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*The Reactions of the Ku Klux Klan towards the Rise of  
the Civil Rights Movement (1950s-1965s)*

A Thesis Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment for the Requirement of the Master Degree  
in English

**Option:** Literature and Civilization

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# Dedication

*I dedicate this work to:*

*My parents with great love*

*The dearest people to my heart who supported me without doubt*

*My lovely sisters: Nassima, Djamila, Selma, Leila, and Sabrina who have stood by me in  
difficult moments*

*My dearest brothers: AbdeAllah, Redouane, and Akram*

*My best*

*friends: Aicha, Fatima, Nora, Hadjira, Wafa, Asma, Nahla, Siham, Leila, Karima, Mouna  
and Hanane.*

*My nephews: Adam, Kosay, Sohaib, hossam, and Fadi*

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*My aunts: Soria and Akila..*

*My uncle: Alhadj.*

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**Abstract**

The present dissertation has concerned itself with the attitude of the Ku Klux Klan towards the rise of the Civil Rights Movement Era between 1950s and 1965s. That movement was the most important event for the African-Americans as they aimed to end segregation in public places like cinemas, restaurants and schools. The African-Americans adopted peaceful protests like marches and demonstrations. It also intends to investigate how the Ku Klux Klan member's response to that revolution. The Ku Klux Klan was a racist organization which aimed at imposing its white supremacy, as well as at preventing integration of the blacks using terror and cruel means. That group which reacted severely and violently against the Civil Rights Movement Era and the Negro Revolution. Its members were always expressing their anger by unfair crimes like killing, lynching, hanging, shooting, kidnapping...etc. Finally, this study also is going to make a through description of some examples of the victims of that terrorist group which included innocent people and civil rights' leaders.

**Key Terms:** Ku Klux Klan, Civil Rights Movement, attitude, Negro Revolution

### الملخص

هذه الدراسة خصت نفسها بدراسة رد فعل ( الكوكلاكس كلان ) اتجاه اندلاع حركة الحقوق المدنية في الفترة ما بين: 1950\_ 1965 . هذه الحركة كانت من أهم الأحداث بالنسبة للزنج الأمريكيان , لأنها كانت تهدف الى إنهاء التمييز العنصري في الأماكن العامة ، كالسينما، المطاعم والمدارس. الزنج الأمريكيان انتهجوا سياسة المظاهرات ، المسيرات و الإحتجاجات السلمية . كما تهدف إلى التحقيق في رد فعل أفراد هذه المنظمة اتجاه هذه الثورة مع الإندماج مع السود. وذلك باستعمال وسائل وحشية كالارهاب مثلاً . هذه المجموعة التي كان رد فعلها قاس وعنيف اتجاه حركة الحقوق المدنية والثورة الزنجية. كان أفرادها يطلقون العنان لغضبهم بجرائم ظالمة كالقتل ، الإعدام , الشنق , اطلاق الرصاص , والاختطاف . وأخيراً تهدف هذه الدراسة الى القيام بوصف مكثف لبعض عينات ضحايا هذه المجموعة الارهابية التي تتضمن أشخاص أبرياء وأعضاء من حركة الحقوق المدنية.

*الكلمات المفتاحية: الكوكلاكس كلان ، حركة الحقوق المدنية، الموقف*

## Table of Content

Dedication.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Content .....	iv
List of Tables.....	vii
List of Abbreviations.....	xi
Introduction.....	7.
 <b>Chapter One: The Historical Background of the Ku Klux Klan (1866s-1965s)</b>	
1.1. Introduction.....	10
1.2. The Origins of the Ku Klux Klan.....	10
1.3. The Founding of the First Ku Klux Klan.....	11
1.4. The Ideological Principles of the Ku Klux Klan.....	12
1.4.1. Political Beliefs of the KKK.....	13
1.4.2. Religious Beliefs of the KKK.....	13
1.4.3. Racial Beliefs of the KKK.....	14
1.5. The Development of the KKK .....	15
1.5.1. The First Era of the KKK (1866).....	15
1.5.2. The Second Era of the KKK (1915s-1944s).....	16
1.5.3. The Third Era of the KKK 1950s-1965s) .....	17
1.6. Some Symbols of the KKK .....	20
1.7. Conclusion .....	20
 <b>Chapter Two: The Most Important Events of the Civil Rights Movement (1950s-1960s)</b>	
2.1. Introduction.....	21
2.2. An Overview of Some of the Main Events of the Civil Rights Movement.....	22

2.2.1. Montgomery Bus Boycott.....	23
2.2.2. Desegregation of Schools .....	24
2.2.3. Sit-Ins .....	25
2.2.4. Freedom Riders .....	27
2.2.5. The Voting Rights Act of 1965.....	27
2.3. Some of the Most Leaders of the Civil Rights Movement.....	28
2.3.1. Rosa Parks (1924-2005).....	28
2.3.2. Martin Luther King. Jr (1929-1968).....	29
2.3.3. James Farmer (1920-1999).....	29
2.3.4. John Lewis (1940- ).....	30
2.3.5. Malcolm X (1925-1965).....	30
2.3.6. Thurgood Marshall (1908-1993)..	30
2.4. White Southerners' Reactions to the Civil Rights Movement.....	31
2.5. Conclusion.....	32

### **Chapter Three: The Reactions of the Ku Klux Klan towards the Civil Rights Movement**

3.1. Introduction.....	33
3.2. The Reactions of the KKK.....	34
3.3. Bombings by the Ku Klux Klan (1950s-1965s).....	35
3.3.1. The Sixteenth Street Baptist Church Bombing on September 15 <sup>th</sup> .1963.....	35
3.4. Some Famous Murders Killed by the KKK.....	37
3.4.1. The Murder of Emmett Till on August 1955.....	37

3.4.2. The killing of Willie Edwards JR on January 23 <sup>rd</sup> , 1957.....	39
3.4.3. The Killing of Henry Hezekiah Dee, Charles Eddie Moore on May 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 1964 .....	39
3.4.4. The Murder of Viola Gregg Liuzzo on March 25 <sup>th</sup> , 1965.....	40
3.4.5. The Killing of Vernon Dahmer on January 10 <sup>th</sup> , 1966.....	40
3.4.6. The Killing of Ben Chester White on June 10 <sup>th</sup> , 1966 .....	41
3.4.7. The Killing of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner on June 21 <sup>st</sup> , 1964.....	42
3.5. Conclusion.....	42
General Conclusion.....	43
Works Cited.....	44

**List of Tables**

Table 01: The Change in the Klan's Estimated Membership over Time.....

Table 02: The States as being notable for active or growing Klan chapters

Table 03: The Case of Brown V. Board Education Timeline

## **List of Abbreviations**

KKK	Ku Klux Klan
WKKK	Women Ku Klux Klan
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Community
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
ADL	Anti-Defamation League

## General Introduction

This study has concerned itself on shedding the light on one of the most anxious characteristics of the American history. For long years, America has considered itself as the cradle of democracy, justice, peace, equity, etc. But, during the Reconstruction of the South after the Civil War on December 24, 1865, when the blacks were given more rights to be free, act, vote, hold public offices and gain power, the white southerners were very annoyed by the Reconstruction practices and its improvements. So, some of them organized a terrorist group and formed a secret organization of white men in the southern states of the US and called themselves the Ku Klux Klan or the Klan. The first two words of the organization's name derived from the Greek word "kyklos," meaning "circle" or "band" and added the word "Klan" for its alliterative sound. They also made up titles for themselves, like: 'grand Cyclops', 'lictor', 'magi', and 'night hawks'. It was firstly formed in Pulaski, Tennessee in 1866, and its members claimed for white supremacy, white nationalism, and anti-immigration. Moreover, the first Klan came into being in the summer of 1866, as a social club by six ex-confederate officers, and then they brought back to life again in the southeast during the early and mid-1920s, while the latter Klan reappeared after the World War II opposing the **Civil Right Movements** (1950-1965s). (McVeigh 35)

The Ku Klux Klan main goal was to kill any black who claims for political progress or change. It also acted to overthrow the Reconstruction Republican State Governments, and enforce the subordination of the newly freed black people. They rode by night through the regions of the South, beating, lynching, and killing any black, it did this through murders and assaults that totaled in the thousands. Moreover, the Ku Klux Klan or the KKK adopted white costumes such as wearing long white robes and tall

pointed hats to hide their faces and their identities. Their Christian sign was a burning wooden cross in front of the houses of African-Americans. (O'Callaghan 56)

The Klan established what they called an “Invisible Empire of the South” by the leader “Grand Wizard”. The Ku Klux Klan raised and declined but it did not disappear at all, i.e. its members became a shadow of their former selves.

