

A Column for On Teaching

The Ku Klux Klan Documents in Noblesville, Indiana: Race, History, and Archives

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Metropolitan State University's history department has offered History Soirées, forums for students, alumni, staff, faculty, and community members to discuss various historical issues, two or three times a year in the past several years. Usually, the Soirées were scheduled as part of the HIST 301: Historical Interpretation class and were opened to the general public. My faculty of color colleague, Dr. Michael Wilson (Accounting, College of Management), gave a presentation in our January 2020 Soirée. He discussed the controversy surrounding the archival policy restricting public access to Ku Klux Klan documents discovered in 1995 in Noblesville, Indiana. It was an unusually intriguing case because the controversy divided major stakeholders along the racial line: those who supported the restriction were white and presumably descendants of the local Ku Klux Klan members and those who opposed the restriction were blacks and descendants of the victims of the Klan and other racist intimidation.¹ Mr. Bryan Glover, Dr. Wilson's brother-in-law who lives in Noblesville, belonged to the latter. This essay informs readers that despite the continuing resistance in favor of withholding the identities of KKK members in the community, the restriction was finally lifted as the documents were transferred from a local archive to the Indiana Historical Society in spring 2020, shortly after Dr. Wilson's talk.² A year later, Colorado's state archive, History Colorado, made the state's KKK membership books available online in April 2021. Here, these two cases in Indiana and Colorado are compared in order to illustrate built-in value judgements in collecting, maintaining, using, and interpreting archival sources as well as recent efforts to recognize and undermine these biases. The essay ends with a reflection on the potential role of rereading history from a minority perspective in reconfiguring historical narratives.

To begin, I would like to revisit Dr. Wilson's presentation, paying special attention to what happened after his talk, to illustrate some of the issues which came up in the classroom.³ *History in Three Keys* by Paul A. Cohen and *A Global History of Modern Historiography* by Georg G.

¹ There were many white proponents of removing the access restrictions. They were not the residents of Noblesville necessarily.

² This does not imply that the change was prompted by our event.

³ Dr. Michael Wilson is Professor of Accounting, belonging to the College of Management, Metropolitan State University. My conversation with him about this topic in spring 2019 led me to organize a roundtable panel, "Archiving KKK Documents: Compromise, Controversy, and Re-Consideration?" for the Midwest World History Association Annual Meeting held at North Hennepin Community College on September 21, 2019. As the subject was relevant to history students, we brought the same panel to Metropolitan State University and presented as a History Soirée on January 30, 2020. Thanks are due to the department chair (also an MWWHA executive committee member), Dr. Jeanne Grant, for making it possible to do both.

Iggers, Q. Edward Wang and Supriya Mukherjee are two of the books that I have assigned in HIST 301. Cohen maintains that “‘biases of survival’ include evidence that is ‘collected and protected’ by contemporaries (official documentation, for example), records pertaining to controversial issues, information relating to success as opposed to failure, and so on” in his book.⁴ *A Global History of Modern Historiography* contrasts two studies on the same topic: James G. Randall’s *Civil War and Reconstruction* (1937) and W. E. B. Du Bois’s *Black Reconstruction* (1935). The former depicted the innate inferiority of black lawmakers during the Southern Reconstruction after the American Civil War. African American scholar, W. E. B. Du Bois, however, “showed a very different picture in pointing at the positive achievements of black legislators in introducing much needed social reforms, reforms that survived the Reconstruction period.” Du Bois perceptively observed “how historical scholarship, in the guise of Rankean scrutiny of archival sources, could be used to sustain ideological, in this case racist, assumptions.”⁵ The archival policy changes in Indiana and Colorado illustrate the issues explored in these books.

Dr. Michael Wilson was familiar with the archival controversy because his wife’s family is from Noblesville, Indiana. It is the seat of Hamilton County, located northeast of Indianapolis. Indiana was one of the centers of the so-called second Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s. Though the commitment to white supremacy was the same, the second Klan was very different from the first. The second Klan was largely northern, sizable, public, prominent, mainstream, and nonviolent.⁶ To be a Klansman, one was expected to be native-born white, Gentile, Protestant American citizen. The second Klan expanded its enemies to include Catholics, Jews, immigrants, and bootleggers beyond targeting just blacks, whose number was limited in the north.⁷ Among the total population of Hamilton County (23,222), there were 464 African Americans (2%) and 166 foreign-born whites (0.7%) in 1920. There were 94 Roman Catholics but no Jews in 1926.⁸ A map showing the increase of members in Klan chapters organized between March and July 1923 revealed the biggest gains in membership in the Midwest. Indiana’s growth (70,999) outperformed that of the other core states (Ohio, 57,296; Illinois, 6,628; and Michigan, 1,628).⁹ This remarkable expansion can

⁴ Paul A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 11-12.

⁵ Georg G. Iggers, Q. Edward Wang and Supriya Mukherjee, *A Global History of Modern Historiography* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/metrostate/detail.action?docID=4662765>.

⁶ Linda Gordon, *The Second of the KKK: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition* (New York: Liveright, 2017), 2.

⁷ Gordon, *The Second of the KKK*, 2.

⁸ Allen Safianow, “‘You Can’t Burn History’”: Getting Right with the Klan in Noblesville, Indiana.” *Indiana Magazine of History* 100, no. 2 (2004): 109-54, esp. 134. Against this backdrop, in 1924 Congress passed the Immigration Act, which restricted the influx of Southern and Eastern Europeans by imposing quotas for immigrants reflecting the proportions of ethnic groups present in the United States in 1890. US Congressman Albert Johnson, who was a Klansman in Washington, and Senator David Reed from Pennsylvania co-wrote and co-sponsored the bill, which was enthusiastically supported by the Second KKK. See Gordon, 195.

⁹ The map is from *The Protestant*, July 1924, cited in Elizabeth Dorsey Hatle and Nancy M. Vaillancourt, “One Flag, One School, One Language: Minnesota’s Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s,” *Minnesota History* 61, no. 8 (December 1, 2009): 360–371. See also James H. Madison, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2020), 2-3.

be attributed to the successful recruitment of the second Klan.¹⁰ Noblesville's population in 1920 was 4,758 and there were 444 African Americans (9.3%).¹¹ The 1925 records reveal that 35.4% of the native-born white adult males in Hamilton County joined the Klan.¹² In 1925, at the height of the organization's popularity and power, D. C. Stephenson, perhaps the most influential Ku Klux Klan leader in the Midwest, was convicted of murder in Noblesville. By 1926, the second Klan quickly lost its momentum not only in Indiana but also elsewhere.¹³ Noblesville's Klavern #42 of the Indiana Realm of the Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan was part of this thriving but short-lived second Klan.

Noblesville was once proud of the "antiracist" legacy because the Stephenson trial led to the Klan's downfall. Ironically, seventy years later, Noblesville confronted its own "racist" past. In March 1995, a local building contractor, Don Roberts, found a trunk which contained membership cards and dues receipts identifying which citizens in Hamilton County belonged to the local Klan, in the barn on a property Roberts had purchased. He contacted County Historian, Joe Burgess, who examined the documents.¹⁴ While transcribing the information from old, fragile material to new pieces of paper, he found that many Klan members were related to Noblesville leaders including Burgess's father who had been an attorney. A local news report prompted "the media circus" that attracted reporters from such national media as *New York Times* and *L.A. Times* as well as inquiries from England and Ireland.¹⁵ Many of the Klan members' descendants exhibited such feelings as disgust, embarrassment, and shame, precisely because the second Klan inherited white supremacy from its predecessor. Considering such negative reactions, it was remarkable that the Hamilton County Historical Society (HCHS) decided to accept Roberts's offer to donate all the materials and preserve them rather than destroy them. But the decision was designed to conceal the Klan members' identities to save the descendants from embarrassment of being linked to the organization which championed racial prejudice and bigotry. In July 1995, the HCHS board of directors "established the policy that the Klan records would not be placed on public display, with access limited to genealogical or scholarly purposes." In addition, "[c]urious individuals could inquire whether specific relatives' names appeared in the records, but names could not be pub-

¹⁰ Gordon, chapter 4, "Recruitment, Ritual, and Profit," 63-77.

