THE MISSOURI JEWISH PRESS AND THE KU KLUX KLAN

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ABSTRACT

This essay examines the reaction of the Jewish press in Missouri to the recruitment, growth, and political activities of the Ku Klux Klan in the state during the 1920s. As a representative of Missouri Jewry, newspapers like the Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, The Jewish Voice, and The Modern View advocated for Jewish interests in their local communities while also serving as critical combatants against intolerance and antisemitism. To challenge the invisible empire in the state, these three newspapers attacked the hypocrisy of "hooded" activities in comparison to official Klan tenets, demanded that Klan officials rein in "loose-tongued" and bigoted orators, and criticized Protestant ministers who colluded with Klansmen through donations and church events. While initially successful in these tactics, by the middle of the decade the Missouri Jewish press made a decided turn away from more overt anti-Klan activism in favor of an outward push from Jewish leaders to have white Protestants lead the fight against the Klan. Despite this later move, however, as this essay demonstrates, these newspapers had a major influence on the state's Jewish population, both in local affairs and in aiding the fight to defeat the Ku Klux Klan.

In the spring of 1922, Harry H. Mayer, contributing editor of the Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, commented on an "insidious poison that has been working in the veins of the American people." That "disease" was "Ku Klux Klanitis," a "pernicious germ of class hatred and class tyranny" whose chief symptoms included "defying constituted authority, clashing with state and city officials, invading homes, and violating there the right of the individual to regard his home as his castle." This "contagion" which had "fastened itself to us with alarming results" could be found primarily in Texas and California. Yet recently, it had "infected" the occupants of the Armory Hall at Ninth Street and Minnesota Avenue in Kansas City. This Kansas Klan, identified by some as Wyandotte Klan No. 5, had solicited members and publicized its activities through a series of church donations.

Harry Burton, mayor of Kansas City, Kansas, was not pleased to see the Klan, "a mistake . . . [that] should have no place among us," in his town. He soon
publicly denounced the Klan and ordered all city employees affiliated with it to resign their positions. Burton stood his ground on the issue, and even agreed to debate a Klan lecturer at the London Heights Methodist Church in 1922, but despite his best efforts, the invisible empire was entrenched in Kansas City. Though acknowledging that Burton had been initially unsuccessful in providing an "antidote" for Ku Klux Klanitis, Harry Mayer felt confident that the "American people would certainly not tamely submit" to the Klan.

Harry Mayer's warning against the Klan offers an interesting glimpse into the response of local officials in opposing the spread of white supremacy and intolerance in their communities. Mayer, writing for the Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, was not alone in his use of the press to voice his concerns over the "hooded" interpretation of 100 percent Americanism. Newspapers across Missouri, particularly the Call, The Catholic Register, the St. Louis Argus, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Church Progress, and the Democrat-Tribune, devoted extensive coverage to the dangers posed by the violence and moral vigilantism of the Ku Klux Klan. Included among these newspapers were The Jewish Voice and The Modern View, published in St. Louis, and the Kansas City Jewish Chronicle. While mainly discussing topics important to Missouri's Jewish population, these three publications also served as a form of protest against intolerance and antisemitism around the world. Exposing the Ku Klux Klan became a common subject in the pages of the newspapers in the early 1920s, usually featured alongside information related to the activities of local synagogues, the refugee crisis in Europe, and Henry Ford's comments on the "the international Jew" in his Dearborn Independent. By the mid-point of the decade, however, the newspapers, citing the need for white Protestants to take the lead in fighting the Klan, made a notable switch away from overt anti-Klan activism. Despite this change, the Missouri Jewish press, by keeping a constant eye on the movements of the Ku Klux Klan, served as a powerful voice against the dangers of intolerance and aided in the successful repudiation of the Klan in the state.

In looking at the The Jewish Voice, The Modern View, and the Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, the major English-language Jewish newspapers in Missouri, it is important to note the different paths these publications followed during the 1920s. Created in the 1880s, The Jewish Voice served as an important source for news on American and St. Louis Jewry during its publication history. Managed and edited by Rabbi Moritz Spitz of B'nai El Temple, the newspaper provided its readers, according to Walter Ehrlich, an "immeasurable service to the community." When Spitz died in 1920, The Jewish Voice struggled to keep
up with St. Louis's secular press and with local Jewish newspapers such as The Modern View and Der Yiddishe Record, and ceased operation in the mid-1920s.8

As The Jewish Voice languished and died, The Modern View quickly became the preeminent English language newspaper for St. Louis Jews. Launched in 1901, The Modern View eschewed non-Jewish news in favor of focusing on topics of interest, specifically to American Jewry. Much longer in publication size than the Voice, the newspaper was also known for devoting extensive space in its pages to glossy photographs and commentary from its editor Abraham Rosenthal. Driven by Rosenthal, the newspaper's editorials took on subjects ranging from Zionism and Americanism to community relations and intolerance. After Rosenthal's death in 1929, the newspaper changed editors frequently before discontinuing publication during World War II.9