This study also sheds the lights on the reactions of that terrorist group towards the rise of the **Negro Revolution** in 1950s and 1965s when the blacks demanded integration with the white people.

### **1-Research Problem**

The USA is considered as being a democratic nation and it is proud of being a model of practicing democracy by its claiming against terrorism all over the world. From this point, the present research undertakes a provoking question on what were the different attitudes of the Ku Klux Klan towards the raise of the **Civil Rights Movement**. It also attempts to answer the following subsidiary questions:

- If the Klan was given much freedom to act, what would happen to the American society in general and the African-Americans in particular?
- Why were they considered as terrorists, although they themselves claimed for political and social reforms for the American way of life?

### **2- Aim of the Research**

As far as this study is concerned, we rely on one of the characteristics of the American history. Parallel to this objective, we also intend to achieve the following secondary objectives: first, to shed light on one of the most fascinating, religious, social and political movement in America. Second, we try to trace the historical development of this violent group which dominated the American society for a long period. Third, we intend to analyze the main causes that led to the appearance of the Ku Klux Klan.

Finally, we seek to discover the attitude of that terrorist group towards the raise of civil rights movement.

### **3-Scope of the Research**

In this research, we are going to make an attempt to study the attitude of the Ku Klux Klan towards the Civil Rights Movement in the United States of America from the beginning of 1950s to the end in 1965s.

### **4-Significance of the Study**

The study of the Ku Klux Klan organization is important for students of American studies. Also, it makes them know more about the nature of that organization, its existence, and its attitudes towards the Civil Rights Movement. It is also so worthy to understand the attitude of that terrorist group towards the American society in general and the African-Americans in particular. This study has also an important significance because it helps us to get an idea about that terrorist group which helped in the appearance of the Civil Rights Movement by its violent and criminal crimes. This movement marked a watershed in the African-Americans' history.

### **5-Research Methodology**

The course of that research focuses on different primary sources such as books, encyclopedias, and professional works. It also examines relevant papers and articles dealing with my research topic. Moreover, this study relies on some the different studies made by historians and scholars related to my research. This work relies on the historical and descriptive methods. Firstly, we deal with the historical approach in order to retracing the historical evolutions of that terrorist group, secondly, we focus more on the descriptive approach to clarify and describe the reactions of that violent organization towards the Civil Rights Movement.

## **6-Structure of the Research**

The first chapter focuses on the historical background of the Ku Klux Klan and describes the different features of special periods of that organization. The second chapter discusses the most important events of the Civil Rights Movement struggle from 1950s to 1965 s and the reasons that pushed the African-Americans to declare that revolution. The third chapter deals with the reactions of the Ku Klux Klan towards the rise of the Civil Rights Movement which considered as the central pillars of the African-Americans history.

## **Chapter one: The Historical Background of the Ku Klux Klan (1866-1965)**

### **1.1. Introduction**

Before examining the attitude of the Ku Klux Klan towards the rise of the Civil Rights Movement (1950s-1960s), the present chapter looks at the historical background of that hatred society which is considered as the ghost of the Civil War. America's first fraternal organization haunted America with hatred and violence. The Ku Klux Klan first aim was to deny and sabotage the black's rights by all the violent means. The memory of that illegal organization and its whips was still fresh in the minds of the Blacks. This chapter will discuss the following points: the origins of the Ku Klux Klan, their ideological principles, their evolution, and their some symbols.

### **1.2. The origins of the Ku Klux Klan**

Several special events in the U.S history had been necessary to form a militant organization like the Ku Klux Kan; in this case, the American Civil War was the first cause for it. The Ku Klux Klan formed itself in response to the radical changes that this war had brought. The white Southerners enjoyed the large lands of plantation worked by slaves, but after the war they found their way of life was completely broken down. The war also mutated the South politically. Before the War the Southerners were powerful in the U.S.A government but after the war they lost their power. As a consequence, the Civil War itself was considered as the impetus for the KKK. During the period of Reconstruction that followed the Civil War, the reconstructed state government did much to improve, develop social services and protect civil rights. The Southern states agreed to give the blacks the same rights that the white had. (Klobuchar 16)

July 1866, the Congress passed a Civil Rights Act and established an agency called the Freedmen's Bureau to make sure that blacks in the South could enjoy their

rights. The Congress passed the Fourteen Amendments in July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1868. It gave African Americans the rights of citizenship and the right to vote.

By 1870, all the Southern states had new “Reconstruction Government”. Then, most were made up of Blacks, and few White southerners were willed to work with them. The Reconstruction government contained honest men who really aimed at improving the South. For example, they provided cars for orphans and blind, built of railroads, and schools for both White and Black children.

Reconstruction improvements did not stop Southern whites from hating and sabotaging it, since they believed it aimed to give the freedmen the same rights they had. In respect of that, the white men started to form a terrorist group to frighten blacks and deprived them their rights. The most famous and the first one was the Ku Klux Klan movement. (O’Callaghan 56)

### **1.3. The founding of the first Ku Klux Klan**

In the late spring of 1866, six young confederate officers (James Crowe, Richard Reed, Calvin Jones, James John Lester, Frank McCord, and John Kennedy) met in a law office in the house of Mr. Thomas M .Jones in Pulaski-Tennessee and formed a secret organization fighting for the rights of the white inhabitants and sabotaging the rights of the African –Americans. These men were well educated; some of them attended university. This hating group chose a name for its members derived from the Greek word “Kyklos” which means “circle” or “band”. After a moment, they changed it to Ku Klux and later added the word Klan. The Ku Klux Klan wanted their club to attract attention, and it did. They shaped their complex system of ranks and gave each leader a title: the president was called the “Grand Cyclops”, and the vice president the “Grand Magi”. The whole group itself was called a “den”. The members had to take an oath not

to reveal anything about the secrecy of their group, and even the names of other members. (Klobuchar 18, 19)

The KKK members rode out at night dressed in bizarre costumes .They wore a loose robes with tall pointed hats .Their faces were covered with hoods. Slaves thought of them as ghosts of confederate dead. They announced that they had not had a drink of water since the Battle of Shiloh, major battle f the American Civil War, fought on 6, 7 April 1862.They felt pleasure in scaring African-Americans with their tricks. (Klobuchar 20)

The Klan's stated purpose was to protect the poor, the weak, and the defenseless, especially, the widows. But another purpose began to take a shape, anyone who wanted to join their group, had to take a Vow that he denied equality for blacks and advocated the reign of the government by and for the white men. (Klobuchar 20)

At first, the Ku Klux Klan decided to create a club just for fun, but after the election of Nathaniel Bedford Forrest as a first leader of the Klan to be their Grand Wizard and the join of other dens like the Knights of White Camilla, a racist organization had the same beliefs as the KKK, the group's activities became more and more brutal and cruel. As time went on the KKK, they turned more and more violent. They hunt African-Americans down and used various ways of torturing them like lynching, castration, shooting, hanging, whipping, and burning. (qtd. in Kovakova).

#### **1.4. The ideological principles of the Ku Klux Klan**

The fear and the threat of non-white minorities were two main problems in the ideology of the Klan. The Klan always felt that its members were under threat from Sinister Jewish conspiracy; this means that the Ku Klux Klan considered the Jewish people as evil creatures threatening their ideologies by illegal plans .According the Testament of the Bible, the Jesus Christ was betrayed by a Jewish person. The Klan

developed and encouraged itself to protect the life of the white Americans, and to take revenge from their enemies .At the core of the Klan beliefs is the idea that violence is justified to protect white America. The Klan's ideology can be classified into political, religious, and racial beliefs. (qtd. in Akins 129)

#### **1.4.1. Political beliefs**

One of the strongest beliefs behind the Klan's political ideology is that the non-whites and immigrants endangered their lives. So, what do the members of the Ku Klux Klan really want, was to face that danger either by themselves or by the intervention of the government.