¹¹ Allen Safianow, "'You Can't Burn History': Getting Right with the Klan in Noblesville, Indiana." *Indiana Magazine of History* 100, no. 2 (2004): 109-54, esp. 134, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27792539> and Casey Patrick, "Begins to Reconcile A Shameful Klan Past: How Ku Klux Klan Membership Cards from the 1920s Remained Out of Sight for Almost 100 years," *Indiana Monthly*, (June 11, 2020), <https://www.indianapolismonthly.com/longform/hamilton-county-begins-to-reconcile-a-shameful-klan-past>. Safianow was one of a few scholars who was allowed to see the documents to write this 2004 article.

¹² Safianow, "You Can't Burn History," 133.

¹³ Gordon, *The Second of the KKK*, 7.

¹⁴ Indiana has the County Historian Program: "The Indiana Historical Society and the Indiana Historical Bureau established the County Historian Program in 1981 in an effort to improve the historical communication network in the state. Each county has one county historian. IHS's Local History Services Department coordinates the program." "County historians are volunteers and receive no compensation for their work. However, county historians can charge their patrons for postage or time spent researching the answer to a query." See "County Historians," <https://indianahistory.org/across-indiana/hometown-resources/county-historians/> (accessed July 2, 2021).

¹⁵ "How Do We Remember Our Ugly Past," hosted by Matt Pelsor, *All In*, on WFYI, July 9, 2020, <https://www.wfyi.org/programs/all-in/radio/How-Do-We-Remember-Our-Ugly-Past>.

lished without consent of both the society and the individual's descendents [*sic*]."¹⁶ The *New York Times* described this decision as follows:

“It would be embarrassing to some families” to publish the list, Mr. Heighway said, adding that threats of boycotts of merchants by the Klan also had to be considered. “There’s an ethical question here, too, since we don’t know how many people were forced to join the Klan.”¹⁷

He was also quoted as saying, “If it had been 10 more years, there wouldn’t have been any problem at all. . . . The local community is really important to us. We don’t want to offend.”¹⁸

In saying this, David Heighway, the director of the Hamilton County Historical Society, which was a paid position, sounded decidedly sympathetic toward the offspring of Noblesville Klan members. As he later recalled, several of them had personally contacted him expressing their strong inclination to keep the documents out of public eyes.¹⁹ As those long-term residents, influential in local politics in Noblesville, never wanted to come out to talk about their views which would reveal their family ties with the Klan, Heighway, a historian hired from outside the community, ended up serving as a spokesperson defending the controversial board decision.²⁰ Not everyone was in favor of access restrictions. Well-informed by the vision and research of Bryan Glover and his sister, Lezli Davis, who are Michael Wilson’s siblings-in-law and who are critics of the restrictive archival policy, Wilson’s presentation, “Serving God and Country: While living with the Ku Klux Klan in Noblesville, IN,” told the story of the minority members of the local community who felt marginalized by this decision and who wanted to end the restrictions. To accomplish his task, Wilson provided the two contexts. First, he placed his wife’s family history in context of a larger black history in central Indiana. Then he discussed how black families have lived with and felt about the white majority which once embraced the Klan’s tenet of white supremacy. His discussion of other racial discriminations experienced by black families in Noblesville showed that racism never went away completely even after the demise of the second Klan. Against these backgrounds, Glover began discussing that it was time to reconsider the Hamilton County Historical Society’s controversial archival policy in 2018.

The Ku Klux Klan’s 100% Americanism tenet required people to be native-born, white, Protestant, and patriotic in order to be counted. Wilson began showing that African Americans in Noblesville met all the criteria other than being white. He explained that black families had resided in Hamilton County, Indiana, since the 1830s and Noblesville since 1860 or so.²¹ Their ancestors

¹⁶ Dirk Johnson, “Old List of Klan Members Recalls Racist Past in an Indiana City,” *New York Times*, August 2, 1995, and Safianow. The quote is from Safianow, “You Can’t Burn History,” 110.

¹⁷ Johnson, “Old List of Klan Members.”

¹⁸ Safianow, “You Can’t Burn History,” 111.

¹⁹ “How Do We Remember Our Ugly Past.”

²⁰ Bryan Glover, phone interview by author, June 25, 2021.

²¹ Michael Wilson, “Serving God and Country: While Living with the Ku Klux Klan in Noblesville, IN,” presented at the History Soirée, “Archiving KKK Documents: Compromise, Controversy, and Re-Consideration?” on January 30, 2020, Metropolitan State University, St. Paul, MN.

came from the Roberts Settlement, the community of about 400 free black (of mixed-race heritage) farmers who had come from North Carolina in 1837. Although they enjoyed a nearly equal status with whites, some moved to Noblesville, several miles south of the settlement, for economic and marriage opportunities.²² Wilson also noted that they were members of one of the two black churches, the African Methodist Episcopal Church or the First Baptist Church, in Noblesville.²³ Wilson then presented many pictures of his wife's extended family. Many of their men served the country in the military since the Civil War.²⁴ Thus, the black residents in Noblesville during the second Klan were native-born, Protestant, and patriotic. They were contributing members of society.

In the next part of his presentation, "Surviving the Klan: Oral History," Wilson shared relevant episodes of discrimination against blacks as well as black responses in the twentieth century. He discussed the illustrious life of Barney Stone (1847-1938), an ex-slave, loyal patriot, minister, political activist, and orator. He was a runaway slave from Kentucky who served in the US Colored Troops during the Civil War. After the war, he moved his family to Noblesville and became a minister of the First Baptist Church for the colored. In 1914, he was elected Justice of the Peace in Hamilton County. We know a lot about him because he was interviewed as a part of the Federal Writers' Slave Narrative Project in the late 1930s.²⁵ Wilson noted that the black community oral history indicated that Barney's son had been a victim of inhumane physical harm imposed by local whites, perhaps associated with the Ku Klux Klan.²⁶

Wilson also showed the clippings of the "Klan Komment!" columns and news about Klan events which appeared in the Noblesville newspaper, *Daily Ledger*, in the 1920s. He pointed out the insensitivity of publishing the column series full of white supremacist messages in a local daily which black families must have read.²⁷

²² Safianow, "You Can't Burn History," 114; and Bryan Glover, "Being Black in Noblesville, 1917-1960: Making a Way Out of No Way," in Noblesville Diversity Commission, "World War I to 1960: A Noblesville Based Conversation," October 8, 2020, <https://youtu.be/fOLnabgFeg4>, 55:50.

²³ Wilson, "Serving God" and Glover, "Being Black in Noblesville, 1917-1960: Making a Way out of No Way," 56:50-57:20.

²⁴ Wilson, "Serving God."

²⁵ Wilson, "Serving God," and "Ex-Slave, Life Story of Barney Stone," Robert C. Irvin, 1935, Library of Congress, Manuscript Room, Washington, D.C., <https://www.loc.gov/resource/mesn.050/?sp=190&st=text>.

²⁶ Wilson, "Serving God," and Bryan Glover, "Q and As," in Noblesville Diversity Commission, "World War I to 1960: A Noblesville Based Conversation," October 8, 2020, <https://youtu.be/fOLnabgFeg4>, 1:45:00-1:45:50.

