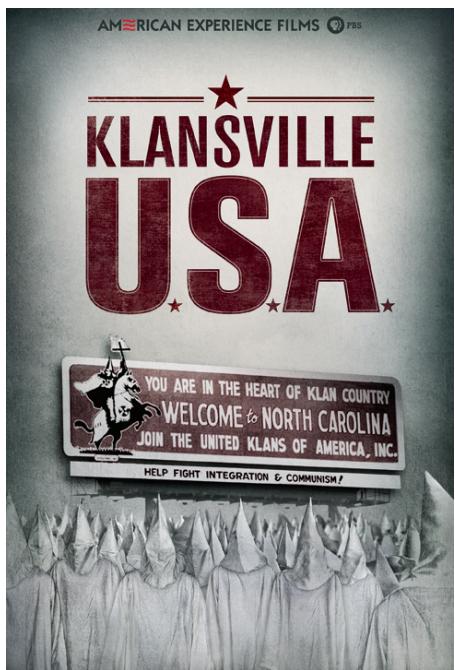


AMERICAN EXPERIENCE Presents *Klansville U.S.A.*

Premieres Tuesday, January 13, 2015
9:00-10:00 p.m. ET on PBS



As the civil rights movement grew, the long-dormant Ku Klux Klan gained momentum as well, having reemerged after the 1954 Supreme Court *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. That the Klan would rise once again wasn't surprising, but where the reincarnation took place was. North Carolina, long considered the most progressive southern state and one whose image was being burnished by the enormously popular "The Andy Griffith Show," saw a boom in Klan membership under the leadership of Bob Jones, the most successful Grand Dragon in the country. In just three years, he grew the North Carolina Klan from a handful of friends to some 10,000 members—more than the Klans of all other southern states combined. In the process, Jones helped give the Tarheel State a new nickname: "Klansville, U.S.A." Produced and directed by Callie T. Wiser, *Klansville U.S.A.* premieres on AMERICAN EXPERIENCE on Tuesday, January 13, 2015, 9:00-10:00 p.m. ET on PBS (check local listings).

Born in Pulaski, Tennessee in 1865, the Ku Klux Klan was established by decommissioned Confederate soldiers following the Civil War. Initially formed as a fraternal social club, the group quickly became violent, and had begun to dissolve in 1871 under pressure from the federal government. In 1915, D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* romanticized the Klan, portraying their violence towards African Americans as justifiable and necessary to restore order in a chaotic South. The enormous popularity of the film sparked a Klan revival in the 1920s, and by 1925, four million Americans claimed membership. But bad press and power struggles tore the group apart in the 1930s.

In the 1960s, as lunch counter sit-ins and other civil rights demonstrations began to spread, officials in several southern states reacted swiftly and defiantly as the movement gained momentum. But North Carolina leaders advocated for a moderate approach, and Bob Jones, whose father had been a Klan member in the 1920s, feared that the state's leaders would not resist the push for integration. In the summer of 1963, he petitioned the United Klans of America for a charter to organize in his home state, and on August 17, Jones was chosen to be the group's first Grand Dragon.

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Two weeks later, American TV sets were filled with images of the undeniable power of the growing civil rights movement at the March on Washington. Three days after the March, on August 31, Jones held a rally of his own in a cornfield near his hometown of Salisbury, hoping to attract a few hundred people. Two thousand showed up.

Tapping into the fears and resentments of low-income whites who believed that a changing America would leave them behind, Jones took his message across the state, establishing Klaverns and signing up hundreds of members. He teamed up with George Dorsett, an ordained Baptist minister who became the Klan's official chaplain and whose powerful sermons complemented Jones' organizational skills. Hoping to turn the Klan into a political force, Jones tried to organize the more than ten thousand members into a powerful voting bloc. To show that his Klan had nothing to hide, he planned marches in broad daylight, and processions of unmasked robed Klansmen, plainclothes supporters, wives, and children took to the streets. They quickly grew to be the largest Klan organization in the nation. While his empire was built on hate-filled rhetoric and white supremacy, Jones publicly advocated nonviolence as a strategy to avoid the wrath of the FBI and federal authorities.

Ultimately, events from inside and outside the North Carolina Klan combined to bring down Jones' empire: the blatant murder of a white civil rights worker from Detroit by Alabama Klan members, and the ability of the FBI to turn members of Jones' inner circle into informants against him.

"When we talk about the Klan now we tend to think about the horrific violence that occurred in Alabama or Mississippi," said Callie T. Wiser. "But if we think that racism only shows itself as violent acts or cross burning, then we can miss the fact that, as in North Carolina, a more subtle and perhaps more insidious form of racism can still lurk within American social and political structures."