The Klan thought that the government gave a hand to non-whites and immigrants more than they deserved. Thus, the government itself became an enemy in their eyes. The Klan's specific problems are immigration, free trade agreements ,”racial purity”, foreign aid, gun control laws, gay rights ...etc. The Klan first target was to protect white America “by, for, and of whites”. The Klan did this because they made a doctrine based on anti-immigration, white supremacy, and nationalism. For example, they called for a halt to the development of immigrations on their website, suggested that “Unemployment, overcrowding and crime are the results of our open gate policy”. America represented a very great theme in the Klan ideology. (qtd.in Akins, 129)

In respect to the Texas Knights, they made this clear on the Ku Klux Klan's website:

“Enemies from within are destroying the United States of America. An unholy coalition of anti-white ,anti Christian liberals, socialists, feminists, homosexuals, and militant minorities have managed to seize control of our government and mass media... We shall liberate our nation

from these savage criminals and restore law and order to America”. (qtd. in Akins,129)

#### **1.4.2. Religious beliefs**

The KKK is considered by historians and even some Americans as a Christian terrorist ideology. Their beliefs were based on a “religious foundation in Christianity. “The Ku Klux Klan aimed at reestablishing Protestant Christian values in America at any cost. The KKK believed that “Jesus was the first Klansman”. Also, their Cross burning was used in order to show respect and reverence for Jesus Christ. Most of the members of the Klan share the same emphasis on the 14 words slogan “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children”. They also supported the racist and anti-Semitic Christian identity sect (ADL.10). This is clearly explained on the White Camelia Knights website:

[We] understand that most people have been educated to believe that the jewish [sic] people are God’s chosen people. Christians have even gone as far as to call themselves Judeo-Christians [sic], they become extremely hostile at the Klan whenever this subject is mentioned. But, we are followers of Christ and even if our beliefs are unpopular, they are still correct. [ we]constantly told that Christ was a jew [sic] that Moses and Abraham were jews[sic] ,but,this belief is incorrect.(qtd. in Akins,130).

#### **1.4.3. Racial beliefs**

“Our definition of a nigger, no matter what color they are, is a dirty, lowdown person who takes and takes and takes from society and does not give anything back,” stated a Klansman when he was asked about blacks. (qtd. in Wade)

Race is the most important issue which covered the ideology of that terrorist group. The Klan believed in that, in turn, the non white races and minorities are threat to

the life of white Americans. As an example, the Ku Klux Klan believed that the African-Americans are a source of burden as they were inferior and have no moralities. They are rapists of white woman and they were the working class white fears. It also considered them as lazy, unintelligent and they are the cause of the failure of the whites in their career. The Klan demonized and dehumanized the African-Americans and treated them as animals. (qtd. in Akins, 132). According to C. Edward Foster (1997):

The Pennsylvania Ku Klux Klan recognizes the simple fact that ALL African niggers are all savage, bloodthirsty, Satanic beasts ... In the last 30 years these cannibalistic apes fiendishly murdered over 50000 white Christians. A nigger cannot be a Christian .Voodoo is the only appropriate religion for these depraved demonic, vile, ape like creatures of jungle darkness. (qtd. in Akins,132-133)

### **1.5. The development of the Ku Klux Klan**

The Ku Klux Klan has persisted through several eras of change in America's political climate .Firstly, the KKK has emerged in 1866 by a small young confederate officers. At the beginning, this terrorist group organized its members in order to play its boyish pranks exclusively on Blacks by telling jokes and tricks to frighten them. Their purpose was to found a "hilarious social club" that means that the KKK organized its members just for fun by playing tricks and jokes on the blacks. One of its founders later told congressional investigators that "The impression sought to be made upon freedmen". (Newton, 3)

#### **1.5.1 The first era of the Ku Klux Klan (1866)**

After the meeting of the six-confederate veterans, the Ku Klux Klan developed a doctrine based on white supremacy in the era of Reconstruction. By 1877, the KKK had

become a paramilitary group in order to place white nationalism above individualism and to enforce their set of beliefs like white supremacy, nationalism and anti-immigration. The KKK goal is to suppress the Reconstruction in the Southern states of the United States of America which aimed to give many opportunities to the new freed people to vote and gain more civil rights. This decision exasperated the Klan and saw that the government gave the blacks hollow rights.

In addition, the Northerners saw in the Klan “an attempt to win through terrorism what they were unable to win in the battlefield”. According to that quotation we notice that the KKK was a weak organization that’s why it used terror to achieve their aims .Thus the Klan expanded in many southern states and became very violent. Numerous victims were incriminated in lynching, killing, beating and many other ways of torturing. Allen Trelease estimated that “more than 1,000 racial murders occurred in Louisiana alone” (qtd in Simi and Futrell 10). These Klan atrocities were the main stimulus for the adoption of the Civil Rights Act of 1871, then known as the Ku Klux Klan Act which forbade the activities of the KKK .So many members were sent to prison by the Freed Man’s bureau and the golden age of the KKK is over in 1871 (Simi and Futrell 10-11).

### **1.5.2 The second era of the KKK (1915s-1944s)**

The Klan reemerged in 1915 by the former minister William Josef Simmons in Atlanta, Stone Mountain who was inspired by Thomas Dixon’s 1905 book “the Klansmen” and D. W. Griffith’s 1915 film “Birth of a Nation” to assert white Anglo-Saxon Protestant control over society. Simmons unified his members in order to formulate a new doctrine based on the repression of the African-Americans and anti-Communist, anti-Semitic views, anti-Jewish, and most importantly anti-Catholics. (Simi and Futrell 10)

Simmons issued an invitation: "Now let the Niggers, Catholics, Jews, and all others who disdain my Imperial Wizardry, come out!" His followers created a set of customs and rituals like the burning cross. One of the most important events that led to the rebirth of the Klan is the numerous immigrants who came from Germany, Italy, Russia, and Great Britain. They totaled in 23 million people. (Bullard, 14)

Another major event which contributed and prepared the ground for the Ku Klux Klan was the First World War. This war had a great effect on the White Americans in the European battlefields. So, the KKK distrusted and hated the aliens and Union leaders. (Bullard16).

The KKK reached its peak during the mid-1920s by approximately 2 and 5 million nationwide. Simmons focused on a doctrine based on "100% pure Americanism" and the KKK promoted Americanism as its nationalistic ideology which means adhering, loving, and respecting the nation of America but opposing the ideas and ways of foreigners. (Semi and Futrell, 10)

Later, women branch of the KKK was established. They were 100% White American women. Also, the WKKK cooperated with the KKK and they shared the same beliefs, ideas and rituals as the KKK did. The WKKK focused on the enemies of the United States of America which were African-Americans, Jews, Roman Catholics and immigrants. After inside problems in the organization, such as; financial scandals, more brutal crimes, corruption and struggles over money and power proved ruinous. So, many members of the KKK left the Klan and it slowly lost its influence. Consequently, the second era of the Ku Klux Klan closed down and the claim for the threat of Roman Catholics seemed as an illusory. (qtd.in Kovocova,09).

### 1.5.3 The third era of the Ku Klux Klan (1950-1965)

The emergence of the Civil Rights Movement of 1960s confronted the Ku Klux Klan with the third major challenge of its history. The Klan came into being again in response to the decision by the U.S Supreme Court in 1896 .This decision stated the prohibition of segregation in public schools; as a result, the demand for Civil Rights moved out in all the streets. Thus, these two events were the central pillars of the explosion of the Ku Klux Klan in many states like Alabama, Louisiana....etc. (Chalmers 03).