Across the state, the Kansas City Jewish Chronicle was the youngest of the three publications when it started in 1920. From the very beginning, the Kansas City Jewish Chronicle asserted that "every movement, every enterprise, every undertaking which will help Jews" would get support from the newspaper, while "every movement that is antagonistic to the good name of the Jew, every statement that is defamatory to him, will be vigorously opposed."10 Like earlier Jewish newspapers in the Kansas City area, the Kansas City Jewish Chronicle served as an important spokesperson for "Jews in the non-Jewish community" by promoting local interests and causes. Influenced in its formative years by Rabbi Harry H. Mayer of B'nai Jehudah Temple, who attached his signature to many early editorial pages, the Kansas City Jewish Chronicle offered news stories on the experiences of Jews around the world and in neighboring communities. It advertised itself in the early days as "a Jewish home paper for the southwest," and continues to serve the residents of Kansas and Missouri today.11

While all three newspapers were experiencing growing pains and major editorial changes during the 1920s, a new group with a familiar name was moving into the communities they served. This "new" Ku Klux Klan was only six years old when it arrived in Missouri in 1921, but its history dated back to the Reconstruction Era. Though its first incarnation existed for less than a decade and was known for terror and violent vigilantism directed against free blacks, Republicans, and the white southerners who aided them, the Reconstruction Klan remained etched in the minds of early twentieth-century Americans as heroes in a time of crisis. This memory of a "heroic" Klan was built upon the romanticism of the lost cause and the scholarship of men like William Dunning. Americans forgot what truly happened all those years ago at the close of the
Civil War and instead developed a perspective on Reconstruction that focused on the corruption and excesses of the period. In this view, rights were taken away from white southerners in favor of "semi-barbarous" blacks and white unionists. Opposition to radical Republican policies, as the redeemer governments had touted decades earlier, became acceptable and respectable, and the leaders of such groups, particularly the Ku Klux Klan, were celebrated.\(^{12}\)

In addition to the newly embraced historical memory of Reconstruction, popular culture, in its theatrical celebration of southern redemption, also aided the growth of the Klan. In 1905, Thomas Dixon published *The Clansman*, a novel that glorified the Klan and its efforts to "save" southern life and culture. A few years later, Dixon's novel was adapted into the film *The Birth of a Nation*. D. W. Griffith's film became an epic production on an unprecedented scale. Film posters advertised the money spent and actors hired to make the work into a masterpiece. For many Americans, Griffith's focus on historical facsimile blurred the lines between reality and fiction. The scenes that played out in front of millions of Americans became, as President Woodrow Wilson reportedly defined them, "like writing history with lightning." Premiering in 1915, *The Birth of a Nation* was shown in theaters throughout the United States. It arrived to rave reviews in Missouri in fall 1915 and by December it was being shown in Atlanta, Georgia. As the film arrived in Atlanta, William J. Simmons was organizing a fraternal re-creation of the Ku Klux Klan that had appeared as heroic saviors at the conclusion of the film.\(^{13}\) As the film arrived in Atlanta, a city recently inflamed by the lynching of Jewish businessman Leo Frank for his alleged involvement in the murder of Mary Phagan, William J. Simmons was organizing a fraternal re-creation of the Ku Klux Klan that had appeared as heroic saviors at the conclusion of the film.

Simmons could not have found a better time to revive the invisible empire. A former Methodist circuit rider, Simmons thought of starting his own fraternal organization while serving as a local organizer for the Woodmen of the World. Developing titles and terms based on mythology and the Reconstruction Klan during a three-month stay in the hospital following an accident, Simmons rallied recruits to his cause throughout Atlanta near the end of 1915. Soon after, the Ku Klux Klan's rebirth occurred in a cross-burning ceremony on top of Stone Mountain in Georgia.\(^{14}\) Though the Klan became popular in and around Atlanta, historian Shawn Lay has argued that in the early years "it appeared highly unlikely that the second Klan would ever develop a following in places [far outside the South]."\(^{15}\) Indeed, at first, the second Klan
remained relatively obscure. It was a fraternal organization among hundreds of other such organizations.

This changed dramatically, however, in 1920, when Simmons obtained the services of the Southern Publicity Association. Headed by Edward Young Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler, the Southern Publicity Association had previously worked with the Salvation Army, the Red Cross, and the Anti-Saloon League. Clarke and Tyler helped transform the second Klan from an obscure fraternal organization into a patriotic group concerned about "core American values," including white supremacy. The concerns of the first Klan, primarily violent resistance to African American rights, were also expanded to include immigrants, Catholics, Jews, and many of the "new" groups in society. Relying on modern advertising and sales techniques, Clarke and Tyler sent recruiters (KKK officers called Kleagles) out to communities across the country to sell Americanism and Klan membership at ten dollars per person. When a Kleagle arrived in a community, he tailored his recruiting message to local concerns. Themes ranged from law enforcement, declining morality, and fraternal bonding to white supremacy, anti-Catholicism, and antisemitism. Kleagles frequently contacted local leaders of fraternal orders as well as clergymen, which allowed for a higher stage or pulpit from which to recruit. Growth was rapid. By 1921, the Klan's membership had skyrocketed from a few thousand to around 100,000. Klan chapters (klaverns) sprouted in towns throughout the South, Midwest, and Southwest.¹⁶

Even before the arrival of the second Klan in Missouri in 1921, residents had become aware of the growth and development of the hooded order elsewhere. Missouri newspapers soon published information about Klan activity. While most articles focused on the modern Klan and its relationship to its Reconstruction predecessor, the subject of vigilantism soon became a recurring theme in Klan-related reports. A number of atrocities rumored to be undertaken by the Klan in Texas, particularly the whipping of an African American man and the branding of "KKK" upon his face, became feature stories throughout Missouri.¹⁷ In the wake of these violent acts supposedly committed by the order, some newspaper editors questioned the motives of the revived Klan and even tried to connect whitecapping incidents in the state to possible Klan activity.¹⁸

