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Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s

Kathleen M. Blee

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Kathleen M. Blee : Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s:

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review helpful. The foundations of Modern American feminismBy J. PrestonThis 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 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This is a very disturbing and well researched book. ...By Jay RaskinThis is a very disturbing and well researched book. Those who think that gender-feminism is progressive need to read this book.

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.

From Publishers WeeklyProbably no future history of the Ku Klux Klan will be written without reference to this ground-breaking work. In its first incarnation (1865-1872) the KKK was all-male, the instrument of "violent masculinity protecting vulnerable femininity." Soon after it was revived in 1915, women, already active in the temperance and suffragist movements, began forming groups with Klan-like tenets; in 1923 these groups developed into the Women of the Ku Klux Klan (WKKK), which lasted until the Depression and enrolled hundreds of thousands of recruits. Blee, an associate dean at the University of Kentucky, shows that while membership in the WKKK was limited to native-born, white Protestants, it was actually far from monolithic. It embraced many right-wing conservatives, but also included liberals, even socialists. All were prejudiced against Catholics, Jews, blacks and the foreign-born. Significantly, the WKKK was never a "ladies' auxiliary" of the male Klan. Members pursued their own agendas, whether their goals were merely social or involved militant battling for women's rights. The work will prove a revelation to many. Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library JournalBlee, a sociology professor, has written a fascinating and disturbing book about the women of the Ku Klux Klan (WKKK) in the 1920s. In Part 1, she examines the historical, cultural, and symbolic contexts of the Klan in the United States. In Part 2, she looks at activities of the women's Klan in Indiana and gives biographical sketches of some of the more prominent women in the Indiana WKKK. Through her extensive research, including interviews with surviving WKKK members, examining seized Klan documents, and reading local newspapers, Blee found that for many women the WKKK offered a logical place for them to express political views while also providing a home of like-minded females who shared social and moral concerns. While many books have been written about the history of the Ku Klux Klan, this is the first to focus on women. An important work which should be purchased by larger public and research libraries. Highly recommended. (Illustrations and index not seen.)-- Cindy Faries, Pennsylvania State Univ. Lib., University ParkCopyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. "A meticulous job of historical sleuthing. . . . This down-home side of the K.K.K. in the 1920s resembles not so much the terrorist Klan of today as the myriad white supremacist groups that rally behind the 'new' David Duke." -- Claudia Koonz, New York Times Book "Thanks to Kathleen M. Blee's superb scholarship in *Women of the Klan* I must now live with the fact that the Klan contained 'all the better people': businessmen, physicians, judges, social workers (even Quakers, political reformers and (this is the truly discomfoting part) feminists. . . . *Women of the Klan* stands before us as carefully garnered, irrefutable evidence that women are capable of asserting their gender rights in the most noisome settings." -- Barbara Ehrenreich, Los Angeles Times "The author's interviews with women who were dedicated members of the Klan in the 1920s are original and remarkable. . . . The hypocrisy revealed in *Women of the Klan* could easily translate as the stuff of fiction." -- Herbert Mitgang, New York Times "[A] superb new book on women in the 1920s Ku Klux Klan Blee's insight is crucial if we are to uncover, and grasp, the depth of white supremacy." -- Dana Frank, The Nation