In addition, the African-Americans started to fight against all kinds of segregation in Schools, restaurants, cinemas, libraries...etc. This revolution started by the event of Rosa Park on Thursday December, 1955 when she refused to let her sit for a white passenger and as a result, the bus driver called the police. Rosa Park was jailed for her great deed. Her act was the root cause of the rise of the Civil Rights Movement by the leader Martin Luther King. (Degran 10)

Consequently, the KKK did not allow that attempt for the African –Americans. It reorganized its group by the Grand Wizard Robert Shelton who reformulated the Klan and turned to more violent activities like the famous one, the bomb attack on Birmingham, Alabama Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in 1963 where four young girls were killed and twenty three people were hurt. With time running out, the African-Americans achieved desegregation in restaurants, schools, cinemas ...etc. The end of the den became apparent in front of that successful movement the Blacks have attained. As a result, the Ku Klux Klan atrocities stopped and its power declined. The den fragmented into anarchy (qtd.in Kovacova 10-11).

**Table 01: The following table shows the change in the Klan's estimated membership over time**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Membership</b>
1871	550,000
1920	4,000,000
1924	6,000,000
1930	30,000
1965	42,000

Source: “Ku Klux Klan”. April 2010.[http://en. Wikipedia, org /Wiki/ Ku Klux Klan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ku_Klux_Klan).  
December 26, 2011.

Table one indicates that the Ku Klux Klan reorganized its members through special and different periods. Their membership raised and declined but never disappeared at all. For Example, the KKK reached its climax in the year of 1924 by a 6000000 members. Unlike the year 1924, the Klan decreased into 30,000 memberships in 1930. In 1965, for example, the Civil Rights Movement helped in the rise of the Klansmen membership again.

**Table 02: the Following states as being notable for active or growing Klan chapters**

<b>South</b>	<b>Midwest</b>	<b>Great Plains</b>	<b>Mid-Atlantic</b>
Alabama	Indiana	Iowa	Maryland
Arkansas	Kentucky	Nebraska	New Jersey

Florida	Michigan		Pennsylvania
Georgia	Ohio		West Virginia
Louisiana			
Mississippi			
South Carolina			
Tennessee			
Texas			

**Source:** Anti-Defamation League, the *Ku Klux Klan Rebounds*, (United States of America: N.P, 2007, web.).[http://www.adl.org/presrele/extremism\\_72/4973\\_72.htm](http://www.adl.org/presrele/extremism_72/4973_72.htm),12 Fev.2012.

In the second table, we notice that the Southern states were the targeted places by the Ku Klux Klan. The KKK directed their violence and hatred into the Blacks who were lived there. The Southern states were always under attack because a huge number of black people lived there.

### **1.6. Some symbols of the Ku Klux Klan**

The Ku Klux Klan used many symbols. The famous one was the cross in a circle with the “blood drop” in the center .According to their explanation and their interpretation; the cross symbolized the bloodshed by Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for the White Aryan Race. Another important symbol that the KKK used was cross wheel which is supposed to advert the original word, the name the Ku Klux Klan is made of, Kuklos, which means the circle. The cross wheel also confirmed the unity and motion of Ku Klux Klan and it is used as a hate symbol. Moreover, the KKK used the abbreviation O.R.I.O.N which means “our race is our nation”. The Fourteen words “We

must secure the existence of our people and the future for white children.”And the five words which signify “I have nothing to say”; the KKK used it as a code of silence in order to avoid any prosecution by law enforcement. (ADL, 11)

### **1.7. Conclusion**

To be blunt, the Ku Klux Klan haunted America with hate and violence and more particularly African-Americans. This America’s hating society conducted its doctrine for the sake of its interests. For example, the Ku Klux Klan groups used anti-immigration and white supremacy sentiments as propaganda purposes and to attract publicity. The ghost of the Civil War splintered into many Klaverns or chapters: the first, the second, and the third Klan. The Klan feared to become a pawn of the laws of the federal government like the adoption of the Civil Rights Act of 1871 because the Ku Klux Klan was a racist organization from the first day. The KKK used a wave of violence as an instrument of fear to frighten the African-Americans. As Edward H .Dixon 1868 stated:”the Ku Klux Klan is the living dead, and the strength of weakness.”(qtd.in Wade 30).

## **The Second Chapter: The Most Important Events of the Civil Rights Movement (1950-1965).**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The United States of America witnessed a political and cultural process in 1950s-1965s. That important event or turning point in the history of the African-Americans in particular and the American society in general was known as the African-American Civil Rights Movement. That event was considered by historians as the second Reconstruction that followed the first one after the Civil War (1861-65).

That voice of African-Americans aimed at putting an end for racial segregation that the Blacks suffered from for a long time. Blacks also attempted to gain full citizenship, to have the right to vote, the right to attend the same schools, the rights to feast in the same places, and overall the right to be considered as human being. The Civil Rights Movement, really, achieved many positive things by non-violent protest actions like marches, peaceful demonstrations and civilized protests.

As a result the Civil Rights Movement of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century marked a watershed in African-Americans history because it helped to change the attitudes of many white Americans towards the African-Americans. Throughout experience the Blacks learned that freedom will never come without struggle and it must be taken, and not given. Blacks organized bus boycotts and freedom riders to bar racial segregation in buses, restaurants, and interstate buses. They also made organization such as SNCC, NAACP, CORE and others which prepared campaigns to enforce the government making segregation in all public facilities unconstitutional.

## **2.2. An Overview of Some of the Main Events of the Civil Rights Movement**

Through the American history, the African Americans suffered from many unfair treatment .White Americans humiliated and degraded them by all the means. The Blacks were considered as second class citizens. But, after the Civil War (1861-65) slavery was abolished and the Blacks gained some of their rights like the right to vote. The history of the Blacks changed with three amendments to the constitution: the thirteenth Amendments (1865) abolished slavery, the Fourteenth Amendments (1868) granted citizenship to former slaves, and the fifteenth Amendments (1870) gave Blacks the same voting rights as Whites (Friedman 35).

In addition, the Supreme Court announced Plessey vs. Ferguson which was a decision made racial segregation a legal part of the American way of life by “separate but equal”. In the South, new laws passed by the constitution in order to prevent Blacks from voting because of their inability to pay the poll taxes. All these obstacles the Whites created just for eliminating Black people from representation. The African Americans did not support such unfair and injustice laws and treatments. As a consequence, they decided to make a Negro Revolt to stop those deeds whatever the price was. (Friedman 35)

On the first of December, 1955, a Black woman named Rosa Parks sat down on the back of the bus as she was entitled to do. After the bus became crowded, the bus driver ordered her to leave her sit to a white man, but she refused. As a result, Rosa was arrested and jailed in Alabama. The African-Americans realized that this was the right moment for demanding equality .Concerning the event of Rosa Parks, Martin Luther king “the leader of the Civil rights movement” decided to use Montgomery bus boycott (Degnan 10).

Harvard Sitkoff says in his Struggle for Black Equality that (Sitkoff, The Struggle for Black Equality)

The Black Panther publicist Eldridge Cleaver would later write about that moment: “Somewhere in the universe, a gear in the machinery had shifted.” At the next stop, Court Square, where slaves had once been auctioned, the driver summoned the police to arrest Rosa Parks for violating the municipal ordinance mandating segregation on publicly owned vehicles. Martin Luther King, Jr. would describe this as the moment when Parks had been “tracked down” by the Zeitgeist- the spirit of the times.... (61)

### **2.2.1. Montgomery Bus Boycott**

It was a remarkable event in the African-American struggle for Civil Rights. Before 1955, the white bus drivers humiliated them by practicing segregation laws. Those laws forced the Blacks to sit on the back of the bus. In some situations, it obliged them to leave their seats for white men. In 1950, Blacks in Montgomery discussed boycotting the bus in order to get best treatment and to end racial segregation. (Norrell sec 3)

This non-violent protest as Mr. Martin Luther king said” we are impatient for justice but we will protest with love, there will be no violence on our part” encourage each Black citizen of Montgomery to refuse traveling by public transport either going to work or attending schools. After that, Black taxi companies offered rides to the boycotters and fifty black car owners. As a consequence, the public transport lost money. Whites tried to stop the boycott but Martin Luther King and Montgomery Improvement Association continued the boycott. On January 30th, 1965, the Ku Klux

Klan bombed the house of king who later on said “we have to meet hate with love” (Degnan 10)

