

Uncovering the KKK

There are those who maintain that certain races, religions, and nationalities are superior to others. The Ku Klux Klan, commonly called the KKK, is one such group. To learn more about their activities, particularly in the 1920s, read the information below.

What It Is The Ku Klux Klan is an organization of people who hate other groups of people, particularly those who are not native-born, Protestant, and white. Members of the KKK especially oppose the advancement of blacks, Jews, and other minorities.

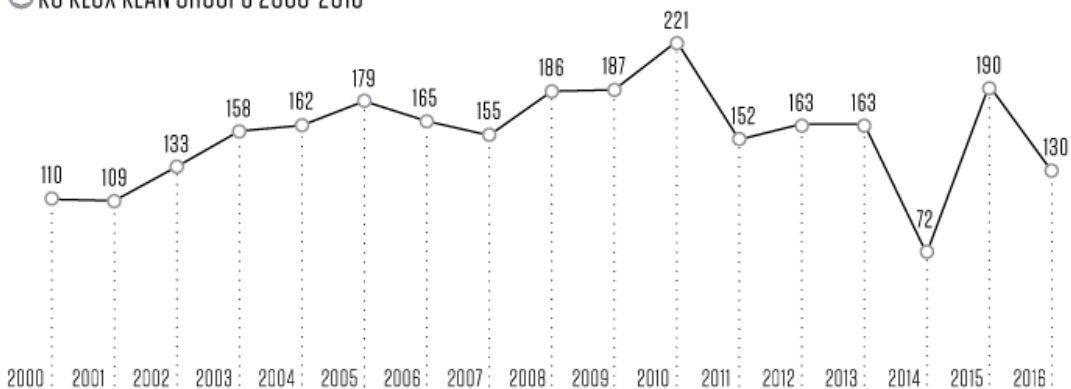
Origins In 1865 or 1866 a group of Confederate Army veterans in Pulaski, Tennessee, formed a social club. The name Ku Klux Klan is taken from the Greek word *kyklos* which means circle and the English word *clan*. Members of this group believed in the superiority of whites and began terrorizing African Americans to prevent them from voting. Klan members wore robes and white hoods to hide their identities and even draped sheets over their horses. They burned crosses to frighten blacks, Jews, and other minorities, and threatened, beat, and lynched their victims. The Ku Klux Klan spread rapidly throughout the southern United States. Following a Congressional investigation in 1871, the Klan activities diminished.



A Return After World War I, agricultural depression, migration, and other social and economic factors caused social unrest. The Klan philosophy was broadened to include anti-foreign, anti-Catholic, anti-Semitic and anti-urban principles. At its height in the mid-twenties, the revived KKK had between 4 1/2 and 6 million members and heavily influenced the government of at least seven states. Some called it "The Invisible Empire."

Election of 1928 During the 1928 presidential election, the group played a pivotal role. Al Smith, the Democratic presidential candidate, was an Irish Catholic. The KKK maintained that if Smith were elected, the Catholic pope would rule America from Rome. Many believed their propaganda, and Smith was easily defeated.

▲ KU KLUX KLAN GROUPS 2000-2016



The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has documented an explosive rise in the number of hate groups since the turn of the century, driven in part by anger over Latino immigration and demographic projections showing that whites will no longer hold majority status in the US by around 2040. The rise accelerated in 2009, the year President Obama took office, but declined after that, in part because large numbers of extremists were moving to the web and away from on-the-ground activities. In the last two years, in part due to a presidential campaign that flirted heavily with extremist ideas, the hate group count has risen again.

The number of hate groups operating in the country in 2016 remained at near-historic highs, rising from 892 in 2015 to 917 last year, according to the latest count by the SPLC. That's only about 100 fewer organizations than the 1,018 tallied in 2011, which was the all-time high in some 30 years of SPLC counts. All hate groups have beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for their immutable characteristics. Hate group activities can include criminal acts, marches, rallies, speeches, meetings, leafleting or publishing.

The SPLC is dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry and to seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of our society. Civil rights lawyers Morris Dees and Joseph Levin Jr. founded the SPLC in 1971 to ensure that the promise of the civil rights movement became a reality for all.

Time to Research

1. Go to www.splcenter.org/hate-map
2. Identify three different hate groups and provide a brief explanation of the groups ideology, history, and size (use a separate sheet of paper if needed).

Group Name: _____

Group Name: _____

Group Name: _____