In September 1921, the New York World commenced a lengthy exposé of the Ku Klux Klan. Reprinted in newspapers throughout the United States, including the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the piece focused on sensational information related to the Klan, its finances, recruiting tactics, and rituals. While outlining the basic tenets of the Klan, the New York World also focused on the
violence associated with the order in Texas and parts of the South. Finally, the expose included denouncements of the Klan by government officials, religious leaders, and former Klansmen. Most prominently, Henry P. Fry, a former Kleagle who later authored a book about his experiences in the Klan—*The Modern Ku Klux Klan*—labeled the organization anti-Catholic and antisemitic and explained that such intolerance influenced his decision to leave the organization. One of the main goals of the *New York World* exposé was to bring the secrets and outrages of the Klan to a national audience. The hope was, as the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* noted, that

publicity would wither it as a cavernous weed is withered by the midday sun . . . How any sensible man, after reading the highfalutin flubdub of its sacred Kloran, the burlesque of its ritual and the list of its officers, from Imperial Wizard through the Klakard and the Kludd, the Kleagle and the Klarago, can hold his membership is beyond the range of sane judgement . . . The danger of the organization lies in its playing upon the prejudices and passions of the ignorant and thoughtless and thus inciting violence, but even the ignorant, in light of the exposure of the flubdubbery and spoils of the "Invisible Empire," ought to see the folly of membership. The mystery which is an alluring appeal to the "joiners" has vanished, the mask is off and the grotesque devil is visible.

The *New York World* exposé came at a critical time for the Missouri Klan. Before the first article was published, Grand Goblin Frank Crippen announced that St. Louis had roughly thirty-five hundred Klansmen who had been meeting at secret locations throughout the city. This anonymity was possible, according to Crippen, because most meeting locations were reserved under the name "Missouri Business Men's League." While the Klan grew, so too did opposition to the organization. In addition to the *St. Louis Argus* and *Church Progress*, which had devoted numerous editorial pages during the summer of 1921 to the Klan, Jewish publications *The Modern View*, the *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle*, and *The Jewish Voice* strongly condemned the order. *The Modern View* expressed relief in the exclusion of Jews from the Klan, as this was "equivalent to being barred from leprosy or smallpox." The *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle* compared the activities of the Klan to the reign of terror that engulfed Russia following the 1917 Revolution. *The Jewish Voice*, which had discussed antisemitism at various points throughout 1921, but had so far ignored the Klan in name, finally denounced the organization as "unneeded" in light of its alleged vigilantism.
Despite the emergence of the Klan in Missouri, Abraham Rosenthal of *The Modern View* felt confident that the order's lifespan was going to be "brief" because its "strength and numbers . . . [were] much exaggerated." The *Jewish Voice* assured its readers that "they need have very little anxiety from this latest manifestation of hate and prejudice . . . this movement, like others of its kind, given enough rope, will surely hang itself." Instead, crediting the work of exposé journalism, the press noted that the Klan was "disintegrating" and "on the run" after the publication of the *New York World* articles. The *Jewish Voice* however, emboldened by the work of the *New York World*, went on the offensive in late 1921. "The time has come when Fordism, Ku Klux Klanism and every individual or organization that stands for hate and prejudice must be eliminated from American life," the newspaper told its readers, "otherwise we shall never have AMERICANISM and all that it stands for in this country." The time had come to fight back against such an "un-American" group and to ensure that "the masks be stripped from the faces of the Ku Klux Klan leaders and supporters and their regalia consigned for all times to the bon fire of oblivion."

To combat the Klan, the Missouri Jewish press focused on three key areas of the organization's recruitment and growth. First, the newspapers attacked the hypocrisy between Klan tenets and hooded activity. Essentially, they posed the question: "Did the Klan truly practice what it preached?" In an "Open Letter to the Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan," *The Jewish Voice* asked William Simmons to "give . . . the official attitude of the Klan towards the Jews." This demand came in the aftermath of a release of allegedly official documents suggesting that Klansmen fire Jewish employees and boycott Jewish businesses. The truth was needed, according to *The Jewish Voice*, because the documents showed that the Klan exhibited "class and religious hatred that will in the end bring about consequences too horrible to contemplate." After receiving a reassuring reply from Klan leaders in two eastern states, *The Jewish Voice* assured its readers that the organization's official literature was not antagonistic to Jews. Later, when a Protestant minister told his audience that Jews could not join the Klan; the newspaper agreed because "of the ritual used and the fundamentals . . . it would be impossible for a Jew to belong . . . unless he were a Christian."

