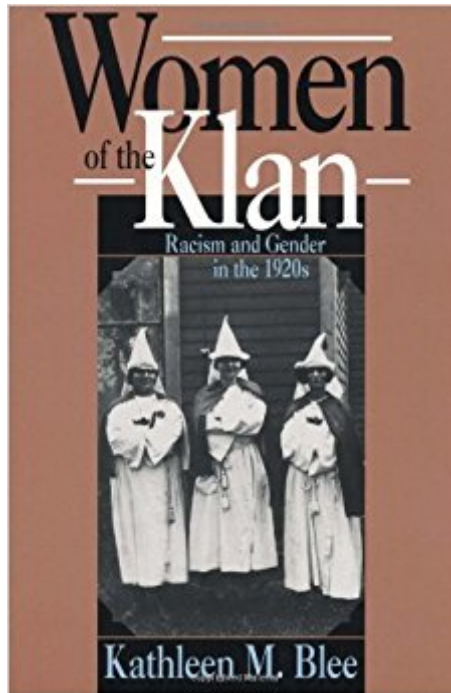




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# Women Of The Klan: Racism And Gender In The 1920s



## Synopsis

Ignorant. Brutal. Male. One of these stereotypes of the Ku Klux Klan offer a misleading picture. In *Women of the Klan*, sociologist Kathleen Blee unveils an accurate portrait of a racist movement that appealed to ordinary people throughout the country. In so doing, she dismantles the popular notion that politically involved women are always inspired by pacifism, equality, and justice. "All the better people," a former Klanswoman assures us, were in the Klan. During the 1920s, perhaps half a million white native-born Protestant women joined the Women's Ku Klux Klan (WKKK). Like their male counterparts, Klanswomen held reactionary views on race, nationality, and religion. But their perspectives on gender roles were often progressive. The Klan publicly asserted that a women's order could safeguard women's suffrage and expand their other legal rights. Privately the WKKK was working to preserve white Protestant supremacy. Blee draws from extensive archival research and interviews with former Klan members and victims to underscore the complexity of extremist right-wing political movements. Issues of women's rights, she argues, do not fit comfortably into the standard dichotomies of "progressive" and "reactionary." These need to be replaced by a more complete understanding of how gender politics are related to the politics of race, religion, and class.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is an excellent book for filling in the gaps of the history of the "women's movement" in the U.S. In studying modern feminism, we hear much about feminism, by definition, being the movement that is behind gender equality. What is often omitted from modern commentary is that the "gender equality" is very often intended by feminism only to apply to Caucasian Women, and, more specifically, to middle and upper class women. In this Book, Professor Blee points out that the doctrines of modern feminism, as they have evolved from the 1960's, were nothing other than the same doctrines of the "Invisible Empire" of Women in the Ku Klux Klan. There is an excellent review of this book in the L.A. Times, by Barbara Ehrenreich:

[http://articles.latimes.com/1991-09-01/books/bk-2279\\_1\\_klan-members](http://articles.latimes.com/1991-09-01/books/bk-2279_1_klan-members) This document actually shows the origins of modern feminism in the U.S. It fills an important gap between early 19th century feminism in Europe, and, how feminism was adopted and evolved here in the U.S. Many of the "ideals" expressed in this work were adopted by the feminists of the late 1950's and 1960's to form a privilege class for "white women" in the U.S. as long as they were Jewish or Protestant. This monograph should be read in conjunction with several scholarly works on the subject: *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* Aliens Found in Waiting: *Women of the Ku Klux Klan in Suburban Chicago, 1870-1930* Sarah Elizabeth Doherty Loyola University Chicago [http://ecommons.luc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1344&context=luc\\_diss](http://ecommons.luc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1344&context=luc_diss)

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This is a very disturbing and well researched book. Those who think that gender-feminism is progressive need to read this book.

Shocking. I didn't know there was a separate Klan of women. Gives names, places, and dates, which is unnerving since one town is a place I've lived. Even though I lived there I never heard this part of history, though in hindsight it helps explain some things. Adds a new dimension to the history of race relations, though the book focuses on white people rather than on black people. It's a book about white people, by a white person, and probably with a white reader in mind. Well-researched. Citations are helpful. Interviews and surveys are enlightening. The author conducts a fascinating investigation. She spends a lot of time examining her own motives and biases, which is less interesting, but may be instructive if this book is used in a course for students learning to do research. Would be a good read for a history, anthropology, sociology, or women's studies class or for a course on racism, maybe good for an English class. Could be paired with *Our Town: A Heartland Lynching*, *a Haunted Town*, and *the Hidden History of White America* which is about events in the same general vicinity and has a similar spirit.

Little known or understood history of how the KKK unified and taught women how to be politically motivated in America. Today's "intellectuals" would do well to understand history rather than just scream diatribes at those they disagree. An understanding of divergent influences is essential to understanding today's issues.

She is the best known historian for the WKKK. I did a 20 page paper for my history about the group, and this book was ESSENTIAL. Fascinating read as well.

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