country and advertising to the world that America is not safe for democracy.

The righteous and liberal minded Americans must not permit such conditions to continue. They must act and in the name of true religion and true Americanism, for the honor of God, for the welfare of this Republic, demand, that the Ku Klux Klan everywhere voluntarily disband or that Congress shall find ways and means, as it did in 1869, to put an end to organized treason masquerading as zealous Americanism.

In opposition to the “Invisible Empire,” let us in the spirit of Lincoln “highly resolve that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth.”

JOSEPH SILVERMAN.

THE SHAPE OF FEAR

BY W. E. BURGHARDT DU BOIS

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Faced by the fact of the Ku Klux Klan, the United States has tried to get rid of it by laughing it off. We have talked of masquerading “in sheets and pillow cases”; we have caricatured the Klan upon the stage; we have exposed its silly methods, the dishonesty of some of its leaders, and the like. But we have not succeeded in scaring it away by ridicule. It is there. It is a fact, and those who do not wish to believe the sinister meaning of its existence should go to the nearest movie and see that Washington parade, that tremendous outpouring of hosts, white-gowned and hooded if not masked.

It is quite beside the point to compare the present Ku Klux Klan with the Ku Klux Klan of Reconstruction day’s. They have nothing in common except their birthplace and their methods. The present Klan is a different movement from the older Klan. It has simply made the older movement’s name its present starting point.
Until last year I was of those mildly amused at the K. K. K. It seemed to me incredible that in 1925 such a movement could attract any number of people or become really serious. And then at first hand and at second I saw the Klan and its workings in widely different places. I was lecturing in Akron, Ohio. Now Ohio is one of those States upon whose essential Americanism and devotion to the finer ideals of democracy I have long banked. There in the Middle West that finer flower of democracy, born in New England, and later choked by the industrialism of the East, had, to my mind, gone for replanting and renewal. I looked for sanity in the United States to come from a democratic appeal to the Middle West. And yet, there in Akron, in the land of Joshua R. Giddings, in the Western Reserve, I found the Klan calmly and openly in the saddle. The leader of the local Klan was president of the Board of Education and had just been tremendously busied in driving a Jew out of the public schools. The Mayor, the secretary of the Y. M. C. A., prominent men in many walks of life, were either open Klansmen or secret sympathizers. I was too astonished to talk. Throughout parts of Ohio, Illinois and Indiana I found a similar state of affairs.

I am not saying that the Klan was triumphant everywhere, but it was there; it was influential; it was recognized; it was important. Again, and further west, the work of the Klan has been manifest. Today there are under arrest at Detroit, Michigan, a young colored physician, well-trained and successful; his wife, torn from her infant child, and nine of his friends; and they are on trial for murder in the first degree because they shot at the mob that tried to drive them out of their own homes and that had a few months before driven out another Negro physician and destroyed his furniture; and that mob was there because the Ku Klux Klan aroused it and sent it; and the Ku Klux Klan is so tremendous a power in that city which is, in some ways, the most significant of American cities, that the Mayor is openly appealing against its activities.

Or again: the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People held its annual meeting in May, 1925, in Denver, and there appeared before it two speakers: one, a little man, nervous with energy and shrill of speech. He was, without
doubt, one of the dozen notable figures which America has given to the world, Ben Lindsay, the maker of the Children's Court. The other had been one of the most successful and enlightened Governors in America. And yet they stood speaking in self-defense; defending themselves against this city and this State; and the great, dark, menacing thing that turned them from social uplift and political reform was the Ku Klux Klan.

In the East, New England and New Jersey, the Klan has been mobilized; and need one mention the South?

What is the cause of all this? There can be little doubt but that the Klan in its present form is a legacy of the World War. Whatever there was of it before that great catastrophe was negligible and of little moment. The wages of War is Hate; and the End, and indeed the Beginning, of Hate is Fear. The civilized world today and the world half-civilized and uncivilized are desperately afraid. The Shape of Fear looms over them. Germany fears the Jew, England fears the Indian; America fears the Negro, the Christian fears the Moslem, Europe fears Asia, Protestant fears Catholic, Religion fears Science. Above all, Wealth fears Democracy. These fears and others are ancient or at least long-standing fears. But they are renewed and revivified today because the world has at present a severe case of nerves; it feels it necessary to be nervous because the Unexpected has happened.