²⁷ Wilson, "Serving God." See also "Klan Komment!," *Daily Ledger*, June 19, 1925. Klan Komment columns appeared on June 20, June 22, June 24, June 25, June 27, July 4, July 6, July 7, July 8, July 9, July 10, July 13, July 15, July 16, July 20, July 21, July 23, July 25, July 28, August 17, August 18, August 22, and September 16, 1925. See Newspaper.com with the search words, "Noblesville," "Ledger," "Klan," and "Komment," <https://www.newspapers.com/search?query=noblesville+ledger+klan+koment&ind=1&iid=2249>. See also Safianow, "You Can't Burn History," indicates that the Klan Komment was published on June 19 as well as June 23, 1925, as well. See note 37 on p. 121. The Klan Komment series was syndicated and local newspapers elsewhere also carried the column articles. Those newspapers included *Eskridge Tribune-Star and Eskridge Independence* (Eskridge, KS), *Fraternalist* (St. Joseph, MO), *Greenleaf Sentinel* (Greenleaf, KS), *Leon News* (Leon, KS), *Paradise Farmer* (Paradise, KS), *Southwest News* (Dodge City, KS), *Winona Times* (Winona, MS), and *Tampa Tribune* (Tampa, FL). See Newspaper.com search (search words: klan and koment) at <https://www.newspapers.com/search#query=klan+koment>.

Another piece of oral history shared in Wilson's presentation involved a black-owned Noblesville barbershop. In the 1930s and 1940s, "Elijah Glover [Wilson's grandfather-in-law] would drive to Indianapolis to have his and his sons' hair cut because the black barber in town would not cut the black residents' hair in his shop for fear of white backlash."²⁸

The black barber would cut the black residents' hair on his back porch, after hours. Elijah Glover refused to support this policy and chose to drive to Indianapolis and have their hair cut in a black owned barbershop.²⁹

Wilson then shared a recollection of Elijah's daughter, Dana [Glover] Hughes, eighty-eight years old at the time, by showing a 1959 Kiwanis Minstrel Show advertisement from *Noblesville Ledger*. Hughes "recall[ed] that her elementary class had to walk up to the local theater in the 1930s and watch[ed] minstrel shows, musicals with white actors in blackface depicting stereotypical behaviors." "She stated how embarrassing it was to see people in her race being made fun of as she watched alongside her white classmates roaring with laughter."³⁰

Hughes also remembered her father loading the family in their car on a hot summer day and driving to the Forest Park swimming pool sometime in the early 1940s. "From their parked car, they would observe the white residents of Noblesville swimming in public, tax-supported swimming pool that they were not permitted to swim in."³¹ Starting in the late 1940s, however, Elijah Glover publicly challenged the injustice as part of a black citizens' commission together with Murphy White, who would later become a black member of the City Council, demanding full privileges at the swimming pool.³² In 1953, the park board decided that "Negroes [would] be allowed to use the city-owned swimming pool only three days a week."³³ The "part-time"

²⁸ Wilson, "Serving God."

²⁹ Wilson, "Serving God." According to the 1949 edition of *The Negro Motorist Greenbook: An International Travel Guide U.S.A. Alaska Bermuda Mexico Canada* (New York: Victor H. Green, 1949), "list[ing] numerous business places, including whites which cater[ed] to the Negro trade," there was one barber shop and five beauty parlors open to black customers in Indiana. See pp. 1, 28-29. The reproduction of *The Greenbook* is viewable in the "Seeking Refuge from Racism" exhibit on the third floor of the Colorado History Center. (Visited on June 28, 2021.)

³⁰ Wilson, "Serving God."

³¹ Wilson, "Serving God."

³² Johnson, "Old List of Klan Members."

³³ "Reg. Meeting [sic] of Nobl. [F]orest Park Board," June 30th, 1953; and "NAACP Joins Fight on Noblesville Officials: Would End Ban on Free Use of Public Pools," *Indianapolis Recorder*, August 8, 1953. Research courtesy of Lezli Davis.

democracy was flatly rejected by the residents of color.³⁴ Because of Jim Crow laws, desegregation did not come to Noblesville until the Civil Rights era.³⁵

The Hamilton County Historical Society's restrictive archival policy established in 1995 was just another example of prejudice and bigotry against black residents. If the access restriction was about the preservation of fragile materials, they could have sought an alternative archive to preserve the documents and ensure public access to them.³⁶ Instead of going over various arguments for document disclosure here,³⁷ I just want to quote Sam Jones, president of the Indianapolis Urban League from a *Kokomo Tribune* article published on July 16, 1995, "the historical society should make the records available not only to scholars but also to the general public." He continued, "History is very important to me. It helps me to understand the past and to chart future directions.

³⁴ "NAACP Joins Fight on Noblesville Officials." For activism for swimming pool desegregation in Indiana, see Emma Lou Thornbrough, "Breaking Racial Barriers to Public Accommodations in Indiana, 1935 to 1963," *Indiana Magazine of History* 83, no. 4 (1987): 301-43, especially 323-24, accessed July 2, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27791112>. See a photograph of also chapter 6 "More Sensitive than Schools": The Structure to Desegregate Municipal Swimming Pools," in Jeff Wiltse, *Contested Waters a Social History of Swimming Pools in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), pp. 154-180; accessed on July 2, 2021, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/metrostate/reader.action?docID=515703>. In this chapter, there is a picture of Mamie Livingston, an African American girl looking in the swimming pool in Baltimore from outside on p. 155.

³⁵ John Tuohy, "1920s KKK Membership Records from HamCo Open to Public at the Indiana Historical Society," *Indianapolis Star*, July 15, 2020. [https://www.indystar.com/story/news/local/hamilton-county/2020/07/15/kkk-membership-records-hamilton-county-indiana-1920-s-open-public/3280141001/?fbclid=IwAR2ILBFVC1HRYdUhg7rC9uYsrocMAWwwT7gsX4oq5yfEDtkSTEM7wemxfAo](https://www.indystar.com/story/news/local/hamilton-county/2020/07/15/kkk-membership-records-hamilton-county-indiana-1920-s-open-public/3280141001/?fbclid=IwAR2ILBFVC1HRYdUhg7rC9uYsrocMAWwwT7gsX4oq5yfEDtkSTEM7wemxfAo;); for details, see Bryan Glover, "Being Black in Noblesville, 1917-1960: Fighting to Integrate the Forest Park Swimming Pool-1953," in Noblesville Diversity Commission, "World War I to 1960: A Noblesville Based Conversation," October 8, 2020, <https://youtu.be/fOLnabFeg4>, 1:34:10-1:42:00. Murphey White's pool episode can be found in Johnson, "Old List of Klan Members."

³⁶ Consider the Indiana Historical Society's KKK documents from Wayne County, Indiana, for example. They are made up of two collections. "One a gift to the IHSL from Franklin Ritchie of Centerville, Indiana, March 1974; the other transferred from Indiana State Library, 22 February 1984, originally given by Norbert Flamm, Webster (Cambridge City), Indiana, 20 February 1974." Ku Klux Klan, Wayne County, Indiana, records, 1916-1933 (bulk 1922-1927) by Ku Klux Klan (1915-). Wayne County, Ind. Archival Material 1916, <https://indianahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/ku-klux-klan-wayne-county-indiana-records-1916.pdf>, 2.

³⁷ One can find the general information on this topic in Safianow, "You Can't Burn History," 109-111; and Casey Patrick, "Hamilton County Begins to Reconcile A Shameful Klan Past: How Ku Klux Klan Membership Cards from the 1920s Remained Out of Sight for Almost 100 years," *Indiana Monthly*, June 11, 2020. <https://www.indianapolismonthly.com/longform/hamilton-county-begins-to-reconcile-a-shameful-klan-past>. The advocates for opening access to the KKK documents mentioned in Safianow include *Noblesville Daily Ledger* columnist Gregg Montgomery, Dirk Johnson of the *New York Times*, Judy Pasternak of the *Los Angeles Times*, Stephenson biographer William Lutholtz, historian Nancy McLean, John W. Jarrett of the NAACP in nearby Anderson, Indiana, Sam H. Jones, president of the Urban League of Indianapolis. Patrick mentioned that David Heighway, the director of the historical society at the time, were contacted by African Americans in the community. These African Americans might have included Jarrett and Jones. Michael Wilson discussed another African American critic of the HCHS access policy in his 2020 Soirée discussion, Coy Robbins, a black genealogist author who had lived in Noblesville. He quoted Robbins' remark, "[t]hinking Americans today can never harbor any doubts about the racist philosophies of the KKK organizations," from an article "On the Record: Ku Klux Klan Membership Records Will Help Public Acknowledge its Multi-cultural Heritage, *Ledger* (June 19, 1995). Wilson, "Serving God." For more about Robbins, listen to comments by David Heighway and Bryan Glover in "How Do We Remember Our Ugly Past."

