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Klan Rallies in the American South: The Next Generation [Abstract]

From its inception in the post-Reconstruction South, the Klan has been a controversial subject for social researchers. Through a long history of change and adaptation, Klan activity continues, although on a much smaller scale than in its heyday during the 1920s and 1930s. Contemporary Klan groups still embrace many of the same rituals and traditions that were introduced during earlier eras. This paper is an investigation of Klan rallies in Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Ethnographic research that included observations of four Klan rallies and one Klan congress reveals that rallies link the past to the present and provide an important networking mechanism for retaining and recruiting members and integrating children into racist Klan culture. The experience of freedom that the Klan rally affords its participants locates them in a liminal state that becomes part of their everyday reality and unites them as a group.