For years we talked of the possibility of European War with bated breath; then we talked of it jauntily; and then we almost joked about it. While here was a Fear, it was one so far away that it did not seem possible for it ever to materialize, at least not in our day. And then suddenly it became a terrible fact, horrible beyond the dream of men. So that all our other fears today have become portentous. Abd-el Krim may be the vanguard of the launching of Asia against Europe; Ghandi and Das may be at the point of destroying the British Empire; the American Negro, despite all precautions, may force himself into a place where he will enter Congress, storm Wall Street and marry white women.

Now against such fears as these there are three possible attitudes. One is the attitude of reason and examination. What does the ferment in the colored world mean and how far is our fear of it but a reflex of its fear of us? What do colored folk
really want, and do their wants interfere with and oppose the just
desires of the white world? How far is free, scientific inquiry going
to undermine religious sanction? What is there in the objects of
the Bolsheviki which should not appear in the objects of Ameri-
can social reformers? These questions indicate one attitude, 
mental, moral and practical, toward great pending questions; but it
is not the attitude which we are disposed to take today in the
world.

On the contrary so imminent does our danger seem to some
people that they turn to one of two other methods. They are
both forms of Force; one an open appeal to force: Fascismo,
either in its bold, physical form as it is appearing in Italy and
Spain or in its more spiritual form as it appears in American
Fundamentalism; in the determination to drive out of the Church
every person who will not honestly or by perjury subscribe to a
certain, narrow, outworn and partially false creed.

The other method is the method of Force which hides itself in
secrecy, and that is the method of the Ku Klux Klan. It is a
method as old as humanity. The kind of thing which men are
afraid or ashamed to do openly and by day, they accomplish
secretly, masked and at night. The method has certain advan-
tages. It uses Fear to cast out Fear; it dares things at which open
methods hesitate; it may with a certain impunity attack the high
and the low; it need hesitate at no outrage of maiming or murder;
it shields itself in the mob mind and then throws over all a veil of
darkness which becomes glamor. It attracts people who other-
wise could not be reached. It harnesses the mob.

How is it that men who want certain things done by brute
force can so often depend upon the mob? Total depravity,
human hate and shadenfreude, do not explain fully the mob spirit
in this land. Before the wide eyes of the mob is ever the Shape of
Fear. Back of the writhing, yelling, cruel-eyed demons who
break, destroy, maim andlynch and burn at the stake is a knot,
large or small, of normal human beings and these human beings at
heart are desperately afraid of something. Of what? of many
things but usually of losing their jobs, of being declassed, de-
graded or actually disgraced; of losing their hopes, their savings,
their plans for their children; of the actual pangs of hunger; of
dirt, of crime. And of all this, most ubiquitous in modern industrial society is that fear of unemployment.

It is this nucleus of ordinary men that continually gives the mob its initial and awful impetus. Around this nucleus, to be sure, gather snowball-wise all manner of flotsam, filth and human garbage and every inhibition of alcohol and current fashion. But all this is the horrible covering of this inner nucleus of Fear.

How then is the mob to be met and quelled? If it represents public opinion, even passing, passionate public opinion, it cannot permanently be put down by the police which public opinion appoints and pays. Three methods of quelling the mob are at hand, analogous to the three attitudes noted above: the first, by proving to its human, honest nucleus that the Fear is false, ill-grounded, unnecessary; or secondly, if its Fear is true or apparently or partially true, by attacking the fearful thing openly either by the organized police power or by frank civil war as did Mussolini and George Washington; or thirdly, by secret, hidden and underground ways, the method of the Ku Klux Klan.

Why do we not take the first way? Because this is a world that believes in War and Ignorance and has no hope in our day of realizing an intelligent majority of men and Peace on Earth. There are many, many exceptions but in general it is true that there is scarcely a Bishop in Christiandom, a priest in New York, a President, Governor, mayor or legislator in the United States, a college professor or public school teacher who does not in the end stand by War and Ignorance as the main method for the settlement of our pressing human problems. And this despite the fact that they may deny it with their mouths every day.