The Klan is very much alive in Indiana, so it would be important to know more about its roots.”³⁸ This reminds me of Harvard psychiatrist Judith Lewis Herman’s remarks. In her *Trauma and Recovery*, she writes,

The Knowledge of horrible events periodically intrudes into public awareness but is rarely retained for long. Denial, repression, and dissociation operate on a social as well as an individual level. . . . Like traumatized people, we need to understand the past in order to reclaim the present and the future. Therefore, an understanding of psychological trauma begins with rediscovering history.³⁹

Wilson’s discussions of “surviving the Klan” well-captured Jones’ notion that “the Klan [was] very much alive in Indiana.” And the 1995 opportunity to listen to the black voice, confront and reflect on the meanings of the trauma of racism in the community to chart the better future was thus lost.

Seeing it this way, it was no surprise that overt racist expressions resurfaced in the central Indiana town in 2018. A Noblesville High School student defaced local park property with swastika emblems while shouting racial epithets and posted this on social media. Then “another student threatened to shoot black people.”⁴⁰ During South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg’s presidential campaign in Los Angeles in July 2019, he happened to meet Joshua Rodgers, also a Noblesville High School student. Rodgers told Buttigieg, the Democratic presidential candidate, that he “had been called racial slurs to his face.”⁴¹

In response to these disturbing racist incidents, the Noblesville Schools’ Superintendent Beth Niedermeyer established a diversity coalition. Wilson’s brother-in-law, Bryan Glover, was asked to participate in the newly created Noblesville Diversity Commission (NDC).⁴² The organization gave a presentation about diversity at the high school in early spring. “The program was intended to demonstrate the diversity in [their] schools and community in 2018.”⁴³ That was when Glover had his personal discussions with David Heighway, who had been a spokesperson of the HCHS board decision to withhold the Klan documents twenty-three years earlier.⁴⁴ “Part of [Glover’s] point was that Noblesville didn’t just become diverse. Diversity can be traced back to the 19th century, and [their] local history on race is not entirely the positive spin [they] like to present. . . .”⁴⁵ Certainly, white residents were proud to talk about things like the Roberts Settlement,

³⁸ “Old Trunk Gives a Glimpse into Ugly Past,” *Kokomo Tribune*, July 16, 1995.

³⁹ Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (1992; New York: Basic Books, 2015), 2.

⁴⁰ Wilson, “Serving God.”

⁴¹ Michael R. Blood, “Buttigieg: Students should speak out on bias, faults Trump,” *AP*, July 25, 2019.

<https://apnews.com/article/c5f814e297494772a3f3e583feca1bf7>

⁴² Patrick, “Hamilton County Begins to Reconcile A Shameful Klan Past.”

⁴³ Bryan Glover, email message to author, July 10, 2021.

⁴⁴ Glover, interview by author.

⁴⁵ Glover, email message to author.

which would make them feel good about the remarkably limited racism in the local history.⁴⁶ Glover, in this context, said to Heighway, “We just completely gloss over many of the things that are sort of negative, particularly when it comes to race.”⁴⁷ Glover recalls that at the time of the school presentation, NDC members were generally unfamiliar with the Klan records issue because either they were newcomers to Noblesville or they had not been there when it was unfolding.⁴⁸ “Coalition’s Board members first learned about [the] 1995 KKK records history when [he] shared [his] one-on-one conversation with David Heighway with them.”⁴⁹ Glover thought “it [was] time for HCHS to give equal consideration and thought to the concerns and feelings of folks that were victimized and threatened, directly or indirectly, by the Klan.”⁵⁰ Glover advised that the Diversity Commission “ask people of color how they felt about the Klan.”⁵¹ Heighway “acknowledged that he [had been] only concerned about Noblesville community feelings from the perspective of those with Klan ancestors, not the experiences of African Americans,” and brought the issue to the HCHS Board in the fall of 2018. There, Heighway proposed to revisit the HCHS’s archival policy which had protected KKK members’ identities.⁵² In early 2019, Glover attended an HCHS board meeting to articulate why the policy change was desirable “not as an HDC member but as an individual.”⁵³ Although one board member voiced concerns for the proposal, most listened to him rather quietly.⁵⁴ Thanks to Heighway’s leadership, the board continued to explore ways to better balance concerns for privacy and desires for information transparency. Reflecting the progress made on the matter, Wilson’s Soirée presentation in January 2020 ended with optimism hinting at a future change.

Following Wilson’s presentation, one of the panelists, Anjanette Schussler, Government Records Archivist at the Minnesota Historical Society, presented “Restricted Records in Archival Collections” in the Soirée session. She explained general rules of archival access restrictions on government documents as usually designed to protect national security, personal privacy, or to preserve materials. As examples of documents withheld for personal privacy, Schussler listed prison, state hospital, out-of-wed birth, adoption, and student information files. At the Minnesota Historical Society, “[r]ecords with private information are closed for 75 years.”⁵⁵ She also noted

⁴⁶ Patrick, “Hamilton County Begins to Reconcile A Shameful Klan Past.” James Madison identified people’s tendency wanting to remember the positive “comfort history.” Listen to his view in the radio program, “How Do We Remember Our Ugly Past,” hosted by Matt Pelsor, *All In*, on WFYI, July 9, 2020, <https://www.wfyi.org/programs/all-in/radio/How-Do-We-Remember-Our-Ugly-Past>

⁴⁷ Patrick, “Hamilton County Begins to Reconcile A Shameful Klan Past,” and Glover, email message to author.

⁴⁸ Glover, email message to author.

⁴⁹ Glover, email message to author.

⁵⁰ Wilson, “Serving God.”

⁵¹ Wilson, “Serving God.”

⁵² Glover, interview by author; Wilson, “Serving God,” and Patrick, “Hamilton County Begins to Reconcile A Shameful Klan Past.”

⁵³ Glover, interview by author.

⁵⁴ Glover, interview by author.

⁵⁵ If the seventy-five years rule had been applied, the Noblesville KKK records containing documents from years between 1923 and 1926 should have been disclosed in 2001. Anjanette Schussler, “Restricted Records in Archival Collections,” presented at the History Soirée, “Archiving KKK Documents: Compromise, Controversy, and Re-Consideration?” on January 30, 2020, Metropolitan State University, St. Paul, MN. Schussler provided key

that “[d]onors may require restrictions prior to donating their collection to a repository.”⁵⁶ She showed a sample deed form from an archive. The information provided by the expert, albeit from a different state, put Soirée participants’ understanding of the HCHS archival restriction policy in perspective.

There were two important coincidental developments after the Soirée. First, in February 2020, the HCHS Board agreed to transfer the documents to the Indiana Historical Society (IHS) where the Noblesville’s Klan documents would be made available to the general public after preservation treatment. Second, Colorado’s state archive, History Colorado, also made the state’s Klan membership books available online in April 2021.⁵⁷ The road to the disclosure of the HCHS-held Klan documents, however, was not necessarily smooth. As noted, Glover attended the HCHS board meeting, following up Heighway’s proposal to change the existing archival policy in early 2019. Most board members listened to his view quietly but one expressed a reservation.⁵⁸ In March 2019, Hamilton County’s daily newspaper *The Times* published an article, “Revisiting the Ku Klux Klan Historical Society Faces Important Decision.”⁵⁹ Its author Paula Dunn argued that such a change would create divisions in society:⁶⁰

While I certainly don’t believe in censoring history, I can’t see the opening up of these records to the general public as bringing anything but problems. It would be different if the cards provided substantive insights into the inner workings of the Klan, but all they contain are personal details such as names, addresses, and dues information. The only positive uses for such information are scholarly studies or genealogical research, situations already covered by the current access policy. There is nothing to be gained by eliminating all restrictions to those records except the ability to point fingers at individual members and to cast a shadow over those members’ descendants.⁶¹

resources in her bibliography. It includes Committee on Best Practices and Standards Working Group on Access, *Principles of Access to Archives Technical Guidance on Managing Archives with Restrictions*, International Council on Archives, 2014, https://www.ica.org/sites/default/files/2014-02_standards_tech_guidelines-draft_EN.pdf. Accessed July 10, 2021. In her literature review on the intersection of privacy and access in archival repositories, Camila Tessler discusses the issue not only from a legal perspective but also from an ethical viewpoint. The bibliography in this article is very helpful. See Camila Z. Tessler, “Privacy, Restriction, and Access: Legal and Ethical Dilemmas,” *School of Information Student Research Journal* 4, no. 1 (May 2014), <https://doi.org/10.31979/2575-2499.040105> Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/ischoolsrj/vol4/iss1/5>, especially pp. 6, 8-9. Accessed July 10, 2021.

