

The Broad Ax

As a weekly paper published between 1895 and 1931, *The Broad Ax* was important – and influential – for its covering of Black uplift and how it combated white supremacist ideologies. In the Nov. 9, 1918 edition, a headline exclaims “THE COLORED SOLDIERS ARE COVERING THEMSELVES OVER WITH GLORY IN FRANCE.” This headline is in reference to the First World War and the Black soldiers in those infantries. Indeed, someone is quoted as saying that the Black soldiers were “cool and brave soldiers in the trenches and gentlemanly when back at rest in the French towns.” A subheading opines, “THE FRENCH LIKE THEM.”

According to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library: “Throughout its history, the *Broad Ax* (Salt Lake City and Chicago) was issued weekly by its founder, publisher, and editor, Julius F. Taylor (1853-1934). Born into slavery near New Market, Virginia, Julius Taylor was the 13th of 14 children of Gilbert and Mary Ann Taylor. Taylor’s parents and older siblings had earlier been sold to different owners but remained in relatively close proximity in the Shenandoah Valley. In the mid-1860s Taylor made his way to Philadelphia and settled successively in St. Paul, Minnesota; Fargo, North Dakota; and Chicago, before arriving in Salt Lake City in 1895. There Taylor founded the *Broad Ax*, which joined two other black newspapers published in Salt Lake City at a time when there were fewer than 1,000 African Americans in the state.”

The Broad Ax is often confused with *The Broad Axe*, a Minnesota publication. Although both were Black newspapers, *The Broad Axe* ended its run in 1903.

The California Eagle

This publication was founded in 1879 with its final issue being printed 1964. Longevity describes this periodical among this collection, for a very distinct reason. “When *The California Eagle* shut down its presses in 1964,” according to PBS, “it was one of the oldest black-owned and operated papers in the United States.” Founded by John James Neimore (1862-1912), *The California Eagle* is notable for its strong opposition to inequality, racism, and the lively issues of the day. “Two of The Eagle’s biggest (and earliest) crusades were against racism in the motion picture industry and the War Department. In 1914 articles and editorials were published in opposition to the making of D. W. Griffith’s film “Birth of A Nation” with its derogatory portrayals of African Americans and celebratory depiction of Klu Klux Klan violence.” *The California Eagle* has an important place in the annals of the Black Press.

Catholic News Service

The *Catholic News Service* (CNS) provided its readership was a clear assemblage of the news, great and small, from a Catholic perspective. Founded in 1920 by the United States bishops, the *Catholic News Service*, according to the publication's mission and history statement, "wanted it to be an authentic news agency." Led by founder Justin McGrath, a veteran journalist, his reporters, covered "the turbulent news of the 1920s, such as the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, the candidacy of Al Smith as the first major-party Catholic nominee for president, the story of communist persecution in Russia, the civil strife over British rule in Northern Ireland and the work of the American church in helping Europe recover from the ravages of World War I." Its effectiveness was in the reach of the message and the approach to distill hateful ideologies by extolling the innate goodness of the human character.

The Catholic Northwest Progress

Launched in 1897, *The Catholic Northwest Progress*, ran well over a century, ceasing publication in 2019. According to the Washington State Library, "The paper served as the official organ of the Archdiocese of Seattle, which currently encompasses all of Western Washington from Canada to Oregon, and from the Cascade Mountains to the Pacific Ocean." Additionally, "In 1924, the paper was instrumental in defeating the anti-Catholic schools Initiative 49, which was created by the Ku Klux Klan. The language in the bill was vague, mentioning only required public schooling until age 16. The Catholic Northwest Progress made it clear the results of a "yes" vote would mean private schools closing and that the KKK were behind the initiative."

Our Sunday Visitor

Catholic publications in the U.S. particularly during the time covered by DWSO (1920s-1930s) had a very important role – a counterbalance and often counterpunch to the vitriol spewed by the Klan publications, which were finding their way into the hands of not only Klan members, but more importantly to the mission of "The Invisible Empire." *Our Sunday Visitor* was one of those voices of dissent. Scholar Leon Hutton describes [*Our Sunday Visitor*](#) as a tool for conversion against bigotry and oppression in America (22). In tracing the history of *Our Sunday Visitor* and its founding editor, John Francis Noll, Hutton concludes: "By means of his own simple and direct style of apologetics, an appeal to reason and fair play, Noll addressed the charges traditionally associated with anti-Catholicism and nativism. With the Ku Klux Klan reaching its peak of intense anti-Catholic activity in Indiana, he claimed that the Catholic Church was not a 'foreign' threat, an 'outsider' on the American scene, as its detractors often claimed. On the contrary, in his mind Catholicism offered a religious vitality and wholesomeness which was

lacking in Protestant America.¹ Therefore, Catholics played an essential, insider's role for the betterment and transformation of American society" (1). *Our Sunday Visitor* is exemplary in this regard and provided an important voice of dissent during the re-emergence of the Klan.

Muncie Post-Democrat

An "opponent" in the larger sense of the word, The *Muncie Post-Democrat* was as anti-Klan as *Tolerance* (but lasted much longer – well into the '50s). Founded by the colorful George R. Dale in 1921, the *Muncie Post-Democrat*, from the start sought to thwart Klan activities. As the Indiana Historical Bureau contends: "*The Indianapolis Times* and the *Muncie Post-Democrat* mobilized the power of their press to take down the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana during the 1920s."