But here again open civil war like Italy's is difficult, costly and hard to guide. The Right toward which it aims must be made obvious even if it is Wrong. In 1918 in order to win the war we had to make Germans into Huns and rapists. Today we have to make Negroes into rapists and idiots. Tomorrow we must make Latins, South-Eastern Europeans, Turks and other Asiatics into actual "lesser breeds without the law". Some seem to see today anti-Christ in Catholicism, and in Jews, international plotters of the Protocol. Even if these things be true it is difficult to bring the truth clearly before the ignorant mob and guide it toward the
overthrow of evil. But if these be half true or wholly false, the mob can only be stirred by wholesale lying, and this is costly; or by secret underground whispering, the methods of night and mask, the psychology of vague and unknown ill, the innuendo that cannot be answered.

Now there are two things that stand out in this explanation of the mob and the Klan. First, the double tongues of our leaders in religion and social uplift; and secondly, this fear of losing jobs. Dayton, Tennessee brought the first vividly to our minds. We heard of a sudden, people talking a religious patois which educated folk had well nigh forgotten: Biblical Truth; the Plan of Salvation; the Blood of Christ. And suddenly we began to see what results widespread ignorance of modern science not only had brought but could bring under the leadership of the demagogue. It sent a thrill of amazement through us.

But whom had we to blame? Manifestly, not the farmers and shopkeepers of Tennessee, but those intellectual leaders of the United States who have been willing to subscribe to a religious dogma that they did not honestly believe and yet which they were willing that the mass of people should think they were believing. Was there any surer way of destroying the ability of the Man of the Street to think straight and argue logically? And to stop even his endeavor to think, comes the Fundamentalist; and his answer to Science is Dogma; and his reason for bringing it forward is again, not perverse hatred of the Truth, but the Shape of Fear. The religionist of today sees the sanctions of moral conduct being swept and battered away, laughed at and caricatured. How shall he meet this wicked thing? He can do it by intelligence and argument and persuasion or he can do it by dogma which is spiritual mob-violence; today he is choosing the mob.

Or again; why is it that in a rich country like the United States, in many respects the richest and most prosperous organization of men in the world, we continually have mobs fighting and doing unutterable things because at bottom men are afraid of being unable to earn a respectable living? The answer is that our post-war prosperity is built more on gambling than on honest productive industry. Gambling was the result of war, born in war time and coming from the sudden demand for technique
machinery and goods, which paid those who happened to hold them enormous marginal rents. The chance to the gambler, the promoter and the manipulator of industry has come during the reconstruction since the war, in the monopoly of land and homes, in the manipulation of industrial power, in the use of new inventions and discoveries, in the reorganization of corporate ownership.

We have today in the United States, cheek by jowl, Prosperity and Depression. Depression among those who are selling their services, raising raw material and manufacturing goods; prosperity among those who are manipulating prices, monopolizing land and mortgaging ability and output.

How shall we meet this situation? Again we revert to the three paths: first and foremost by the spread of wider and deeper understanding among the masses of men of the modern industrial process and the method of distributing income, so that intelligently we may attack Production and Distribution and re-make industrial society. Or, a second method, by hue and cry and propaganda to stop all criticism and desire for change by dubbing every reformer "Bolshevik" and by frightening the wage earner with loss of the very foundation of his wage. And this is the kind of attack that again easily sinks to the whispering courses underground and attempts to save modern industry through mobs engineered by the secret Ku Klux Klan.

I can no better illustrate my meaning than by an actual case. The world has forgotten Mer Rouge—the Red Sea of Louisiana where a few years ago a terrible series of murders was laid at the doors of the Ku Klux Klan. It was so horrible a tale that we hastened to forget it before we really understood it. But it deserved thought and intelligent comprehension.