⁵⁶ Schussler, “Restricted Records in Archival Collections.”

⁵⁷ I am grateful to Anjanette Schussler who shared the announcement with the Soirée panelists in a timely manner.

⁵⁸ Glover, interview by author.

⁵⁹ “Revisiting the Ku Klux Klan Historical Society Faces Important Decision,” *The Times* (March 1, 2019), <https://thetimes24-7.com/Content/Columnists/Paula-Dunn/Article/Revisiting-the-Ku-Klux-Klan/13/200/61481>.

⁶⁰ The article does not have any author’s name, but it was published with a picture of Paul Dunn, who writes her weekly historical column for the *Times*. See also Betsy Rearson, “Paula Dunn Emerges from behind Her Book,” *The Times* (November 10, 2018), <https://thetimes24-7.com/Content/News/Local-News/Article/Paula-Dunn-emerges-from-behind-her-book/1/1/60534>.

⁶¹ “Revisiting the Ku Klux Klan.”

Clearly, it was a reiteration of the 1995 argument which had held sway over the HCHS board members to decide on restricting the access to documents. (Considering Anjanette Schussler's explanation of a general pattern, it is interesting that not the donor of the collection, Don Roberts, but the archive's board established the restriction policy.) The preservation of the deteriorating material was also a factor. But it seems it was secondary to the first purpose of protecting the Klan members' descendants because even the records transcribed by County Historian Joe Burgess in 1995 were restricted. It was the white majority opinion that David Heighway could not ignore.

But this time, as discussed, Heighway, no longer the director of the HCHS but a County Historian, listened to the African Americans who desired disclosing the documents. According to *IndyStar*, "Heighway agreed with Glover's assessment and that led the NDC to begin talks with the historical society about ways to open the collection."⁶² In a radio program, Glover acknowledged Heighway's important and persistent role in bringing the issue to the Hamilton County Historical Society board, proposing that the policy be changed, and persuading the board to agree with him.⁶³ Jessica Petty provides more details about how the group reached out to the Indiana Historical Society. She graduated from Hamilton Heights High School, located nine miles north of Noblesville in 2015. She was working on her master's degree in public history and library science at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). She served as an intern at the Indiana Archives and Records Administration and a volunteer at the Hamilton County Historical Society. She attended HCHS board meetings as a volunteer when members discussed what to do with the KKK documents.⁶⁴ Petty was involved enough to suggest three options: 1) opening the KKK documents to the public at the HCHS; 2) making them available online; and 3) keeping the existing policy without modifications.⁶⁵ Like Glover, Petty also encountered resistance for change. The board members did not like any of the options for change and expressed reservations echoing the reasons behind the 1995 decision and Paula Dunn's 2019 concerns:

Old worries resurfaced. What if someone obtains the list and just publishes it in the paper? What if someone's home is vandalized because his or her last name appeared on the list? How can we protect people from misusing or destroying the

⁶² Tuohy, "1920s KKK Membership Records from HamCo Open."

⁶³ "How Do We Remember Our Ugly Past."

⁶⁴ Mark Ambrogi, "Hamilton County Historical Society Donates KKK Records to IHS," *Current* (May 21, 2020), <https://www.youarecurrent.com/2020/05/21/hamilton-county-historical-society-donates-kkk-records-to-ihs/>; and Patrick, "Hamilton County Begins to Reconcile A Shameful Klan Past." Hamilton County Historical Society Old Sheriff's Residence and Jail *Facebook* Page, Petty wrote about the KKK document transfer on May 8, 2020, "My name is Jessica Petty, and I have recently been elected President of the Board of the Hamilton County Historical Society (HCHS). The board and I have spent several months working with the Noblesville Diversity Coalition and the Indiana Historical Society on the project that the press release attached here details." <https://www.facebook.com/hamiltoncountyhistory/>.

⁶⁵ Patrick, "Hamilton County Begins to Reconcile A Shameful Klan Past."

list? They didn't want that responsibility, so when the idea of handing over the records to the Indiana Historical Society was proposed, it took hold.⁶⁶

...

"People were really intrigued and excited that it would be protected better physically," Petty says. At the Indiana Historical Society, members of the public would request to see records and then check them out to view in a supervised reading room.⁶⁷

Heighway believed Petty was "a mover" in the whole process, contacting the Indiana Historical Society and hand-delivering the documents to the IHS.⁶⁸ The HCHS's *Facebook* post written on May 8, 2020 indicated that Petty, the young volunteer, had been elected President of the Board of the society with a link to the KKK document transfer press release. The press release issued under the name of Nancy A. Massey. She serves on the HCHS Board and is in charge of the local history and genealogy collection in the Indiana Room at the Hamilton East Public Library in Noblesville. Moreover, Massey has worked closely with Paula Dunn having co-authored a book on the history of Noblesville.⁶⁹ The press release noted, "[t]he Hamilton County Historical Society (HCHS) board of directors voted on February 4, 2020, to donate its collection of Ku Klux Klan (KKK) membership cards and dues receipts to the Indiana Historical Society."⁷⁰ The document explained the rationale behind it:

In an effort to preserve the membership cards and to make the collection more accessible, HCHS approached the Indiana Historical Society (IHS) in 2019 with their concerns about the lack of accessibility to the public. HCHS felt the IHS would be the best caretaker for the collection. This collection will join similar KKK membership collections from other counties in Indiana collected by the IHS.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Patrick, "Hamilton County Begins to Reconcile A Shameful Klan Past." David Heighway mentioned that the uncomfortable feelings toward the policy change expressed during internal debate at HCHS board meetings. Listen to "How Do We Remember Our Ugly Past."

⁶⁷ Patrick, "Hamilton County Begins to Reconcile A Shameful Klan Past."

⁶⁸ "How Do We Remember Our Ugly Past."

⁶⁹ Author Information, *Noblesville*, by Nancy A. Massey and Carol Ann Schweikert, Arcadia Publishing, <https://www.arcadiapublishing.com/Products/9780738582733>. See also the author information page, *A Brief History of Noblesville*, by Paula Dunn & Nancy A. Massey, Arcadia Publishing, <https://www.arcadiapublishing.com/Products/9781625858917>, accessed July 2, 2021. Their co-authored book was published in November 2018 from the History Press. See also Rearson, "Paula Dunn Emerges from behind Her Book."

⁷⁰ Nancy A. Massey, "Press Release: Hamilton County Historical Society Donates Collection of KKK Membership Cards to Indiana Historical Society," May 8, 2020, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TvXTTISTX5ZWxW5oh0bpAyMdBM-PHkV/view?fbclid=IwAR0wXM9t9OtsCPS1WMkDjcT4IKF8yJf20j90ijRbdajHifPnI_Jk18TJ_WQ. *The Times*, which had published Paula Dunn's critique of the discussion for KKK document disclosure in March 2019, printed this press release (except for the media contact information) without acknowledging the source clearly and without identifying its author one day after the press release came out. See "Klan Docs Going to State Group: Collection Will Be Available to Public," *The Times* (May 9, 2020), <https://thetimes24-7.com/Content/News/Local-News/Article/Klan-docs-going-to-state-group/1/1/65691?s=1>.