After 381 days of long and hard struggle, the African-Americans achieved their goal. The buses were officially integrated on 21<sup>st</sup> December, 1956. As an old Negro woman said “our feet are tired but our souls were rested” (Degnan 13)

### **2.2.2. Desegregation of schools**

Another struggle for African-American was desegregation of schools. African-Americans had their own schools but they differed from the white ones. In the year of 1954, Oliver Brown in Topeka, Kansas, asked NAACP for helping his daughter Linda. Linda Brown suffered a lot to attend her school which was far from her home. She could not attend an elementary school for Whites because of the decision of the Supreme Court “separate but Equal”. Many parents joined Brown and asked for desegregated schools. The Supreme Court abolished “Separate but Equal” .Finally, many Black students could join schools for whites. The case of Linda Brown called: “Brown Vs Board of Education”. It was considered as most important event for integration for schools, the activists of Civil Rights Movement reached. Brown Vs Board of Education ended the idea of “Separate but Equal” and made segregation in public schools illegal and unconstitutional. Finally, that case ended on May 17, 1954. (“Brown .V. Board of Education”) .The effect of segregation on educational development of Negro children stated by a court:

Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law, for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the Negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation

with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to [retard] the educational and mental development of Negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racially integrated school system. ... We conclude that, in the field of public education, the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. ("Brown .V. Board of Education")

Ironically, the decision of "Separate but Equal" claimed that colored people and white ones were separated but had the same rights, so, how we can understand equality? We can notice that the decision of "Separate but Equal" could affect the hearts and minds of Negro children because separate them from others of the same age and the same qualification generates the feeling of inferiority.

Table1: This Table Shows the Case of Brown V. Board Education Timeline

Year	Event
<b>1950</b>	The parents of black students tried to enroll them in the local "white schools."
<b>1951</b>	The suit was started by Oliver Brown and other parents.
<b>1952</b>	The Supreme Court first heard from the lawyer
<b>1953</b>	One justice died and had to be replaced.
<b>1954</b>	The case ended in favor of Linda Brown and the other Blacks near her.

Source: "Brown.V.Board Education." January 2002. [library.thinkquest.org](http://library.thinkquest.org). 12 April 2012

<[http://library.thinkquest.org/J0112391/brown\\_v\\_of\\_education.html](http://library.thinkquest.org/J0112391/brown_v_of_education.html)>.

### **2.2.3. Sit-Ins**

Sit –Ins are another protests by the Blacks against racial discrimination in segregated places like restaurants, churches, schools...etc .That struggle taken by the students of university who played a great important role in the Civil Rights Movement. That idea was founded by Student nonviolent Coordinating Committee .That organization came up with new ways for preventing segregation in restaurant with nonviolent actions like “read-ins” in libraries, “watch-ins” in cinemas and “kneel –ins” in segregated churches. (Norrel Sec 4)

On January 31, 1960 in Greensboro, North Carolina, four Black students went into a lunch counter and asked to be served. They refused to leave the restaurant till they got served. The owners of the restaurants and lunch counters refused to serve black students. They always called the police to arrest the demonstrators. But nothing could prevent the activists of the Civil Rights Movement for claiming their democracy. (Norrel sec 4) According to Sitkoff:

When asked to explain their motives, sit- ins participants answered in about as many ways as their number. They stated that their inspiration came from parents engaged in the struggle for racial justice or from teacher who dwelled on the long and noble tradition of Negro protest, or even from whites, who urged the necessity to demonstrate against Jim Crow. Sometimes they stressed personal experiences. (61)

The black student planed another arrangement for sit-ins struggle. It was that the students would be dresses in their best Sunday clothing. James J. Kilpatrick, the

editor of the Richmond News Leader and a vehement segregationist, noted that this created an interesting contrast with the whites who came to annoy them:

Here were the colored students, in coats, white shirts, ties, and one of them was reading Goethe and one was taking notes from a biology text. [The students often brought schoolbooks with them to sit-ins so they could study.] And here, on the sidewalk outside was a gang of white boys come to heckle, a ragtail rabble, slack-jawed, Black-jacketed, grinning fit to kill, and some of them, God save the mark, were waving the proud and honored flag of the Southern States in the last war fought by gentlemen. Eheu! It gives one pause. (cozzens ph5)

#### **2.2.4. Freedom Riders**

Another new battle the Blacks used was the Freedom Riders. The aim from that strategy was to test the Supreme Court's 1946 decision "Boynton V. Virginia" which barred segregation in interstate transportation. African-Americans knew that possessing the right and exercising it are two different things. On April 1961, thirteen volunteers, seven of them were blacks met in Washington DC for the CORE's project called "Freedom Riders". Their plan was to travel on interstate buses for white passengers through the South. The plan called the whites to sit in the back of buses and the black to sit in the front. Unfortunately, they did not succeed.

The Whites were very aggressive and violent .CORE director James Farmer, explained: "This was not civil disobedience, really," "because we [were] merely doing what the Supreme Court said we had a right to do." after a long resistance and struggle, segregation in interstate buses became unconstitutional on November 1961 and it prevented motor companies from using Jim Crow Facilities .Really, the Freedom Riders made a great contribution to Civil Rights Movement. (Cook 123)

### **2.2.5. The Voting Rights Act of 1965**

It was a landmark piece of Civil Rights legislation. The African-Americans learned that the guarantee of their rights was depending on empowering their political position first. The African-Americans had to assert themselves as participants in the Democratic Party by the guaranteed right to vote. This right in the eyes of the Blacks was the central pillar of their demands. The White Americans suppressed that right by violence.

One of the obstacles that Blacks faced was the Poll Tax. Everyone who was not able to pay that tax was considered as ineligible to vote. Many black voters and some poor whites failed to pay that act, so they were prevented from voting.

Another practice was “voter registration”. African-Americans had the rights to vote but they were not able to do because they were not registered. The voter registration required more help and intention from ordinary leaders like Student Nonviolent Coordinating Community (SNCC) and Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). After they got involved to solve the problem, their aim was forward Selma, a city in Alabama. Although, the African-Americans made more than half of the population of the city, but no more than one percent of blacks were registered to vote. On January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1965, the SNCC was well established. The SNCC helped in preparing local residents for a long time but some financial problems led their efforts to be too tired.

Thus, the Black minister of Selma accepted the help and Martin Luther King’s involvement by his money and his peaceful ideas. On January 18, 1965, SNCC and SCLC shared efforts with a series of marches to reach Selma courthouse. Their goal from that march was to prove the world the cruel violence that African-Americans suffered from, especially when they were claiming for their right to vote register. After

a long negotiation between King and the federal authorities, they reached a compromise. After five months later, the Voting Act Bill became the Voting Rights Act of 1965. (Rubel and Weistein 606)

### **2.3. Some of the Most Famous Leaders of the Civil Rights Movement**

These were some of the Civil Rights Movement leaders, whose sincere efforts made the Civil Rights Movement a catalyst for change. They really devoted their lives to impose their race within the American society. In fact, those leaders awakened the conscience of all African-Americans and even some white leaders that's why we cannot deny their greatest role they played for encouraging the continuity of the Civil Rights Movement struggle.