The cotton and sugar soil of the Mississippi and Red River valleys form a junction in Louisiana. It is a section bounded on the south by the scene of Uncle Tom’s Cabin, on the north by the Helena riots, and on the east by that bit of hell which is sometimes called the Mississippi Delta. In the center of this district, in northeastern Louisiana, is Morehouse Parish and in the midst of Morehouse Parish is Mer Rouge. Mer Rouge has the peculiar problems of a little town in the Black Belt. It is ruled by the whites, and since the whites must stand united as rulers there is
among them a rather extreme sense of social equality which even wealth and education cannot wholly break down. They go to the same churches and there their social life centers. They send their children to the same schools except the few that go away to boarding school. All this works out fairly well as long as the character of the ruling class of whites is essentially homologous. But today a change is taking place in Morehouse Parish. There are about 20,000 inhabitants there. The white population has increased from five to six thousand in the last ten years while the Negro population has decreased from fourteen to thirteen thousand. This is because of the migration of Negro laborers to the city and north; so that instead of being a county three-fourths black it is today about two-thirds black. To replace these migrating Negroes the poor whites from the neighborhood have been pressing in. They stream in especially from one poor county directly toward the east where there is a majority of poor whites and these new comers bring problems, problems of unrest, of drink, of gambling, of wayward women.

Now Mer Rouge has traditions of the time when its white folk were great landowners protecting their women in elaborate homes and having a pretentious social code. These newer and poorer whites coming in not only brought a lower moral tone but a new economic condition. They have become tenant farmers, so that between 1900 and 1920 there was an increase of nearly one-third in the number of tenants. But the great landowners are still in the ascendancy, two hundred and fifty of them with farms of one hundred to more than a thousand acres, with crops valued at two and one half million dollars a year, chiefly cotton, corn and sugar cane. In addition to this the value of the land is rapidly increasing. It has doubled every ten years since 1900. Then too, to complicate the situation further there are a number of small Negro farmers who own their own land, some two hundred and thirty-one in all as compared with the two hundred and fifty large white landowners and one hundred and nineteen small white owners. One can easily scent here tremendous and bitter rivalry between the rich and poor white owners, between the owners and tenants, between the white and black owners, and crushed under all of it lie the mass of black tenants. These tenants are igno-
rant, forty per cent. of them acknowledge that they cannot read or write, and in truth this number should probably be sixty or seventy per cent. There is no modern wage system, but nearly all is barter and debt peonage. The county reported only one hundred dollars a year in wages for each worker, and this included the white workers as well as the colored.

Here then we have the setting. Here is the little town of Mer Rouge, which proposes to stop the growing lawlessness among the whites and the breaking down of social conventions. Shall it openly appeal to the ballot? Certainly not. There are 6,524 Negroes of voting age and only 3,000 whites; but of course there is no question in Mer Rouge of the black man’s voting. A thousand or more Negroes are landowners able to read and write, but they cannot vote. The white women, too, are disfranchised despite the law, so that the voting population consists of about 1,500 white men, and among these the new white tenants, shopkeepers, artisans and small landowners, or in other words the lawless and easy-going new comers, could outvote the whole aristocracy.

Mer Rouge, therefore, turned to the Ku Klux Klan, and when afterward the matter came out it defended itself and claimed with undoubted truth that the Ku Klux Klan was an organization of the best elements in the community and that they were trying to put down the worst, believing that they could do by secrecy and force what they could not do openly at the polls. It was natural for them to come to this conclusion. Secrecy, force and murder have been part of the Black Belt social economy for fifty years. The landlords lived with their hands on the trigger. Formerly this was because of the fear of servile revolt or the hint of it. That fear is still there; but in addition to that there is another fear and these men did not hesitate. They were used to taking the law in their hands. They face baffling social problems. A white face is no longer a badge of aristocracy. A white woman may be rival to a black concubine. Formerly the relations of white men and colored women were open and complacent. The sheriff’s son recently was killed in a colored woman’s cabin. Then too the sex distribution is illuminating: More colored women than colored men and eleven per cent. more white men
than white women. To this are added the bootleggers and the loose white women. There is no place, no treatment for them. Colored women, however decent, can always be treated like prostitutes; but unless white prostitutes are treated like ladies the whole scheme of white supremacy fails.

All this led logically, as Mer Rouge thought, to one solution: bootleggers, gamblers and bad women were to be driven out by the Ku Klux Klan. But they miscalculated. The new whites fought back. They were not scared by hoods and nightgowns. The result was appalling. Kidnapping, whipping, murder almost wholesale, torture that would shame the Middle Ages, an atmosphere of terror, hatred and feud that attracted the attention of the world. And in the midst of it all the black, driven cattle who form sixty-eight per cent. of the population were dumb.