While the *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle* argued that the Klan's "anarchistic policy . . . in addition to their outrages in defiance of the courts and the Constitution of America . . . is sufficient to condemn them," *The Modern View* initially sided with *The Jewish Voice* in its stance that the Klan was not anti-Jewish.
"real or radical ill-will toward any self-respecting, law-abiding Jew."35 Reprinting Imperial Wizard Hiram Evans's comments that the Klan was not antagonistic to Jews, *The Modern View* left it "to the judgment of . . . readers."36 But the newspaper changed its opinion by late 1923 after comments emerged, allegedly from Klan officials, claiming that Jews were unblendable and un-American. This "vile libel," according to *The Modern View*, showed "malice and ignorance" towards Jews. "While its antagonism and narrow, bigoted opposition to the Jewish people had long been no secret to anyone who followed the un-American tactics of the masked mob," the Klan was now "unmasked" and all of its prejudice revealed.37

The second attack point used by the Jewish press was to pressure Klan officials to rein in speakers and publishers who spread intolerance. The newspapers warned Klansmen not to take up the work of being "moral censors" and warned citizens not to listen to "loose-tongued orators" who were guilty of spreading a message of prejudice and bigotry. The press exposed these "orators," many of whom also served as recruiters for the Klan, for speeches that allegedly misled Klansmen and common citizens about the true intentions of the group. "If the Klansman would discard their robes and masks and engage in a lofty work in the open," *The Jewish Voice* declared, it would "remove one of the shields behind which evil-minded men can shield themselves."38 The rhetoric of these "evil-minded men" could just as likely be found in the editorial pages as it could in the pulpit or speaker's podium. In Missouri, the Klan published affiliated newspapers in St. Joseph and St. Louis, the *Missouri Valley Independent* and *The Patriot*, respectively.39 Yet despite their ties to the Klan, these newspapers received little attention in the pages of the Jewish press.

Instead, the Jewish press focused more on the anti-Catholic newspaper, *The Menace*, published in tiny Aurora, Missouri. Under the leadership of Billy Parker, a fiery orator from southwest Missouri and a frequent speaker at Klan events, *The Menace* claimed a nationwide subscriber list in the millions at the height of its popularity.40 While it was anti-Catholic in its rhetoric, *The Menace* extended a hand of friendship to American Jewry in the early 1920s. The feeling was not mutual. *The Jewish Voice* confronted this nefarious offering as it feared that Jews might be duped by the questionable intentions of this "rabid anti-Catholic organ." "We spurn the friendship of *The Menace* and other publications of its ilk," the newspaper told its readers, "[and] we will have nothing to do with any institution that is a calumniator of any group of sincerely religious people."41 Calling *The Menace* "unworthy of recognition," *The Jewish Voice* nevertheless devoted space in its editorial pages to chastising the paper for its
"venom and vindictiveness" directed at Roman Catholics. Added to this, The Jewish Voice declared The Menace to be an "enemy of the Jews and ought not to find a place in any Jewish home" because it was "a friend and a defender of the Ku Klux Klan."

The third tactic used by the press, and some local Rabbis, was to draw attention to Christian ministers who spoke favorably of the Klan or accepted donations from hooded members. That clergymen could be found among the ranks of the Klan was, according to The Jewish Voice, "nothing short of appalling." It was deeply troubling that "clergymen preaching the doctrine of the brotherhood of man . . . who are presumed to be leaders in upholding the principles of justice . . . should band themselves with a masked group and set themselves about the courts of the land . . . [and] take it upon themselves to inflict punishment." When a St. Louis area minister publicly remarked that "the Saviour [sic] would commend the work of the Ku Klux Klan," Rabbi J. H. Miller of B'Nai-El Temple admitted confusion at this alleged virtue of Jesus of Nazareth. "I thought he preached that 'even as you do for the least of these, so you do unto me';" Miller told his congregation, "but our friends insist that Jesus would . . . use tar and feathers and violence." Denouncing the rhetoric of the unidentified minister, Rabbi Miller praised the decision of the St. Louis Boy Scouts to reject a Klan donation and reminded his "Christian friends" that Jesus was much "higher, more reverent and more wholesome than this."

While rabbis such as Miller offered hope to their congregations in a time of antisemitism and religious intolerance, one of the most outspoken champions for the rights of Missouri's Jews was not Jewish at all. James A. Reed, a one-time mayor of Kansas City who later served in the United States Senate from 1914 to 1929, was, as the Kansas City Jewish Chronicle identified him, "an old friend of the Jewish people." On multiple occasions during the 1920s, Reed was the guest of honor at the dedications of synagogues and various Jewish community buildings throughout Missouri. When asked to speak, he usually acknowledged the contributions made by Jews in the United States. In doing so, he directly challenged those who would suggest that Jews were not real Americans. Intolerance was also a common theme in Reed's speeches. It was "the poorest American," he told the audience at Kerem Israel Synagogue in Kansas City, "who will condemn a fellow American on account of his race or religion." At a Constitution Day event organized by the Young Men's Hebrew Association at St. Louis's Temple Shaare Emeth, he warned those listening that "any society or group which preaches the doctrines of religious intolerance and
race hatreds in the United States is an enemy of constitutional government and should be driven from the country.”

Senator Reed's appearance at these dedication events served an obvious purpose. When he spoke out against intolerance, voter suppression, and "masked" hatred, Reed presented himself as a defender of Missourians from the threats of those who hid behind "pillow sheets." In doing so, he enhanced his political ambitions and slowly built alliances with a diverse collection of anti-Klan groups that would support him on Election Day. As a noted anti-Klan activist, Reed rallied many Missourians to oppose the growth and recruitment of the Klan in the state. Along with governor Arthur Hyde and congressmen Perl Decker, Harry Hawes, and L. C. Dyer, Reed fought to ensure that Missouri would not fall under the sway of the Klan.