According to historian Leonard Moore, "In Muncie [Indiana], Post-Democrat editor George Dale ridiculed the Klan's rallies and hypocritical ideology and published the names of known Klansmen. Ultimately, the Times won the Pulitzer Prize in 1928 for exposing the Klan, and Dale became mayor of Muncie in 1929." The Ball State University Digital Media Repository, a project of the University Libraries asserts: "He [George R. Dale] was beaten, shot and even spent time in prison because of his strong anti-Klan position. He used the newspaper as a weapon against the Klan and its many prominent local members."

The *Muncie Post-Democrat* embodies the spirit of Dale guiding it as a frontal assault on nationalist terrorism – against blacks and other minorities – espoused by the Klan.

The Tulsa Star

An African American newspaper, *The Tulsa Star* has a long history. Started in 1912 as the *Muskogee Star* by its founder, Andrew Jackson Smitherman, with the express purpose of "promoting progress and stability within Tulsa's Black community until its dramatic and untimely demise following the race massacre of May 31, 1921." According to the Oklahoma Historical Society: "Smitherman advocated self-reliance and urged resistance to the mob violence and lynchings that were taking place throughout the United States. The *Star* also campaigned against perceived wrongdoings of the white Republican city administration and repeatedly criticized its actions towards the African American community."

Tolerance

With its mission as "voicing a protest against racial and religious discrimination," Chicago-based *Tolerance*, led the way to a more perfect union through the disruption of journalistic norms by pushing the boundaries; namely, exposing the Klan. Published between [1922] and [1925] by the

American Unity League (AUL), the publication is a distinct, American original. The editors were determined to stamp out the message of the Klan, which had, by the early 1920s, become vociferous and strangely, mainstream. It was not unusual to read about the Klan from a quotidian perspective, “they’re just like us,” the message went – but *Tolerance* vehemently disagreed with this. In fact, the publication went out of its way to expose the Klan by making what was known as invisible, *visible*. Felix Harcourt explains, “The first issue appeared on newsstands in Chicago on September 17, 1922, naming more than a 150 Chicagoans as Klan members. Within five months, the newspaper had printed the names of 4,000 alleged Klansmen in the Midwest and garnered a claimed circulation of 150,000.”

However, the publication was short-lived because the names it identified were not always Klan members. This led to a lawsuit by millionaire William Wrigley, Jr., resulting in not only defamation, numerous lawsuits, and loss of revenue and circulation. Although it officially ceased publication in 1925, the legend of *Tolerance*, and its aggressive fight with the Klan, lived on with other publications taking up the mantle, in subtler, but more effective ways.

Klan/Anti-immigration papers

Voice of the Knights of the Klu Klux Klan

[not on the website] – The “Voice of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan was published by the North Star Klan no. 2, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, one of up to ten Klan groups reportedly in Minneapolis at the time. Only two known issues were produced: February 8, 1923 and April 10, 1923. The inaugural issue announced the group's aims: “The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is an organization of Native-Born American, White, Gentile, Protestant Citizens formed to oppose, by all legal means, every lawless element in our county.” The presumed editor of the paper was Roy Miner, North Star Klan no. 2 chapter leader and local KKK accouterments dealer (writing under the pen name "Exalted Cyclops").”

Fellowship Forum

This Klan-allied publication has its roots in Washington, D.C., where its first issue was published in 1921. The *Fellowship Forum* in its anti-immigration and pro-Klan stance, was at its core, related – and in part, fueled – by a masonic worldview. Masonry, or more specifically, as defined by Merriam-Webster’s dictionary, is “a member of a major fraternal organization called Free and Accepted Masons or Ancient Free and Accepted Masons that has certain secret rituals.” The “secret rituals” aspect of the Freemason aligns the two perfectly, and the *Fellowship Forum*, which became quite popular, increasing its readership from around 1,000 to roughly more than a million by 1927. This increase was due in part to the developing apparatus – increasingly sprawling, indomitable, in those days – of mass media and the assistance of the organization, the

Southern Publicity Association. Scholar David M. Chalmers in his 1981 book, [*Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*](#), wrote that the founders “had drifted from newspaper work into fraternal salesmanship” (31). You can read more about the connection – and collaboration – between the Freemasons and the Klan in Miguel Hernandez’s *The Ku Klux Klan and Freemasonry in 1920s America Fighting Fraternities* (2019). Moreover, the book “explores the nature of fraternities, especially the overlap between the Klan and Freemasonry.”

Wisconsin Kourier

The *Wisconsin Kourier* is a Klan-ran publication. In volume 3, Issue 52, 14 November 1924, an article wildly proclaims this message: “The organization known aa the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is composed of native-born Americans. Hence, all the citizenship-rights that our people possess are those granted under the Constitution and laws of our country. There is no other country to which they may appeal. The parade at Niles, Ohio, was held in strict conformity with the law.” However, even this gathering had its detractors, and they effectively fought back, “There can be no doubt about the intention of the interfering forces. Carnegie, Lilly, Perth Amboy, South Bend and the recent bombing at Ft. Worth carry their own lesson. The number of our men killed and injured at these and other points is the convincing proof.”

The Wisconsin Historical Society describes the Wisconsin Klan as unique in one particularly way – the preference for secrecy over violent expression. “Unlike Klans in other states, the Wisconsin KKK did not resort to violence, choosing instead secret and extralegal actions. The Klan was already in decline by 1926, however, and had all but disappeared from Wisconsin by 1928.” Still, the ideological framework of white supremacy makes up the thematic underpinning of the publication.