⁷¹ Massey, "Press Release."

The press release ended with an announcement that the Hamilton County Historical Society and the Noblesville Diversity Coalition were preparing a session covering the history of the Ku Klux Klan in Hamilton County as part of the series designed to teach the history of Noblesville.⁷² The press release also listed Jessica Petty as well as Bryan Glover and Suzanne Hahn, archivist at the Indiana Historical Society, as contact persons.⁷³ In an interview for *Indiana Monthly*, Petty indicated that there were “no objections from the community this time around” when the HCHS board decision was made.⁷⁴ The transfer was completed on February 28, 2020, “when a deed of gift was signed.”⁷⁵

Though IHS originally planned to make the documents accessible to the public after conservation treatment in April 2020, COVID-19 forced the archive to close.⁷⁶ When it reopened on July 7, 2020, the KKK documents formerly held at HCHS also became open to the general public. When I put the keyword, “Ku Klux Klan” and limited the search to archival material held at the Indiana Historical Society, it hit seventy-nine materials including Collection #M1481: Ku Klux Klan, Hamilton County, Indiana Records, ca. 1923-1926.⁷⁷ A simple four-page description, prepared by then IHS director of manuscript and visual collections Paul Brockman, can be seen online.⁷⁸ A collection information page indicates that it consists of “membership records including oaths stating they were native born Americans, dues cards, delinquent notices, reinstatements and membership lists for the Hamilton County, Indiana, of the Ku Klux Klan, 1923-1926.” They are in two shoe-box-size manuscript boxes and one half-size manuscript box (containing Burgess’s transcripts). Its provenance is Hamilton County Historical Society, Noblesville, Indiana, with a note of the transfer date, February, 2020. The “sketch” description of the collection is summarized from a *Wikipedia* article “Indiana Klan.” The catalogue descriptions do not mention the records’ controversial history behind the transfer from the HCHS in either the “sketch” or “Scope and Content Note” section.⁷⁹ The omission appears highly intriguing to me as I believe the controversy

⁷² Massey, “Press Release.”

⁷³ Massey, “Press Release.” In *The Times* report based on the press release, the contact information of Hahn and Glover is omitted. See “Klan Docs Going to State Group.”

⁷⁴ Massey, “Press Release.”

⁷⁵ Massey, “Press Release.”

⁷⁶ Patrick, “Hamilton County Begins to Reconcile A Shameful Klan Past” and Massey, “Press Release.”

⁷⁷ Ku Klux Klan, Hamilton County, Indiana records, circa 1923-1926 by Ku Klux Klan (1915-). Hamilton County, Ind. (Chapter) Archival Material 1923, Indiana Historical Society, <https://indianahistorylibrary.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1145861853>; and <https://indianahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/What-to-expect-as-IHS-reopens-v2.pdf>. The PDF version is more detailed.

⁷⁸ Brockman retired in December 2020.

⁷⁹ Source is acknowledged as “*Wikipedia*, accessed 24 March 2020” in the catalog record. But it does not identify which *Wikipedia* article. Ku Klux Klan, Hamilton County, Indiana Records, ca. 1923-1926, <https://indianahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/ku-klux-klan-hamilton-county-indiana-records.pdf>, 3. Brockman’s catalogue descriptions about other collections use “historical sketch” instead of “sketch” for the section heading. The length of his “historical sketch” descriptions vary depending on sources, which are typically published sources. For example, see Ku Klux Klan Officers, Indiana Records, 1925, Indiana Historical Society, <https://indianahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/ku-klux-klan-officers-indiana-records-1925.pdf>; Ku Klux Klan, Odon, Indiana, Unit 90 Records, 1923-1924, Indiana Historical Society, <https://indianahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/ku-klux-klan-odon-indiana-unit-90-records-1923.pdf>; D.C. Stephenson Collection, 1922-1978, Indiana Historical Society, <https://indianahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/d-c-stephenson-collection-1922-1978.pdf>; and Indiana Jewish

is a defining characteristic associated with the Noblesville KKK documents and a reason behind the document transfer. Whatever the intention, it is a fact that the decision was made not to make any reference to the colorful and controversial history of the Hamilton County's Klan documents in the catalogue descriptions. Just like in 1995, the important opportunity to learn about race and racism and the trauma associated with them from the past "to chart future directions," wished for by Sam Jones and analyzed by Judith Lewis Herman, could be lost by this 2020 choice again.

On the other hand, there were efforts to remember the curious past. WFYI, Indianapolis' National Public Radio affiliate, aired discussion, "How Do We Remember Our Ugly Past," in its local program, *All In*, hosted by Matt Pelsor, on July 9, 2020, on the day of the document disclosure at the Indiana Historical Society. Guests included James Madison (Professor of History Emeritus, Indiana University), Jody Blankenship (President and CEO, Indiana Historical Society), David Heighway, and Bryan Glover. As the program title indicates, it went beyond the "comfort history" by talking about the Ku Klux Klan and racism in the community.⁸⁰

Furthermore, the Noblesville Diversity Coalition held a Zoom session entitled, "World War I to 1960 – A Noblesville Based Conversation," moderated by Jessica Petty, as part of the History of Noblesville Learning Series on October 8, 2020. Bryan Glover together with historians and anthropologist James Madison, the author of *Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland* (Indiana University Press, 2020), Paul Mullins, the author of *Race and Affluence: An Archaeology of African America and Consumer Culture* (Kluwer/Plenum, 1999), and David Heighway shed light on the dark side of the race relations covering the Ku Klux Klan and the Forest Park Pool segregation in Noblesville.⁸¹ Mullins was probably one of the first to examine Collection #M1481, working through the quarantine policy as soon as it was made available at the IHS soon after it reopened.⁸² Like the radio program, this session refused to gloss over negative issues about race. The most powerful part of Glover's well-illustrated and well-organized presentation might be the interview segment featuring a ninety-year-old African American resident, Dana Hughes (also mentioned in Wilson's presentation), recalling her traumatic experiences during her high school senior trip to Washington, D.C., in 1950. She and her fellow black students were unable to stay at the same hotel where everyone else stayed in D.C.⁸³ In New York City, they were able to stay in the hotel with fellow students but one of the chaperones and her daughter did not want to share a room with the black girls. Hughes said that the pain of these discriminations hurt her so deeply and never left.⁸⁴

Historical Society Collection Addition, 1933-2012, Indiana Historical Society, <https://indianahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/indiana-jewish-historical-society-collection-addition-1933-2012.pdf>.

⁸⁰ "How Do We Remember Our Ugly Past."

⁸¹ "Resources," Noblesville Diversity Coalition, <https://noblesvillediversitycoalition.org/resources/>.

⁸² At the time, the IHS had the three-day quarantine policy: "the public need[ed] to make an appointment to view the documents because they need to be quarantined for a period after each viewing as part of coronavirus precautions." "Welcome Back, What to Expect When You Visit," Indiana Historical Society, <https://indianahistory.org/welcome-back-what-to-expect-when-we-reopen/>, accessed July 2, 2021; and Matt Holdzkom (IHS Assistant Reference Librarian), phone interview by author, July 6, 2021.

⁸³ Instead Dana Glover (later Hughes) and her friend stayed at Y.W.C.A. The Green Book listed the Y.W.C.A. as one of the six hotels open to black tourists in Washington, D.C. See *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, 15.

⁸⁴ Bryan Glover, "Being Black in Noblesville, 1917-1960: Fighting to Integrate the Forest Park Swimming Pool-1953," in Noblesville Diversity Commission, "World War I to 1960: A Noblesville Based Conversation," October 8,

This is exactly what Glover meant by “ask[ing] people of color how they felt about the Klan” when he suggested opening of the KKK documents to the public.