#### **2.3.1. Rosa Parks (1924-2005)**

She is considered as the Mother of the Civil Rights Movement. Her event made a turning point in the black's history and opened the door for anti-segregation legislation. She is an African-American woman. She was born in Tuskegee, Alabama in 1913. In 1924, she became a member at private Montgomery Industrial School for Girls known as "Miss Whites School" where the entire students were African- Americans. As a teenager, she attended Booker T. Washington Junior High School in Montgomery and participated in a high school program at State Teacher College (now Alabama State University). She was involved in black civic affairs. By 1943, the local branch of the NAACP, and rapidly became secretary of it. She died in 2005. (Finkelman ph 5)

#### **2.3.2. Martin Luther King. Jr (1929-1968)**

He is deemed to be the most important leader of the nonviolent Negro Revolution. He did much to end racial segregation and encouraged the Blacks for the struggle for equality. He was born on January 15, 1929. In 1954, he became a member

of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored people. King won the Nobel Peace Prize and Presidential Medal of Freedom before his assassination in 1968. He led the first non-violent demonstration by Negroes. He was remembered for his famous and important speech "I Have a Dream". He said the Civil Rights Movement could be won with love and peace. Martin Luther King's ideas were inspiration for people of all the skin colors. In April 1968, Martin Luther King was murdered by White sniper. (Ollhoff 14)

### **2.3.3. James Farmer**

He was a national director of Congress of Racial Equality which was the first organization to enforce civil rights in the South through administration. He was born in January 12, 1920. He was famous for his nonviolent protests that contributed to the Civil Rights Movement 1950s-65. He was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1998 before his death in 1999. ("The leaders of the Civil Rights Movement" /Wikipedia sec 5)

### **2.3.4. John Lewis (1940- )**

He was born on February 21, 1940. He became a leader in the American Civil Rights Movement as president of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Lewis played a great role in the battle to end segregation. ("The leaders of the Civil Rights Movement" / Wikipedia sec 5)

### **2.3.5. Malcolm X (1925-1965)**

He was an African-American separatist. His ideas influenced on the Civil Rights Movement of 1950s-1960s. He believed that Western nations were inherently racist. He told Blacks to fight for their own state. He ordered blacks to defend themselves with guns. Unlike the Black leaders who preferred working to integrate blacks with

community, Malcolm X chose another method. He claimed that nonviolent ways were the philosophy of fools. He replied to the king's speech "I have a dream" that the Negroes were having nightmare when he was having a dream. He also adopted a religious name El -Hajj Malic El-Shabbazz. (Degran 34)

#### **2.3.6. Thurgood Marshall (1908-1993)**

He was the first African-American judge, best remembered for his legal policies in the fields of criminal procedures and civil rights, in Baltimore, Maryland. In 1940, Marshall was appointed Chief Counsel of NAACP. His most important contribution to the Civil Rights Movement came in 1954 by his *Brown v. Board of Education* case in the Supreme Court which ended segregation in public schools. This victory became one of the most essential moments of the Civil Rights Movement. Also, he argued that segregated schools meant that schools were unequal. He was remembered for his arguing at the Supreme Court by many cases like the case of *Brown V. Board Education*. (Ollhoff 9)

#### **2.4. White Southerners' Reactions to the Civil Rights Movement**

From the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement, the white Southerners reacted violently. The Whites knew that this political and social change altered their world forever. The White Southerners humiliated Blacks and deemed them as second class citizens. Moreover, they worked in the houses of whites as nannies and maids because Blackness meant degradation. Blacks claimed for equality, meant being white as well as being strong. After the outbreak of the Negro Revolution, the Whites disbelieved their own eyes. The Whites used various ways of violence like arresting, killing, lynching...etc. (Friedman 62)

Before the victory of Montgomery Bus Boycott, the court arrested eighty-nine boycotters and black bus drivers. Then, Martin Luther King was jailed with them. On January 30, 1965 King's house was bombed by the KKK. (Degnan 10, 13)

In the marshes to Selma courthouse, King was jailed with three thousands demonstrators as demonstration was considered illegal. On February 18, a march was held at night in the town of Mariton, west of Selma. All the streetlights went out, policemen, soldiers, and angry whites attacked peaceful demonstrators. Also, during that riot, a black youth named Jimmie Lee Jackson was killed and hundreds of peaceful black protesters were jailed. On 7<sup>th</sup> of March, 1965, hundred marchers were attacked by state troopers with tear-gaze as they attempted at crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge toward Montgomery. That day was called "Bloody Sunday" (Rubel and Weinstein 606,608)

In the battle of Freedom Riders, hundreds of Whites attacked the bus carrying a group of Freedom Riders as well as bombed the bus. Some of Whites called the Klansmen in order to attack those protestors with savagery. (Rubel, Weinstein 593,595)

The most important reaction the Whites took was the organization of a fearful group called the Ku Klux Klan. This instrument of fear terrified blacks by its brutal means such as killing, torturing, lynching, castration....etc. Another memorial crimes committed by Klansmen were the Bombing of Black Baptist Church and killed four innocent girls. They also murdered three Civil Rights workers and buried them. The Whites organized that violent group just to sabotage the evolution of the Civil Rights Movement. That group became very violent and cruel whenever the Negro Revolution achieved success. Most dangerous and serious reactions that group took was lynching African Americans. Lynching was most famous means of torturing. Many and many

African-Americans were killed; many churches were bombed, many houses were burnt, more than a thousand of serious crimes were committed...etc (Friedman 62).

## **2.5. Conclusion**

During the Civil Rights Movement Era (1950s-1965s), the African-Americans had gained new position in the American society .In spite of the obstacles and violence that the leaders faced; they had a great impact on ending segregation, but not completely. In that period, many laws and acts had been passed for the benefit of the blacks like the “Voting Rights Act” of 1965. Those laws really gave blacks, a sense that they were human beings as well as to be treated as citizens of the United States of America.

Individuals and organization challenged segregation in a variety of methods like marches, boycotts ...etc .After a long suffering, they experienced that liberty did not come without struggle. In addition, we cannot forget its greatest leaders and organizations that devoted their lives, money, time in helping the success and achievements of that great event in the African-Americans history. Nevertheless, the violent reactions the blacks suffered from could impose their race and their color within white America. Also, they gained respect, freedom and dignity from all the other nations in the world by their great achievements and perseverance in that time. Finally, we can say that the success of that decade, the Blacks experienced in the United States of America that Freedom did not come out of nothing.

## **The Third Chapter: the Reactions of the Ku Klux Klan towards the rise of the Civil Rights Movement**

### **3.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, we are going to examine and analyze the reactions of the Ku Klux Klan members during the Black freedom revolution or the Negro Revolution in 1950s and 1965s. Through this chapter we are going to deal with the Klan's bombings, killings and murdering committed during that revolution. In that period, the African-Americans gained and succeeded in many nonviolent protests, marches and peaceful demonstrations.

The Klansmen turned more and more to violence because it was the only weapon which it could stop the Blacks from demanding integration of public facilities. The fear of the Klan was registration of voting of the Black people. During that important event, the Ku Klux Klan feared the political evolution of the African-Americans which might totally change the life of the white Americans.

This chapter also will focus on the brutal response of that terrorist group towards the nonviolent resistance of the leaders like Viola Liuzzo and Martin Luther King, Jr. These bloody deeds were just committed to maintain segregation, to attract the national attention and to use terrorism as a tool to enforce their beliefs whatever the price was.

The Klan really committed many unfair and inhuman crimes which totaled in millions of innocent people. Thus, many files of them are still open till that time. Finally, in spite of all these obstacles, violence and terrorism, the African-Americans never and ever got tired. Truly, what the movement achieved for the benefit of the black community could not be closed by all the type of terrorism either by the Ku Klux Klan or the American society. As Patrick Henry said, "Give me liberty, or give me death", the blacks were aware about the necessity of their freedom and their right to be

considered as citizens of America. Thus, they decided to bar and stop segregation laws at any cost even if it costed them their lives.

### **3.2. The reactions of the KKK**

The Civil Rights Movement was another enemy for the White people in general and The Ku Klux Klan in particular. That Movement led to the third era of the Ku Klux Klan members who reorganized and reopened their hate group again to put an end to the blacks' social and political change they claimed for. The Klan in that time developed a doctrine based on no integration with the black people and kept them in their position. The KKK between 1950s and 1965s directed widespread of violence against African-Americans. They used different kinds of torturing, like; lynching, killing, shooting, castrating, hanging, murdering, and intimidating the Blacks. The Ku Klux Klan first objective in the Civil Rights Movement was to stop Blacks from voting.