Despite being "an old friend of the Jewish people," Reed did have his critics. Most notable were the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the Anti-Saloon League, and Kansas City's The Call, who spoke out against Reed's record during his 1922 reelection campaign. The WCTU and Anti-Saloon League attacked Reed's opposition to Prohibition, while The Call compared him to white supremacists Ben Tillman and James Vardaman in arguing that his "record of hate" showed that "no man in public life outside the black belt of the South . . . has gone as far as he to prove his unvarying opposition to the race." This criticism also found its way into the pages of The Modern View. Though the newspaper published an advertisement defending Reed's stance on immigration, it also included letters to the editor calling for his defeat because the Senator was "reaching out in every direction, appealing to the passions, prejudices, and race hatreds, and sowing seeds of hate which will take many years to eradicate and overcome." These accusations would not be detrimental to his congressional campaign, but charges that Reed spoke before Jewish congregations while also keeping the company of men like Henry Ford did weigh on the minds of Missouri Jews.

The press was also involved in the political fight to prevent the hooded invasion of the state. "This nation cannot encourage hatred and prejudice and elect public officials on such a platform if it is to retain its respect," The Jewish Voice warned, "the deadliest blow that has been struck against the forces of Liberty in this country is the victory of the Ku Klux Klan." Though it had spread from the American South into different corners of the country by 1921, the Klan did not make a substantial move into politics until 1922 and 1923. Through municipal and county elections, the organization tested out a blue-
print of political success in the lead-up to 1924. Some states, such as Indiana, Colorado, and Oregon, proved to be especially fruitful for Klan candidates.\textsuperscript{57} Casting a careful eye upon Indiana, the \textit{Kansas City Jewish Chronicle} warned that the state's governor's race would "prove a barometer of the strength that can be mustered in a typically American community of average intelligence by the forces of darkness, malevolence, and class hatred."\textsuperscript{58}

This "barometer of hate" could also be seen in the St. Louis area. As Jews in St. Louis prepared for Passover in 1923, disturbing information began to circulate throughout the metropolitan community. In East St. Louis, the local Klan had organized a political activities committee to influence the upcoming municipal election. The Political Activities Committee distributed election pamphlets and solicited support for Klan candidates from organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, American Legion, Real Estate Exchange, YMCA, YWCA, and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. During a committee meeting at East St. Louis's Winstanley Baptist Church, a Klan speaker declared that "the only way the city could be made one hundred per cent American is to crush the Jews, Negroes and Catholics at the polls."\textsuperscript{59} For a city still reeling from the 1917 Race Riot, these comments were potentially incendiary, and Rabbi J. R. Mazur knew it. Speaking before the Agudas Achim Synagogue congregation, Rabbi Mazur called upon his audience to remember the history of intolerance directed at the Jews and asked elected officials to provide a government that served all citizens. Mazur wanted a government that was designed "not to crush but to uplift; not to crumble but to uphold; not to hood but to see and seek justice . . . sending its rays throughout the world, proclaiming America a land of equality and fraternity."\textsuperscript{60}

Such sentiments were shared by Louis Aloe, a Jewish businessman and one-time president of the St. Louis Board of Aldermen. With tensions running high between Klan and anti-Klan factions, Aloe felt it necessary to speak out on the invisible empire. Pleased that the Missouri Republican State Convention adopted an anti-Klan plank in 1924, Aloe called out those who were not making a "real man's fight" against the Klan, particularly Louis Marshall of the American Jewish Committee. Marshall, one of the most prominent Jews in the United States, publicly denounced attempts by various state conventions to adopt anti-Klan planks because "if left alone, the Klan will die a natural death." Aloe, who had dealt with antisemitism and the Klan as a member of the Board of Aldermen, felt that Marshall was "not familiar with the situation of the Klan in the Middle West, in the South, or in the Southwest."\textsuperscript{61} In a letter to J. A.
Harzfield of Kansas City, reprinted in *The Modern View*, Aloe made it clear that he was not "lacking in backbone, courage, and real manhood." "Decent men hate a coward, and I shall raise my voice in 'political denunciation' of the Klan whenever the occasion is appropriate," he told Harzfield, because "the quickest way to destroy the Klan is to demonstrate to the Klan merchant and Klan politician that the anti-Klan is stronger than the Klan."62

One difficulty faced by anti-Klan activists in challenging the political aspirations of the Klan revolved around party affiliation. While the Reconstruction Era Klan had been a "military force serving the interests of the Democratic Party, the planter class, and all those who desired the restoration of white supremacy," Klansmen in the 1920s could be found on all political tickets.63 Alliances quickly formed between local klaverns and the dominate party of a county or state. Hooded knights may have voted Republican in states like Indiana, but they overwhelmingly supported Democrats in Missouri. Yet despite winning in a few state elections, and throwing its support behind the victorious Calvin Coolidge for president, the Klan emerged from the 1924 election with little momentum to show for its efforts. Hotbeds of hooded activity elected pro- and anti-Klan politicians, while communities opposed to the Klan offered only repudiation. Reflecting back on the election, the *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle* felt confident that "the voters . . . [would] see the day when all discussion of that sinister organization will have been gleaned out of the pages of history!"64