Here were white men afraid of degradation; here were white men afraid of hunger; here were black men afraid of hunger and black men afraid of death. And here were secret midnight oath and murder seeking to right it all.

Such were the elements that make for secret mob law: economic rivalry, race hatred, class hatred, sex rivalry, religious dogmatism and before all the Shape of Fear. For years and centuries this method of organized secrecy, sworn to unlimited and ruthless action, has been used to accomplish certain things. Strong arguments have been brought to defend it and it may be admitted that one can easily see circumstances when the only way to make the survival of certain ideas and ideals certain, would be to force them through by secrecy and stealth.

But are we ready to say that this is the case in the first half of the twentieth century? Can we for a moment admit this? Is not the very thought a monstrous attack upon all that civilization and religion have accomplished?

What is there after all, of truth back of what the Klan attacks? And perhaps first, what does the Klan attack? I will not stop to argue this. I simply quote from their own blank application for membership seven of their twenty questions: “7.—Were your parents born in the United States of America?” “8.—Are you a Gentile or Jew?” “9.—Are you of the white race or of a colored race?” “13.—Do you believe in White Supremacy?” “15.—
What is your religious faith?" "17.—Of what religious faith are your parents?" "20.—Do you owe ANY KIND of allegiance to any foreign nation, government, institution, sect, people, ruler or person?"

Here then is clearly the groundwork for opposition to the foreign-born, the Jew, the colored races and the Catholic Church. I am not the one to defend Catholic or Jew. The Catholic Church and modern European civilization are largely synonymous and to attack the one is to accuse the other. For the alleged followers of Jesus Christ and worshipers of the Old Testament to revile Hebrew culture is too impudent for words. But in this crazy combination of hates fathered by the Ku Klux Klan (and so illogical that in any intelligent country it would be laughed out of court), is included the American Negro. What is the indictment against him? He was a slave. He is ignorant. He is poor. He has the stigmata of poverty and ignorance—that is crime. He laughs and sings and dances. He is black. He isn't all black. The very statement of such a bill of indictment is like accusing ashes of fire. The real arraignment of the Negro is the fear that white America with its present machinery is not going to be able to keep black folk down. They are achieving equality with startling swiftness. Neither caricature nor contempt, rape of women or insult of children, murder or burning at the stake, have succeeded in daunting this extraordinary group.

Against it open reasoning and argument has been employed but it has failed to convince even those who employed it. This was followed by propaganda; and the propaganda of emphasizing "race", "racial" characteristics, "racial" inferiority, is a propaganda which according to all modern scientific dicta is unreliable and untrue. Yet these terms flourish and these things are taught in school and college; they appear in books and lectures and they are used because of what men want them to accomplish, namely, the continual fear and hate of black folk instead of that natural rebound of sympathy and admiration which their work in a half century deserves.

But as I have said, even this propaganda has not been successful. What next then? Next comes the Ku Klux Klan. Next comes the leadership of mob and perpetration of outrage by forces,
secret, hidden and underground. And the danger and shame are not in the movement itself, so much as in the wide tolerance and sympathy which its methods evoke among educated and decent Americans. These people see in the Ku Klux Klan a way of doing and saying that which they themselves are ashamed to do and say. Go into any western town from Pittsburgh to Kansas City: “The Klan? Silly—but!—You see these Catholics, rich, powerful, silent, organized. Got all the foreigners corraled—I don’t know. And Jews—the Jews own the country. They are trying to rule the world. They are too smart, pushing, impudent. And niggers! And that isn’t all. Dagoes, Japs; and then Russia! I tell you we gotta do something. The Klan?—silly, of course—but—.”

Thus the Ku Klux Klan is doing a job which the American people, or certainly a considerable portion of them, want done; and they want it done because as a nation they have fear of the Jew, the immigrant, the Negro. They realize that the American of English descent is not holding his own physically or spiritually in this country; that America survives and flourishes because of the alien immigrant with his strong arm, his simple life, his faith and hope, his song, his art, his religion. They realize that no group in the United States is working harder to push themselves forward and upward than the Negroes; and over all this rises the Shape of Fear.