Shortly before the Zoom session, as if to counter the presentation, Paula Dunn in *The Times* published two articles expressing her continuing discontent with the document disclosure:

During the past year Hamilton County’s role in the 1920s revival of the Ku Klux Klan has once again become a topic of discussion. That’s a subject that easily lends itself to a lot of misconceptions and sensationalism....By all means, Hamilton County’s Klan history should be explored, but exposing sensitive personal information, ignoring inconvenient truths (did you notice the articles never mention the Klan’s hostile 1973 reception?.) and trying to make people feel guilty for events that took place long before they were born isn’t the way to do it.⁸⁵

Instead of seeing “no objections” or consensus in the KKK documents transfer from HCHS to IHS, the archival policy toward the documents containing sensitive private information kept being contested even after the restrictions were lifted. If it represented continuity, I also saw the change in power dynamics in archival politics in which the minority voice refused to be silenced this time.

Thus far, we have learned that the Hamilton County Historical Society had chosen not to share the local KKK documents with the general public by imposing stringent access restrictions in 1995. We have also observed that twenty-five years later the Indiana Historical Society removed them and made these materials available to the public, but fell short of taking advantage of the prime opportunity to showcase the role of archives which could shape, maintain, but also challenge the master narrative. Take a different approach as an example. A little over a year after the Noblesville’s KKK documents were transferred to Indiana Historical Society, History Colorado announced that they had scanned and made its KKK membership books online in April 2021. It was a grant-supported project.⁸⁶ Colorado’s state archive, unambiguously committed to anti-racist work, put together additional resources “to frame the ledgers in a context of resistance to oppression, and emphasize the voices and perspectives of those targeted and silenced by 20th-century

2020, <https://youtu.be/fOLnabgFeg4>, 1:09-1:15. The similar experience was shared by Murphey White, Noblesville’s black City Council member then, about his Noblesville High School senior trip to Washington D.C. in the early 1940s in Dirk Johnson’s 1995 *New York Times* article. See Johnson, “Old List of Klan Members.”

⁸⁵ Paul Dunn, “A Ku Klux Klan Quiz,” *The Times* (September 30, 2020), <https://thetimes24-7.com/Content/Default/Columnists-Home/Article/A-Ku-Klux-Klan-Quiz/-3/596/66978?s=1>; and Paul Dunn, “A Ku Klux Klan Quiz Part II,” *The Times* (October 7, 2020), <https://thetimes24-7.com/Content/Columnists/Columnists/Article/The-Ku-Klux-Klan-Quiz-Part-II/13/163/67046?s=1>, accessed July 1, 2021.

⁸⁶ Kevin Beaty, “Historic Colorado KKK Membership Documents, Newly Published, Show White Supremacy was Rampant in 1920s Denver,” *Denverite*, April 21, 2021. This article describes History Colorado’s consultation process involving community members including African Americans and scholars before the KKK ledgers digitally available to public. Beaty is a visual journalist at *Denverite*. See “About Denverite,” *Denverite*, <https://denverite.com/about-denverite-staff/>. See also a brief discussion on the tensions between privacy protection and access in the digital age, see Tessler, “Privacy, Restriction, and Access,” 6.

organized discrimination in Colorado, namely people identified by Klan members as atheist, Black, Catholic, communist, Hispano and Latino, LGBTQ, immigrant, Jewish, and Muslim.”⁸⁷

In a spirit of more actively naming and confronting systems of inequality, History Colorado aims to make these [KKK] items available as freely and widely as possible. In keeping with our grounding virtues, we hope to unlearn harmful long-held ideas and practices through this sharing process.⁸⁸

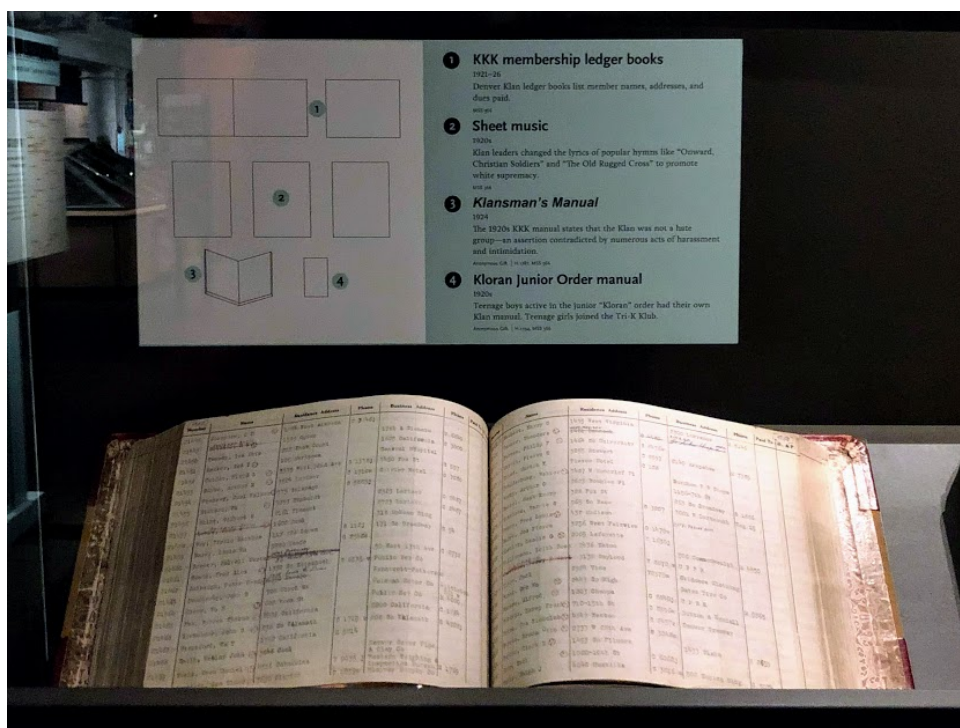


Figure 1: KKK Membership Ledger Book displayed at the History Colorado Center, Denver, CO. Photograph by Sumiko Otsubo, June 28, 2021.

These ledgers included the individual member names and they are available for anyone to see online. As noted, the online option for the Noblesville KKK documents that Jessica Petty suggested was rejected by the HCHS board. The Indiana Historical Society does have downloadable archival KKK materials such as hood image, a blank membership application form, and event announcements, which were not linked to any specific individuals.⁸⁹ History Colorado’s decision might be unusual.⁹⁰ The aforementioned ground virtues of History Colorado articulate

⁸⁷ “Ku Klux Klan Membership Ledgers: Greater Denver Area, 1920s,” History Colorado, <https://www.historycolorado.org/kkkledgers>; History Colorado Anti-Racism Work Grounding Virtues, Goals, Accountability, https://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2020/Anti-Racism_Grounding_Virtues.pdf.

⁸⁸ “Ku Klux Klan Membership Ledgers: Greater Denver Area, 1920s.”

⁸⁹ Click the Digital Collections bar at <https://indianahistory.org/search/?search=ku%20klux%20klan>.

⁹⁰ History Colorado Anti-Racism Work Grounding Virtues, Goals, Accountability. Compare and contrast diversity/anti-racist mission statements elsewhere. One of the four Indiana Historical Society’s organizational principles is “Inclusion, Diversity, and Empathy: We will include, represent, and work to understand and appreciate

the role of academic disciplines and archives in amplifying racism and History Colorado's determination to change the practices:

We, as History Colorado, acknowledge that museums, historical societies, schools, and fields such as history, anthropology, archaeology, and historic preservation have historically prioritized EuroAmerican [*sic*] perspectives and experiences and have misrepresented, excluded, and erased Black, Indigenous, and People of Color perspectives and experiences. Individually and as an organization, we are shaped by and contribute to these racialized systems that manifest in often subtle or invisible ways. Naming and confronting these systems requires us to unlearn harmful long-held ideas, practices, and methodologies and to learn new ways of being in the world.⁹¹