But what about appeals to the Jewish voter? Was he or she swayed by the possible Klan affiliation of local, state, or national candidates? At the national level, members of both major political parties denounced the Klan as "un-American," much to the pleasure of the anti-Klan press.65 Among individual presidential candidates, only Calvin Coolidge did not officially offer opposition to the Klan. In Missouri, A. W. Nelson's campaign for governor was marred by accusations that he was a Klansman.66 Despite numerous Nelson allies issuing statements defending his character, including one published in *The Modern View* by H. T. Zuzak, a Jewish businessman from Nelson's home county, the candidate was unable to convince voters that he was not a member.67 The allegations, combined with a public confession that he had attended at least two Klan events as a "curious and interested spectator," doomed Nelson's campaign.68 Missouri, like the nation, went overwhelmingly Republican, which stung the state's Democrat-aligned Klan. It is hard to know for sure how Missouri's Jews voted in local elections, but most likely they went against candidates who were overtly pro-Klan. Overall, it seems that voters,
as *The Modern View* advised its readers, cast their lot with their preferred party.69 "Jews who are Republican voted for Coolidge; Jews who are Democratic voted for Davis, and Jews who are Progressive voted for La Follette," the *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle* speculated, "we don't offhand remember the names of any other candidates who also ran, but we are sure that they all got their share of the 'Jewish vote!'"70

With the close of the 1924 election, the *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle*, *The Jewish Voice*, and *The Modern View* devoted less and less space to the Ku Klux Klan. While still monitoring the activities of the Klan around the country, the editorial pages of all three newspapers only offered occasional critiques of the organization, usually in the form of commentaries clipped and reprinted from other sources.71 "The Klan is more a name now than a genuine reality," *The Modern View* asserted, noting that it "seems as if the fiery crosses are not burning so bright these days."72 This movement away from more overt anti-Klan activism occurred for two main reasons. First, the Ku Klux Klan was declining in power by 1925. Though experiencing significant electoral success in states like Indiana and Colorado, the Klan's momentum soon lost ground. The organization had used the 1924 election as a rallying cry when scouring the country for new members in the early 1920s, but stinging defeats in some states, combined with ineffective governments in hooded strongholds, left the Klan's political future in question.73

In addition to this electoral failure, the Klan found itself involved in a number of scandals. William Simmons, the founder and one-time Imperial Wizard of the Klan engaged in a bitter tug-of-war with his successor, Hiram Evans, over control of the group. Out of power, Simmons became a thorn in the side of Klan officials. His drinking, along with an attempt to establish a rival Klan-like group populated by women, brought the Klan negative press. E. Y. Clarke, a long-time Simmons lieutenant who was largely responsible for the successful expansion of the Klan beyond the South, was ousted for immoral activity. D. C. Stephenson, arguably the most powerful Klansman never to hold the office of Imperial Wizard, was arrested for kidnapping Madge Oberholtzer in Indiana. After drugging, torturing, and raping her, Stephenson had some fellow Klansmen dump her unconscious body near her home. Oberholtzer later died, but not before giving a deathbed declaration to law enforcement that implicated Stephenson. Held for murder, Stephenson revealed the deepest secrets of the Klan to anyone who would listen in an attempt to get a plea deal. His revelations turned Indiana politics upside-down and severely damaged the second Klan. Men and women
of the Klan, many citing a loss of faith in an organization that did not practice what it preached, left the hooded order in large numbers in the latter years of the 1920s. By the end of the decade, Klan membership had dropped steeply from its previous high watermark of roughly five million to about fifty thousand.74

The second major reason for the shift away from overt anti-Klan activism was an apparent indecisiveness among members of the press on how best to combat the Klan. African American, Catholic, and Jewish newspapers in Missouri, though they may have differed on the needs of their local communities, all agreed that their readers were specifically targeted by Klan members. As such, editorials often provided a central theme of unity against a common enemy. "While in many localities the Jew makes his business start among Negro customers," The Call told its readers in a critique of Klan intolerance, "we should not envy him the success he makes, —it is ours if we will only try for it as he does. We have no quarrel with the Catholics. Whether it is a Bishop off in Chicago, a National Convention president down in Tennessee, or a Pope in Rome, after all men's real religious father is the Father in Heaven."75 Likewise, when Klan-backed candidates were defeated in the 1922 election, The Catholic Register credited the work of African American, Catholic, and Jewish voters.76 Though these various groups may have celebrated their cooperation in fighting the Klan, they also questioned which group should lead in challenging the organization. While he felt that "organized Jewish opposition is not justified nor necessary," Abraham Rosenthal of The Modern View did express the hope that if resistance against the Klan was to be undertaken, it should done by "ALL citizens united, independent of creed." Until that point, however, Rosenthal preferred to let Catholics and African Americans handle specific matters regarding the Klan individually.77 In early 1923, The Call confessed that there were much more pressing issues in the African American community than the Klan. Perhaps, The Call argued, the Klan could be defeated by the Catholics or Jews.78 Such sentiment was not shared by the Kansas City Jewish Chronicle. Citing comments by the former United States Ambassador to Germany, James W. Gerard, the paper asserted that Jews and Catholics should abstain from fighting the Klan. Who then would be left to challenge the Klan? "Right-minded [white] Protestants," Gerard asserted, "would exterminate the Klan in a short time . . . [and] slay the dragon." Agreeing with Gerard, Harry Mayer assured the readers of the Kansas City Jewish Chronicle that "we can well afford to wait until decent Protestants are aroused by the seriousness of the vicious propaganda and the lawlessness which the 'Invisible Empire' has incited."79 By the mid-1920s, a
survey of prominent Jewish leaders conducted by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency found that most favored a campaign against the Klan organized and carried out by Protestant denominations.80