"What we've tried to do in *Klansville* is offer a 360-degree perspective, shifting the focus from those who supported the civil rights movement to those who saw integration and social change as a threat to their way of life," said AMERICAN EXPERIENCE Executive Producer Mark Samels. "What made these people go to extremes and join a hate group? From where does racism spring? What keeps it alive in this nation? These are hard questions, but only by searching for answers will we make the progress we need to make."

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About the Participants (in alphabetical order)

Price Brown Jr. was a member of the Salisbury Police Department in the 1960s.

David Cecelski is a North Carolina historian and author of *The Fire of Freedom: Abraham Galloway and the Slaves' Civil War* and *The Waterman's Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina*, among others.

Rob Christensen is a political columnist for the *Raleigh News & Observer*.

Ned Cline was a reporter at the *Salisbury Post* from 1964 to 1970 and retired in 1997 after serving as managing editor of the *Greensboro News and Record*.

David Cunningham is a professor of sociology at Brandeis University and author of *Klansville, U.S.A: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights-Era Ku Klux Klan*.

Gary Freeze is a professor of history at Catawba College in Salisbury, North Carolina.

Michael Frierson is an associate professor and Director of Graduate Studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and a filmmaker whose work includes “FBI KKK,” a documentary about his father, Dargan Frierson, an FBI agent in Greensboro, and his informant, George Dorsett, a chaplain of the North Carolina Klan and close associate of Bob Jones.

Philip R. Manuel was an FBI Investigator.

Mark Potok is a senior fellow at the Southern Poverty Law Center and one of the country’s leading experts on extremism.

Estelle “Bunny” Sanders is the mayor of Roper, North Carolina. Her father, E.V. Wilkins, was the first African American mayor of Roper.

Patsy Sims is author of *The Klan*. An award-winning journalist, Sims drove more than 1,200 miles over the back roads of the South for two years to research and write the book. Currently, she is the director of Goucher College’s MFA in Creative Nonfiction program in Baltimore.

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About the Filmmakers

Produced and Directed By	Callie T. Wiser
Edited By	Chad Ervin
Story By	Callie T. Wiser
Telescript By	David Espar and Callie T. Wiser
Director of Photography	Jason Longo
Original Music By	Gary Lionelli
Narrated By	Oliver Platt
Associate Producer	Elizabeth Shea
Based in Part on the Book	<i>Klansville, U.S.A.</i> by David Cunningham

A Five O’Clock Films production for AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Callie Taintor Wiser (Producer/Director) was the producer for the Emmy-nominated *The Amish* and *The Amish: Shunned*, both of which premiered on AMERICAN EXPERIENCE. She began her career in documentary journalism working on a number of films for FRONTLINE before embarking on a freelance career. Wiser’s other work for AMERICAN EXPERIENCE includes producing the three-and-a-half hour documentary *George H.W. Bush* and co-producing the first two episodes of the six-part series *God in America*, a co-production of AMERICAN EXPERIENCE and FRONTLINE. She has also produced for the web, most notably the first edition of the FRONTLINE Interviews, a web-based oral history initiative launched in April 2012. She is a native of Tennessee and graduated from the University of North Carolina, where she was a Morehead Scholar. She lives with her husband and son in Somerville, Massachusetts.

Mark Samels (Executive Producer) was named executive producer of AMERICAN EXPERIENCE, PBS' flagship history series, in 2003. Under Samels' leadership, the series has been honored with nearly every industry award, including the Peabody, Primetime Emmys, the duPont-Columbia Journalism Award, Writers Guild Awards, Oscar nominations, and Sundance Film Festival Audience and Grand Jury Awards. Prior to joining WGBH, Samels worked as an independent documentary filmmaker, an executive producer for several U.S. public television stations, and as a producer for the first co-production between Japanese and American television. A native of Wisconsin, he is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

About AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Television's most-watched history series, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2013. The series has been hailed as "peerless" (*The Wall Street Journal*), "the most consistently enriching program on television" (*Chicago Tribune*), and "a beacon of intelligence and purpose" (*Houston Chronicle*). On air and online, the series brings to life the incredible characters and epic stories that have shaped America's past and present. Acclaimed by viewers and critics alike, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE documentaries have been honored with every major broadcast award, including thirty Emmy Awards, four duPont-Columbia Awards, and sixteen George Foster Peabody Awards, one most recently for the series represented by *Freedom Riders*, *Triangle Fire*, and *Stonewall Uprising*.

Exclusive corporate funding for AMERICAN EXPERIENCE is provided by Liberty Mutual Insurance. Major funding provided by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and Public Television Viewers. AMERICAN EXPERIENCE is produced for PBS by WGBH Boston.

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