The worst aspect of all this is that when we resort to the underground method it involves a conscious surrender of Truth. It must base itself upon lies. One of the greatest difficulties in estimating the power and spread of the Ku Klux Klan is that its members are evidently sworn to lie. They are ordered to deny their membership in the Klan; they are ordered to deny their participation in certain of its deeds; they are ordered above all to keep at least partially secret its real objects and desires. Now the lie has often been used to advance human culture, but it is an extremely dangerous weapon, and surely we have lived beyond the need of it today.

Consequently the greatest thing that we have to fear in any such underground movement as the Ku Klux Klan, a thing that makes it much more fearful than anything that has been alleged
of Bolshevism or Fascism, is the danger and ease of its being used for exactly the opposite of the things for which it is established or which the thoughts or ideals which its leaders profess. If it is possible to establish a widespread underground movement against Jews, Negroes and Catholics, why isn’t it just as easy to establish similar movements against millionaires, machinery and foreign commerce, or against “Anglo-Saxons”, Protestants and Germans, or against any set of people or set of ideas which any particular group of people dislike, hate or fear? It may be said that at present it is possible to mobilize larger numbers of people in a common hatred against the Hebrew race, the black race, and the Catholic Church than against any similar things; but this is not necessarily true and it certainly is not true in all places and will not be true at all times.

Without doubt, of all the dangerous weapons that civilized man has attempted to use in order to advance human culture the secret mass lie is the most dangerous and the most apt to prove a boomerang. This is the real thing that we are to fear in the Ku Klux Klan. We need not fear its logic. It has no logic. Whatever there is of truth in its hatred of three groups of Americans can be discussed openly and fearlessly by civilized men. If Negroes are ignorant underbidders of labor, unhealthy and lazy aspirants to undeserved equality there are plain and well-known social restraints and remedies. First, to improve the condition of Negroes so far as it is improvable; secondly, to teach them the reason behind the objections to their rise so far as there are reasons; and above all to examine thoroughly and honestly what the real questions at issue are. If the hierarchy of the Catholic church is in any way threatening democracy in America there is a chance for perfectly open and honest investigation and conference between this young democracy and that old and honorable government of the spirit of men. If the Jew in self-defense against age-long persecution has closed his fist against the world there is more than a chance to clasp that human hand. In fine, unless we are willing to give up human civilization in order to preserve civilization we cannot for a moment contemplate turning to secret, underground methods as a cure for anything; and the appearance of such a movement is not a case where we stop to ask
whether the movement in itself has at present laudable objects or not. It does not make any difference what the Ku Klux Klan is fighting for or against. Its method is wrong and dangerous and uncivilized, and those who oppose it, whether they be its victims like the Jews, Catholics and Negroes, or those who are lauded as its moral sponsors like the white Southerners, the American Legion and the “Anglo-Saxons”, it is the duty of all these people to join together in solemn phalanx against the method which is an eternal menace to human culture.

W. E. Burghardt Du Bois.

THE KU KLUX KLAN OF TODAY

BY WILLIAM STARR MYERS
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It is just a little more than two years since I contributed an article to The North American Review under the title Know Nothing and Ku Klux Klan, in which the position was taken that the movement, of which this organization is the outstanding representative, embodied a sincere, though mistaken, effort to preserve intact those peculiar principles based upon individual responsibility in religion and law that have found their expression in this country and in the institutions known as “American”. There were reasons which gave superficial cause for the fears of our self-appointed protectors of America, such as alien organizations in our midst, interference in politics by various religious bodies, and an overwhelming influx of immigrants. On the other hand, the Ku Klux Klan was merely a recrudescence of a like movement, the “Know Nothings” of some seventy years ago, and likewise would follow its earlier prototype in gradual disintegration and decay, due to the fact that while professing “one hundred per cent. Americanism”, in itself it was a direct denial of two of the most fundamental principles upon which our country and its Government are built—namely, racial and religious freedom.

While I do not desire to appear opinionated or self-complacent, yet after going over the events of the last two years in retrospect,