Though there was a decided push for Protestant Americans to lead the charge in defeating the Klan, this did not diminish the anti-Klan activity of American Jews. They used their voices and votes to counter the Klan's ascendancy, and challenged the growth of the invisible empire across the country. Led by the local Jewish press, Missouri's Jews ensured a similar fate for the Klan in their own communities. Blending the history of Judaism with the legacy of Americanism, the Missouri Jewish press, along with prominent rabbis like J. H. Miller and J. R. Mazur, made it clear that Jews were "One Hundred Percent Americans" and would never need to don hoods and robes to demonstrate their patriotism and devotion for the United States of America. In doing so, they offered hope for American Jews, even in the midst of Klanism, Nazism, and antisemitism:

Can the Jew be crushed? The answer to the world is that history shows that we have passed through black ages of bigotry, and through the darkness of superstition. We have passed onward through the sea of trouble, forward through the Red Sea of difficulty, onward to the waves of oppression, through the waters of sorrow. Israel could not be crushed and Israel cannot be crushed, for 'Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will not fear evil for Thou art with me.'81

NOTES
1 Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, May 12, 1922.
2 The Catholic Register, May 11, 1922.
3 The Catholic Register, April 27, 1922; June 22, 1922.
4 The Catholic Register, April 27, 1922; The Kansan, n.d., Ku Klux Klan—April, 1922, folder 17, box C-313, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Collection (hereafter cited as NAACP), Library of Congress, Washington DC (hereafter cited as LOC).
5 The Catholic Register, May 11, 1922; Shreveport Journal, May 7, 1922, Ku Klux Klan—May, 1922, folder 18, box C-313, NAACP, LOC.
6 Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, May 12, 1922.

8 Ehrlich, Zion in the Valley, 380–83.
9 Ehrlich, Zion in the Valley, 383–85.
10 Firestone, "Jewish Journalism in Kansas City," 186.
11 Firestone, "Jewish Journalism in Kansas City," 185–98.
12 Lay, The Invisible Empire in the West, 3–8; Foner, A Short History of Reconstruction, 184–98; Parsons, Ku-Klux, 1–26.
13 Lay, The Invisible Empire in the West, 3–8; Baker, Gospel According to the Klan, 4–8; McVeigh, The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan, 19–21; MacLean, Behind the Mask of Chivalry, 11–13; Dinnerstein, Anti-Semitism in America, 181–85.
14 MacLean, Behind the Mask of Chivalry, 4–5; Lay, Hooded Knights on the Niagara, 2–6; The Invisible Empire in the West, 3–8; Baker, Gospel According to the Klan, 4–8.
15 Lay, Hooded Knights on the Niagara, 2.
16 Lay, Hooded Knights on the Niagara, 2–6; The Invisible Empire in the West, 3–8; MacLean, Behind the Mask of Chivalry, 5–6; Jenkins, Steel Valley Klan, 2–4.
17 Southeast Missourian, April 2, 1921; Fulton Daily Sun, April 2, 1921; Fulton Gazette, April 7, 1921; Columbia Missourian, April 2, 1921; St. Louis Argus, May 20, 1921; Kansas City Star, May 13, 1921.
18 "Whitecapping" refers to vigilantism undertaken by masked individuals to rid specific locations of moral transgressors. The victims of whitecapping were usually accused of promiscuity or other alleged moral failings. For examples of whitecapping incidents see Columbia Missourian, April 9, 1921; St. Louis Argus, April 15, 1921; Fulton Daily Sun, January 22, 1921; June 20, 1921; Jasper County Democrat, June 24, 1921; Hernando, Faces Like Devils, 1–17.
19 St. Louis Post-Dispatch, September 6, 1921; September 7, 1921; September 8, 1921; September 12, 1921; September 13, 1921; September 14, 1921; September 15, 1921; September 16, 1921; September 17, 1921; September 18, 1921; September 19, 1921.
20 St. Louis Post-Dispatch, September 7, 1921; Baker, Gospel According to the Klan, 34–35.
21 St. Louis Post-Dispatch, September 13, 1921.
22 St. Louis Post-Dispatch, September 6, 1921; Crippen claimed in August that the Klan had enrolled 400 members in St. Louis and most meetings took place at the Planters' Hotel. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 15, 1921.
23 The Modern View, September 16, 1921; St. Louis Post-Dispatch, September 13, 1921.
24 Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, August 19, 1923.
25 The Jewish Voice, September 1, 1921.
26 The Modern View, September 16, 1921.
27 The Jewish Voice, September 29, 1921.
28 The Jewish Voice, September 22, 1921; January 19, 1922.
29 The Jewish Voice, October 13, 1921.
30 The Jewish Voice, October 6, 1921.
31 The Jewish Voice, October 20, 1922.
32 The Jewish Voice, November 3, 1922. For more information on how the Klan viewed Jews see Baker, Gospel According to the Klan, 173–75; Moore, Citizen Klansmen, 20–22.
33 The Jewish Voice, November 10, 1922.
34 Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, April 6, 1923.
35 The Modern View, November 24, 1922.
36 The Modern View, February 16, 1923; April 6, 1923.
37 The Modern View, November 2, 1923.
38 The Jewish Voice, November 3, 1922; November 10, 1922.
39 The Patriot changed names at least twice in its existence. After the name The Patriot was dropped, it was called The Missouri Fiery Cross and the Missouri Klan Courier.
40 Kansas City Journal, October 11, 1922; October 29, 1922; The Catholic Register, November 2, 1922.
41 The Jewish Voice, March 8, 1923. The Menace's attempt to court Jews was also discussed in a short syndicated article by Charles H. Joseph in The Modern View. The Modern View, October 3, 1924.
42 The Jewish Voice, April 12, 1923.
43 The Jewish Voice, July 7, 1922.
44 The Jewish Voice, March 31, 1922.
45 The Jewish Voice, December 1, 1922.
46 Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, August 12, 1921.
47 Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, August 12, 1921; October 26, 1923; The Jewish Voice, September 22, 1922. It is hard to say when the exact moment was that James A. Reed took up the plight of Jews around the world, but his speech entitled "The Jew," delivered before the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society of America, received favorable press in 1915–1916. Even after leaving Congress in 1929, Reed continued to speak out about prejudice against Jews, including at least one speech before the Chicago Committee For the Defense of Human Rights Against Nazism in 1934. For resources on Reed's comments on Judaism see folder 11, box 041, James Alexander Reed Papers, State Historical Society of Missouri, Kansas City, Missouri.
48 Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, August 12, 1921.
49 The Jewish Voice, September 22, 1922.
50 Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, October 26, 1923; St. Louis Post-Dispatch, April 3, 1924.
51 For information on the anti-Klan views of Perl Decker, Harry Hawes, L. C. Dyer, and Arthur Hyde, see the following sources. For Perl Decker, see folders 14–15 in the Perl
D. Decker Papers, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri. For Harry Hawes, see The Jewish Voice, September 22, 1922; October 27, 1922; St. Louis Post-Dispatch, September 18, 1922; October 6, 1922; October 7, 1922; November 11, 1923; October 21, 1924; Kansas City Star; October 21, 1924; St. Louis Argus, October 20, 1922; Joplin Globe, October 6, 1922; September 7, 1924; September 9, 1924. For L. C. Dyer, see St. Louis Post-Dispatch, September 18, 1921; October 2, 1921; St. Louis Argus, October 7, 1921; House Committee on Rules, The Ku-Klux Klan: Hearing before the Committee on Rules, 67th Cong., 1st sess., 1921, 6–8. For Arthur Hyde see folders 365–70 in the Arthur Mastick Hyde Papers, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri.

