to grow back. The post-war situation was ripe for its resurrection. In addition to the creeping fear of communism, white supremacists were also worried about returning African American GIs.

**10 :47 :51 :00**

ITW Mark POTOK

After the Second World War, we had enormous numbers of black servicemen coming back to this country for the first time, and they had seen in Europe, particularly in France but in many countries, that they were treated completely different, they were treated as if they were actually people. Plus they had for the first time (born) arms, they had been given weapons, and many of them had shot white people. So people came back, African-Americans came back to the United States with a completely changed sensibility about who they were. "I fought for my country. I fought against racism, against anti-semitism. Why can't I be a full citizen like everyone else?"

**10 :48 :33 :00**

ITW Adam GREEN

Much effort had been expended within the United States on the part of African-American intellectuals, African-American journalists, African-American organizers and institutional heads, to say, "You can't fight a war against repression and reaction abroad, and not address repression and reaction at home. There needs to be two victories: the victory against fascism and the victory against racism in the United States."

**10:49:01:00 / COMMENTARY**

Faced with such old-fashioned discrimination, African Americans protested to exercise their rights. Many veterans refused to give up their seats in public transportation. There were more and more incidents. White Southerners weren't ready to accept this thirst for freedom.

**10 :49 :25 :00 / SUBTITLES**

*Ku Klux Klan is back in South*

**10 :49 :29 :00 / SUBTITLES**

*The Ku Klux Klan returns to the South. Complete with traditional white hoods, the sheet shortage notwithstanding, about seven hundreds klansmen prepare for the first meeting to be photographed since 1941. The assembly point at top Stone mountain is sixteen miles east of Atlanta, Georgia. Klan leaders predict similar revivals throughout America.*

**10 :49 :51 :00 / COMMENTARY**

In October 1946, the organization was taken over by Samuel Green, a member of the Klan since the 1920s. A doctor from Georgia, Green began organizing ceremonies and doing extensive advertising. He sold the rights to film them to the media, including to *Life* magazine.

**10 :50 :11 :00 / SUBTITLES**

*We don't hate the negro. God made him black and He made us white. And you will find this laid out in the eleventh chapter of Genesis, in which He segregated the races. And we knowing that for five thousand years the white man has been the supreme race, we the knight of the ku klux klan intend to keep it the white race.*

**10 :50 :39 :00 / COMMENTARY**

Despite going bankrupt, the Klan had maintained an underground network. There were still thousands of people willing to pledge allegiance to the organization.

**10 :50 :50 :00**

ITW Chris BUCKLEY

The ceremony that takes place, it's called the naturalization ceremony. "Take an oath of allegiance, and swear to protect the white race, and you'll never turn your back on your brothers", things like that. It's really childish, but for me, I felt enlightened, I felt like I belonged to something, "I finally did it, I earned this. I worked for it", they make it a point to make you feel proud of it, like they want you to feel proud of it.

**10 :51 :29 :00 / COMMENTARY**

The invisible empire was once again on the march. But an unexpected obstacle appeared in its the way.

**10 :51 :38 :00 / SUBTITLES**

- *Up in the sky, look !*

- *It's a bird !*

- *It's a plane ! It's Superman !*

**10 :51 :48 :00 / SUBTITLES**

*This looks like a job for Superman*

**10 :51 :51 :00 / COMMENTARY**

In 1946, this particular superhero was already very popular. His adventures appeared in cartoons and comics. On a radio show, he fought a criminal organization oddly similar to the KKK.



## **10 :52 :07 :00 / SUBTITLES**

*Now the adventures of Superman !*

*Clark can't track down a boy he believes knew the identity of the robed and hooded biggots. What has happened to the cunning half-mad leader of the clan of the fiery cross. We'll find out in just a moment ! So stand-by for the exciting climax of today's episode.*

## **10 :52 :29 :00 / COMMENTARY**

The originator of this project, Stetson Kennedy, was a journalist who infiltrated the Klan and learned its secrets. He convinced the producers of *The Adventures of Superman* to warn young Americans about its toxic ways. The program was a major success.

## **10 :52 :49 :00**

ITW Felix HARCOURT

The idea of having Superman fight the Klan on the radio in the 1940s is a really important and effective piece of propaganda in putting forward the idea that the Klan is un-American. The tragic irony is that Superman's catchphrase of course was "Truth, Justice and the American way", which is phrasing that would have been very at home in a Klan pamphlet of the 1920s.

## **10 :53 :20 :00 / COMMENTARY**

Stetson Kennedy didn't stop there. He went to Congress dressed as a Klansman to raise awareness and denounce the lack of democracy in the American South. His performance worked. Beginning in 1947, the Klan was added to the list of subversive organizations by the Justice Department. The KKK's post-war reemergence couldn't save it. It only had about 20,000 members. Very few compared to the four million of the 1920s. But the threat had not been eradicated.

## **10 :54 :00 :00 / COMMENTARY**

Soon, African Americans would demand civil rights much more forcefully. The battle for equality would lead to the third – and much more violent – invisible empire.