In addition, the Ku Klux Klan committed serious crimes to stop the blacks in the Deep South from voting. Lynching was employed by the Klansmen as a method of terrorizing blacks. In that time, thirty black homes and thirty seven black churches were burnt. More than eighty volunteers from the Freedom Summer Campaign were beaten. On June, 21, 1964, the Ku Klux Klan members murdered three men, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner. The houses of civil Rights leaders were all burned by the Klan as well as their churches were bombed. (Bullard 25)

One of the most famous Klan organization that was known as the most extremist and bloodthirsty from the Reconstruction Era to the Civil Rights Movement was the White Knights. That organization had no more 6,000 members at its peak, but was considered as the more racist one. The White Knights committed many violent crimes throughout the Deep South; for example, the killing of a black man and two White Civil Rights Movement leaders in Philadelphia, Mississippi on June 21, 1964. (Bullard 25)

Other murders which were committed by the Klan were: the killing of Lt. Col. Lemuel Penn, a black educator who was shot when he was returning home after finishing his Summer military duty at Ft. Benning, Georgia; Rev. James Reeb who was beaten in Voting Rights protests in Selma, Alabama and Viola Liuzzo, a Civil Rights worker who was shot in Selma. (Bullard 25)

### **3.3. Bombings by the Ku Klux Klan 1950s-1965s**

Bombing was another crime committed by the KKK. The first bombing of the Klansmen was dated back to the bombing of the house of Martin Luther King, Jr. in January 1956. Between January, 1956 and the first of June, the Ku Klux Klan was responsible for more than 138 bombing attacks. The KKK bombings totaled in seventy bombings in Georgia and Alabama, burning of thirty churches in Mississippi, and ten racial killings in Alabama. (Bullard 25)

#### **3.3.1. The Sixteenth Street Baptist Church Bombing on September 15, 1963**

The bombing of the church was another hate crime which was committed by the Ku Klux Klan members on September 15, 1963. The Sixteenth Street Baptist Church was the most important place for the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, like; Martin Luther King .Jr. and Ralph David Abernathy who were regularly organizing meetings there. The Klan bombed the Church by placing a bomb under its stairs where it exploded a few minutes later. In that time, four young black girls called: Carole Robertson (14 years old), Addie Mae Collins (14years old), Denise McNair (11 years old) and Wesly Cynthia (14 years old) were preparing their Sunday morning worship service. After moments Carolyn Mckinstry, a friend of the other four girls answered a ringing phone .The caller said “Three minutes”, but she did not understand what he meant by his key words. Just after a few minutes, the bomb exploded exactly at 10:22

a.m and killed all these young innocent African-American girls. Some people lived near the church described that explosion as thunder. (Klobuchar 11)

Carolyn Mckinstry recalled:

“I heard something that sounded, at first, a little like thunder and then just this terrific noise and the windows came crashing in. And then a lot of screaming, just a lot of screaming, and I heard someone say, ”Hit the floor”, and I remember being on the floor and it was real quiet.”

(qtd. in Klobuchar 12)

The bomb damaged the stairs; crushed the cars which were near the church, breaking windows of the church, and injuring more than twenty three people. Some of them were inside the church, and others outside. After long investigations, the police and Federal Bureau (FBI) discovered that the Ku Klux Klan members were responsible of the bombing of the church that shocked not only the American nation, but the whole world. But, they were not completely sure and the file was left opened .That crime came just after the decision of the Supreme Court to integrate non-racist schools in the area. (Klobuchar 12)

Birmingham in that time was called “Bombingham” as a result of the bombing incidents that happened in it from 1947s to 1967. African-Americans have become accustomed to bombings and they became part of their life in that time. The Sixteenth Street Baptist Church was regarded as the most cruel and catastrophic event during the Civil Rights Movement struggle. (Klobuchar 12)

Because of the difficulty of the crime, it was just on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2000, the FBI identified the four men from the KKK’s members who were responsible for that atrocity. Those men were Robert Chambliss, Herman Cash, Thomas Blanton, and Robby Cherry. They were sentenced by life imprisonment. (Klobuchar 15)

Finally, that tragedy had a great effect on the hearts of Blacks because it destroyed their hope and their progress they aimed for. Also, that atrocity was not the first of the KKK's brutal acts of violence against the evolution of the African-Americans and their integration. The Ku Klux Klan Bullets and atrocities helped the Civil Rights Movement indirectly. It also caused outburst of anger towards the White people and added fuel to the African Americans Civil Rights Movement.

### **3.4. Some famous murders killed by the KKK**

Those are some of the innocent people who were killed by the Klansmen just for demanding their rights no more .Unfortunately, what they wanted costed them their lives. That people were either helping the Civil Rights Movement or were accepting it. The Ku Klux Klan killed children, women, and aged people. In the Eyes of the Klansmen, everyone had a black skin it was be their target.

#### **3.4.1. The murder of Emmett Till on August 1955**

Emmett Till (1941-1955): was an African-American boy who was murdered in Mississippi at the age of fourteen years old. Emmett was killed after flirting with a white woman called Carolyn Bryant. He was from Chicago. On August 27, 1955, he went to visit his relatives in Mississippi. During that time, African-Americans who lived there were suffering severely from violence. ("The Lynching of Emmett Till" /Wikipedia Sec 8)

His mother, Mamie Till, was always giving him a strict warning:"Be careful. If you have to get down on knees and bow when a white person goes past, do it willingly" because Mississippi was the most racist and violent state in the United States of America at that time. Emmett did not pay attention to his mother's warning and he was severely killed. ("The Lynching of Emmett Till" /Wikipedia Sec 8)

On August 27, 1955, Emmett was violently kidnapped, beaten and shot in the middle of the night by two white men, Bryant's husband Roy and his half brother J.W and threw his body in the Tallahatchie River near Money, Mississippi .The cruel and brutal murder of the innocent Emmett Till came just a year after the decision of the Supreme Court Brown V. Board of Education which made segregation in schools illegal. Emmett Till was a sacrificial lamb of the Civil Rights Movement. ("The Lynching of Emmett Till" / Wikipedia Sec 8)

The horrific death of Emmett justified the severe and martyr the blacks suffered from. Emmett was killed and shot just for flirting with a white woman and said to her "Good bye baby" .His teen behavior costed him his life. The cruelty of killing Emmett shocked all the nations in the world as well as some of the white Americans who felt sympathy for that inhuman crime. Mamie Till spoke out about her son's death and held an open-casket funeral for her only son in order to show the world "what they did to [her] boy". Emmett's face was distorted very violently and his head was pierced by a bullet. The horrific kidnapping of Emmett affected over 50,000 people from the world who came to the funeral and saw his body. ("The Lynching of Emmett Till"/ Wikipedia Sec 8)

There are conflicts about the death of Emmett. On the one hand, some reports said that Emmett pulled a picture of a white girl from his wallet and told his friends that she was his girlfriend. He said it proudly that this girl was his beloved. On the other hand, some reports suggested that Emmett went to a white woman's store and bought some candy. He whistled at that twenty one years old white woman, by making a lewd suggestion .Carolyn Bryant testified against him in court that Emmett grabbed her and said "Don't be afraid of me, baby. I was with white girls before". ("The Lynching of Emmett Till" / Wikipedia Sec 8)

Truly, we can consider the murder of Emmett as the watershed in the history of African-Americans in particular as well as in America's Civil Rights Movement struggle. He was one of the million victims of the Civil Rights Movement who were slaughtered by the hands of hatred. Really the killing of Emmett symbolized the harsh conditions the Blacks suffered from in the South, especially during that important event that changed the life of the African-Americans forever. That inhuman atrocity enraged both Blacks and Whites, thus many people joined and supported the Civil Rights Movement.

### **3.4.3. The killing of Willie Edwards JR. on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1957**

He was a black man killed by the Ku Klux Klan in Montgomery, Alabama. During that period, Montgomery had very racial climate and witnessed many types of protests like; the bus boycott by Martin Luther King, Jr. The civil rights activists were suffered a lot from state troopers especially, the marchers who attempted to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge towards Montgomery. (Bullard 27)

The Ku Klux Klan decided that the only way to stop the Blacks was terror in order to express their anger. Willie Edwards JR. was the scapegoat who was forced by the KKK into their vehicle, where they took him to a rural country and tortured him and then ordered him to leap over the bridge of Alabama River. (Bullard 28)

After three months, his decomposed body was found. In 1976, the Alabama lawyer general found the members of the Klansmen charged with the killing of Edwards who did nothing, just killed for the color of his skin. He died in 23 January 1957. (Bullard 28)

#### **3.4.4. The killing of Henry Hezekiah Dee, Charles Eddie Moore on May 2nd, 1964**

Mississippi was another battlefield for the Civil Rights Activists. The leaders wanted to show the world the injustice racial segregation that country suffered from for a long time. These protests led to bloody attacks of beating and lynching the blacks.