52 Mitchell, "The Re-Election of the Irreconcilable James A. Reed," 416–35; Missouri Counselor, June 1922, September 1922; Union Signal, June 1, 1922; November 16, 1922.

53 The Call, October 27, 1922; Ben Tillman and James Vardaman were United States Senators, from South Carolina and Mississippi respectively, who championed white supremacy.

54 The Modern View, October 27, 1922; November 3, 1922.
55 The Modern View, July 22, 1927.
56 The Jewish Voice, August 4, 1922.

58 Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, May 30, 1924.
59 The Jewish Voice, April 19, 1923.
60 The Jewish Voice, April 19, 1923.
61 The Modern View, May 30, 1924; March 20, 1925.

63 Foner, A Short History of Reconstruction, 184–98.
64 Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, November 14, 1924.
65 Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, June 13, 1924; July 18, 1924; August 1, 1924; August 22, 1924; The Modern View, August 29, 1924; September 7, 1924.
66 Large, The "Invisible Empire" and Missouri Politics; Kansas City Journal-Post, October 22, 1924. It was alleged that a portrait of A. W. Nelson, the Democratic candidate for governor in Missouri, hung in the headquarters of the Kansas City Klan.

67 Large, The "Invisible Empire" and Missouri Politics; The Modern View, October 10, 1924; October 31, 1924.
68 Large, The "Invisible Empire" and Missouri Politics; Kansas City Journal-Post, October 22, 1924; October 23, 1924; Kansas City Star, October 22, 1924; St. Louis Post-Dispatch, October 21, 1924; October 22, 1924; St. Louis Globe Democrat, October 22, 1924; Daily Capital News, October 22, 1924; October 23, 1924; Democrat-Tribune, October 22, 1924.
69 The Modern View, October 31, 1924.
70 Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, November 14, 1924.
71 The Jewish Voice, March 20, 1925; March 27, 1925; April 3, 1925; October 30, 1925; Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, March 20, 1925; June 12, 1925; July 24, 1925; February 5, 1926; March 11, 1927; March 2, 1928; November 16, 1928; December 28, 1928.

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72  The Modern View, January 16, 1925; October 30, 1925.
73  Pegram, One Hundred Percent American, 185–216; McVeigh, The Rise of the
Ku Klux Klan, 188–93.
74  Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, 100–08, 171–74, 291–318; Blee, Women of
the Klan, 21–28, 93–98, 175; Dumenil, The Modern Temper, 235–45.
75  The Call, November 3, 1922.
76  The Catholic Register, November 9, 1922.
77  The Modern View, November 24, 1922.
78  The Call, January 26, 1923.
79  Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, December 15, 1922.
80  Kansas City Jewish Chronicle, August 22, 1924; Goldberg, Unmasking the Ku
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81  The Jewish Voice, April 19, 1923.

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