Instead of hiding the documents, History Colorado, aware of the digital archive's ability to reach out to the wider public, worked hard to present them in historical context.⁹² If one scrolls down History Colorado's page about the new online KKK documents, "Ku Klux Klan Membership Ledgers: Greater Denver Area, 1920s," one will find "Additional Resources from History Colorado."⁹³ One of the articles found here is "Two Men who Helped Pave the Way for African American Activists in Denver: Holmes, Westbrook, and Activism before the Age of *BlacKkKlansman*," written by graduate student intern Noah Allyn. Referring to Spike Lee's 2018 film *BlacKkKlansman*, based on the biography of Colorado Springs police officer, Ron Stallworth, who infiltrated the Klan, Allyn tells a fascinating "passing" story about a fair-complexioned medical doctor Joseph H. P. Westbrook. He was an early African American activist who joined the Ku Klux Klan to inform his black friends of KKK plans to intimidate African American neighborhoods in the 1920s and 30s.⁹⁴ One of the sources for Allyn's article, written by journalist Kevin Beaty, illustrates the utility of oral history in uncovering Westbrook's infiltration history.

multiple perspectives in our interpretation of history, so that everyone's story is told and their voices are heard." See "Sharing the Past, Inspiring the Future: Strategic Plan 2020-2029," Indiana Historical Society (November 2020), https://indianahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/Strategic_Plan_11-18-20.pdf. The Minnesota Historical Society's "Inclusion and Diversity" strategic priority can be found on the society's website under the "Mission, Vision, Values & Strategic Priorities" bar. It reads, "Welcoming and serving all communities MNHS welcomes and serves all people of Minnesota, including displaced Indigenous communities. We reflect the diversity of those we serve and ensure that inclusive practices are embedded in all aspects of our work," <https://www.mnhs.org/about/mission>.

⁹¹ History Colorado Anti-Racism Work Grounding Virtues, Goals, Accountability.

⁹² John Wenzel, "History Colorado Releases 1,300 pages of Denver's Ku Klux Klan Membership Records: The Records, Digitized and Searchable, Are Available Online Now For Free," *Denver Post*, April 23, 2021, <https://theknow.denverpost.com/2021/04/23/history-colorado-kkk-membership-ledgers/257193/>.

⁹³ "Ku Klux Klan Membership Ledgers: Greater Denver Area, 1920s."

⁹⁴ Noah Allyn, "Two Men who Helped Pave the Way for African American Activists in Denver: Holmes, Westbrook, and Activism before the Age of *BlacKkKlansman*," History Colorado, February 26, 2019, <https://www.historycolorado.org/story/colorado-voices/2019/02/26/two-men-who-helped-pave-way-african-american-activists-denver>. One of the sources used by Allyn illustrates the utility of oral history. See Kevin Beaty, "Meet the Secret Society that Infiltrated Denver's Ku Klux Klan during the Height of its Power," *Denverite*, February 8, 2017, <https://denverite.com/2017/02/08/meet-the-secret-society-that-infiltrated-denvers-ku-klux-klan-during-the-height-of-its-power/>.

It seems to me that History Colorado's vision echoes what W. E. B. Du Bois pointed out in 1935 and what Bryan Glover wanted. In the post-George Floyd world, many organizations come up with anti-racist, diversity, and inclusion statements and action plans. Both Noblesville's Diversity Commission and History Colorado have made a meaningful difference in the community and in the archives for making these visions come alive. Like Du Bois did in his *Black Reconstruction*, Michael Wilson and Bryan Glover presented alternative narratives of the Hamilton County's Ku Klux Klan. They connected Noblesville's second KKK and the KKK document controversy in a context of history of racism using oral history. Such an approach shows the potential of rewriting KKK history from a distinctly black perspective. A typical approach to write KKK history might be to show how a local or national Ku Klux Klan organization was formed from documents left by white KKK leaders and members. In that way, one might assume that blacks were less targeted in the second Klan as it expanded its enemies to Catholics, Jews, and immigrants. One might also presume that white supremacy disappeared when the KKK organizations were disbanded. Paula Dunn's Ku Klux Klan quiz published in September 2020 took this position, more or less. It included:

True or False?

1. The Klan played an important role in Hamilton County for many years.

...

4. African Americans were the main targets of the 1920s Klan.

...

1. False. The Klan was only active here for about four or five years, from 1921 or 1922 to 1926 — a mere blink of an eye in the county's nearly 200-year history.

...

4. False. The 1920s Klan primarily targeted Jews and foreigners, especially Catholic foreigners. Most of the immigrants flooding America after World War I came from predominantly Catholic countries. There were fears Catholics would be more loyal to the Pope than they were to this country.⁹⁵

But Wilson's and Glover's black narratives, partially based on oral history, demonstrated the survival of traumatizing racial prejudice and bigotry in everyday lives, as Indianapolis's African American leader Sam Jones had alerted us. After all, the second Klan legitimized the perception that black citizens were less than 100% Americans in the 1920s. Glover and Wilson saw the access restriction placed by the descendants of the Klan members against the black voice calling for disclosure as one of many discriminatory practices, which continued to exist after the downfall of the local Klan. But by no means was this position held by just black people. Non-black writers such as Kevin Beaty and Noah Allyn also began seeing history from a black-centered perspective.

⁹⁵ Dunn, "A Ku Klux Klan Quiz."

Our Soirée session discussant, Anna Kurhajec, a historian at the University of St. Thomas, pointed out that history has been written by winners. By extension, people with power get to decide what is included in archives.⁹⁶ As noted at the beginning of this essay, Paul Cohen discusses the “biases of survival.” Some documents were chosen to be kept and protected by contemporaries. He lists materials which are often collected. Those include official documents, records on controversial issues, and sources with respect to success rather than failure. Though they are private documents, the Hamilton County’s records, associated with the Ku Klux Klan, definitely controversial and increasingly stigmatized, survived in 1995. Its survival depended on white HCHS board members who were simultaneously appreciative of the preservation of historical documents and afraid of being identified as the descendants of the Klan members. History narratives privileging archival sources tend to reflect what is available and accessible in archives. The awareness about built-in biases, however, has begun changing public discussion, archives, and narratives. These biases and changes away from the biases are well illustrated not only by the 1995 Hamilton County Historical Society board decision not to make the documents available to the public, but also by the 2020 Indiana Historical Society’s catalogue description for the transferred KKK documents from Hamilton County not referring to the controversy, and History Colorado’s active stance to unlearn past practices that favor the views of some at the expense of others. Archives are created, documents are collected, and descriptions are written with purposes. The debates regarding what to do with Noblesville’s KKK documents are remarkable in that they provide glimpses into archival politics and power dynamics, especially pertaining to race. In addition, the role played by young history interns including Jessica Petty and Noah Allyn may be inspiring to history majors aspiring to use their training.

In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my colleague, Michael Wilson, and his relatives in Noblesville, Bryan Glover, and Lezli Davis, for bringing this important issue to my attention through their activism, research, and communication.⁹⁷ I also appreciate History Soirée KKK session panelists, Michael Wilson (again!), Anjanette Schussler, and Anna Kurhajec, who helped to bring such a painful but fascinating case study to our students. The Soirée and our continued discussion afterwards provided me an opportunity to contemplate on the survival (and accessibility) biases of historical sources as well as the utility of race as an analytical tool in history.

⁹⁶ For instance, in Libya, Mu’ammar al-Qadhafi (1942– 2011) overthrew the monarchy in 1969. After that, Libya began finding examining the recent past of anticolonialism instead of Libya’s remote past valuable. “For that purpose, the government established the Center for the Study of the Jihad of the Libyans against the Italian Occupation in 1978, whose main task was to offer new interpretations of Libyan history from a nationalist, revolutionary perspective. It sponsored oral history and other source collection projects; the former consisted mainly of interviews with the participants in the resistance movement.” Iggers, et al., *A Global History of Modern Historiography*, 295 (print).

⁹⁷ Bryan Glover and Lezli Davis were kind enough to read multiple drafts of this essay to offer feedback through emails and a phone call. I thank them whole-heartedly.

If there are readers interested in organizing educational sessions on history, archives, and diversity using this KKK document controversy at their schools/organizations, I would suggest contacting Mr. Bryan Glover: glove4930@yahoo.com.