The most terrorist organization of the KKK in Mississippi was called the White Knights who were regarded as the most dangerous group in the South. Their two noted victims were Charles Eddie Moore and Henry Dee. (Bullard 28)

Charles Eddie Moore, a young man aged 20 years old. He left his school in order to join a student organization and Henry Hezekiah Dee, a young man who worked in a lumber yard. Those two black men were two memorial murders in Mississippi who were killed by the KKK and threw their bodies in the Mississippi River. The two members of the White Knights were called: James Ford Seal (29 years old) and Charles Marcus (31 years old). They killed those innocent men because they were convinced that the two black men belonged to a group of Black Muslim rebellions in the area. Edwards said later that their information was not based on reasons or any evidence, they just accused them. (Bullard 28)

After two months and a half, the remains of their bodies were found in the river. The FBI arrested Edwards and Seal but after few days, the FBI did not find enough evidence to convict them. A justice peace threw out their charges without any explanations and the two White Knights were never punished. (Bullard 29)

#### **3.4.2. The murder of Viola Gregg Liuzzo on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1965**

Viola was a civil rights activist who was killed by the Ku Klux Klan in the Civil Rights Movement. In the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 1965, the civil rights activists were suffering a lot from violence and terror, especially in the voting rights march. The demonstrators received beating and killing by the KKK. Viola Gregg Liuzzo traveled to Selma in order

to participate in the struggle for racial equality. In that demonstration, Viola supported and encouraged the demonstrators to continue their protests. That deed enraged the Klansmen, who were frightened and terrorized by the demonstrators. The KKK shot Viola through the car window and she died immediately on 25<sup>th</sup> March, 1965. The Federal Jury convicted three members of the KKK who were responsible for killing Liuzzo and the judge sentenced them to a period of ten years prison (Bullard 30).

#### **3.4.5. The killing of Vernon Dahmer on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1966**

Dahmer was a black community leader and a business and political leader in Hattiesburg Mississippi. He earned a reputation and admiration as a farmer and merchant. His blunt support of voting rights of blacks earned him the feeling of hatred by the White Knights of Mississippi. Concerning that, the White Knights always planned to burn his home. (Bullard 30)

After Dahmer offered to pay the poll taxes of too poor blacks, the White Knights turned very violently towards him. They attacked his house and his store by guns and fire bombs. Unfortunately, Dahmer died from his injuries in the blaze of anger and his ten year old daughter hospitalized with third degree burns. (Bullard 31)

The White Knights anticipated that the murdering of Dahmer was supported by the whites or at least their acquaintances. But the reactions of the whole community, Blacks and Whites, were different. Both of the white and black people participated in rebuilding the burnt house of Dahmer and helped his family. (Bullard 31)

The three Klansmen were convicted and sentenced to life in prison. The opponents of the White people decreased the power of the Ku Klux Klan especially the law enforcement which reacted very aggressively to find the charges. After a long reign of terror, the White Knights in Mississippi have lost their sovereignty on the people of

that area and their power decreased. Really, the Civil Rights Leaders devoted their lives to help and support the evolution of the entire black community. (Bullard 31)

#### **3.4.6. The killing of Ben Chester White on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1966**

Concerning all the victims by the Klansmen, White was considered by historians as a calm man. He always stayed away from any protests against segregation and devoted all his time on plantation, but his skin's color made him a target of the Klansmen. He was killed by members of the cottonmouth Moccasin Gang, a faction of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. (Bullard 31)

White was murdered by Gang members, James Jones, Claude Fuller, and Ernest Avants who took him into a rural area where they shot his lifeless body at the age of 67 years old. After a long period, the FBI could not convict crimes against the KKK. The White Knights were set free without any punishment. White's son swore to see the members of that extremist, violent, cruel group punished. (Bullard 31)

#### **3.4.7. The killing of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1964**

Schwerner was a social worker who came from Mississippi to work with the Congress of Racial Equality in 1964. He was a spokesman and self-confident. His aim was to build a Freedom School in Philadelphia, Mississippi. Schwerner developed his work relationship with James Chaney (21 years old), a black native man who encouraged the Mount Zion Methodist Church to organize the Freedom School. Those two men very quickly earned the enmity of the White Knights. The elders of the churches decided to use their building for the meetings of the Civil Rights Movement. (Bullard 29)

Unfortunately, the White knights discovered that place and bombed the Church.

Schwerner, a newly arrived Civil Rights worker who joined James and Andrew in order to work together was arrested by the Klan with them. Later on, the KKK shot them one by one. The Blacks were accustomed to terror and violence for a long time but killing two white men pushed the Federal government to react very quickly. President London called the FBI and ordered them to investigate that crime and give it great priority. The KKK's killing of two white men let the Government to enact serious laws which prevented segregation in public facilities. (Bullard 29)

### **3.5. Conclusion**

Finally, we can say that the innocent victims of the Negro Revolution were really very humiliated even by the government lobbies that helped and supported the KKK atrocities secretly. Thus, the Ku Klux Klan did not stop its violence, intimidation of the blacks and its resurgence by time.

In the whole crimes that committed by the Ku Klux Klan we noticed that the KKK reacted violently against any peaceful demonstrations and civilized marches by its pseudo-propaganda which they claimed for. The KKK stated purposes on a paper and on their eyes are two different things because when we count their victims, the rubber comes and deletes all their pseudo-purposes like protecting the poor people, the widows....

To be blunt, the KKK adopted itself according to danger especially the evolution of the black community. The Klan used violent, cruel, and brutal reactions towards the African-Americans .The Ku Klux Klan used all kinds of torturing towards African-Americans like Lynching, killing, kidnapping, beating, terrorizing, hanging, whipping, slaughtering and arresting.

## General Conclusion

This dissertation has concerned itself with a racist organization called the Ku Klux Klan during a special period in the history of the United States of America which was known as the Civil Rights Movement Era between 1950s and 1960s. The Negro Revolution was a turning point in the African-American struggle for racial equality. That struggle really had a great impact on the Ku Klux Klan itself and the black people in particular.

The African-Americans suffered too much from humiliation, and degradation by the White community, so they decided to rebel against that harsh laws which deprived them from many public facilities. The Blacks demanded the right to vote, the right to study in the same schools, the right to enjoy their lives as citizenship, the right to eat in the same restaurants and destruct Jim Crow Laws which kept the blacks separate from the white people.

African-Americans challenged segregation in different ways. First, they adopted many kinds of protests to claim their rights, like; Montgomery Bus Boycott, marches, peaceful demonstrations, and freedom riders. Some of them made organizations like: CORE, SNCC, and NAAP. Other leaders made campaigns in order to enforce the government to make racial segregation illegal in all public places.

All these nonviolent protests earned the enmity of that terrorist group who dominated America for a long time. That group was too determined against the integration of the blacks by all the violent means in order to bar them from evolution and exercising their rights as the white people did. The Ku Klux Klan turned more and more for violence and terror acts against civil rights activists who had a great role in advocating the Civil Rights Era by all the nonviolent means.

The KKK killed many innocent people like Emmet Till and the four young black girls in the church. They really committed inhuman crimes that still fresh in all the minds of both black and white community. Till now, there are many files of crimes are still open by the FBI. The KKK murders still exist in the memory of the United States of America.

In spite of all the obstacles made by the white people, The African-Americans had gained a new position in the American society. The Negro Revolution had a great effect in fulfilling the gap between white and black Americans. It helped the African-Americans to gain dignity, freedom, respect, and good treatment in what was called segregationist America. The clear evidence of that was the increase of black numbers in registers to vote. Nevertheless, we cannot deny the great contribution of African – American leaders who devoted their lives to enforce their race within the American community.

To conclude, the Ku Klux Klan was not only a very racist organization that America does not pay attention to its danger but, a ghost that haunted America with hatred and violence. As it is said “The Klan is the living dead and the strength of weakness”

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