

WOMEN AND THE KLAN

Accross the country, the Klan is conducting a massive campaign to recruit women. 30-40% of the Klan is now women. The recent appointment of Babs Wilson as national coordinator of the Knights of the KKK (the highest ranking woman in the history of the Klan) exposes the seriousness of this recruitment. Who is Babs Wilson? What is the significance of the Klan recruitment of women? What does this mean for the anti-klan and women's liberation movements?

The klan has been projecting Babs Wilson into prominence for some time. In October, 1982, exploiting the so-called free-speech issue, the klan appeared on the liberal Phil Donahue show, broadcasting a message to millions on national t.v. Babs Wilson was the major spokesperson along with Bill Wilkinson and Don Black. She is first and foremost a spokesperson for white supremacy.

Native Americans: When our people came to this country, there were not cities, no culture. They [Native Americans] were nomadic people, they went from place to place... The Indians in this country right now are accorded every single right that we are plus...they get all kinds of freebies from the government."

Wilson has a long history of right wing racist practice, including years as a lobbyist in the Louisiana legislature fighting the ERA, affirmative action, school busing and welfare.

The klan itself says of Wilson:

Her achievement of this key post in the kkk is a recognition of Mrs. Wilson's record of service and her ability to articulate the principles of the organization. As National Coordinator, she becomes the chief spokesperson for the ...organization.

In other words, this woman is no token, and we have to take very seriously who she is and what the klan's strategy to recruit women represents.

As the u.s. empire is being shaken by revolutionary struggles in Afrika, Asia and Latin America, as well as within its own borders, imperialism in crisis creates social contradictions at home. Inflation, massive unemployment, welfare, drugs, poor and racist education and rat-infested housing intensify the genocidal conditions for third world people in the u.s. These conditions reinforce the total social, economic and political control that has kept Black people (a) colonized (nation) in this country for over 400 years. White working class people are also effected by the crisis. The impact of fewer jobs, higher taxes, crime, has been particularly severe on women with the responsibility of raising children. In response to these social conditions, racist movements have been developing rapidly: the tax revolt, the law and order and anti-busing movements have mushroomed around the country, drawing thousands of women into their ranks. The bottom line of these movements is to demand more for white men, women and children - and to suppress Black, Latino, Asian and Native people's struggle for survival. The klan has focused on recruiting women largely due to the potentially vast base of support from which the klan can organize and recruit the most committed and ideological activists - the Phyllis Schafleys and the Bab Wilsons - and bring them into their military strategy and apparatus.

The klan is self-consciously using the symbol of the women's movement - the women's symbol - adding to it the klan cross - to

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give itself the veneer of being pro-women. In San Francisco, the klan spraypaints racist slogans around the city, and on the walls of the Haight Ashbury and Sunset districts writes "This neighborhood patrolled against rape and mugging by the kkk." As a fundamental enforcer of male supremacy, the klan obviously does not stand for women's liberation, but it is using the symbol and rhetoric of some of the concerns of the women's movement to compete with it for standing for the solutions to (white) women's problems.

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The klan is recruiting women because it recognizes the importance of mobilizing and winning the consensus of the entire white population. It recognizes women's ability to organize other women, especially around the issues that impact hardest on women, family and children, i.e. schools, busing, welfare, etc. David Duke, former Nazi, CIA mercenary and imperial wizard of the klan, was explicit about the need to mobilize women. "At one time," he said, "women played auxillary roles in the klan, but this was a waste of resources. We had a lot of women who wanted to take a more active role. Because a lot of women were housewives, they had a lot of time. They could go to school board meetings and things like that. It was a more effective effort."

There is no question but that the involvement of women in the klan is not just for show, or for "social" purposes, but that women are playing significant roles. Tom Metzger, who received 80,000 votes in the California u.s. senate primary last year, boasts that women in his organization have authority and power to "give orders." Journalists report hearing klanswomn directing a Georgia cross-burning, making phone calls to solicit klan support in Louisiana, and delivering full-fledged racist speeches at a North Carolina klan rally.

The structures of the growing fascist police state in the u.s. -- the military, court and police as well as the kkk and other right wing forces, are all recruiting women because they cannot succeed in their goals without the support and cooperaiton of wives, daughters and neighbors. We have to clear that the klan and right wing forces need women to play certain roles in order to consolidate the growth of fascism. We also have to be clear that women joining the klan reflects a self-conscios choice of white supremacy as the solution to problems.

There are so many reasons that I have decided to become a member of the klan...economic, political, social... I am concerned about our race, the fact that we are going to be a minority in our nation by 2080. -- Babs Wilson

Klanswoman Phoebe Wair further exemplifies the ideological support that is the basis for the massive recruitment of women: "I don't hate Black people," she says. "I don't think they are human." And Babs Wilson says on television to millions, "Aliens have brought us nothing but more unemployment and disease."

The recruitment of women is not happenning in isolation. The crisis in imperialism and development of fascism that requires women to help preserve the empire has escalated the level of violence againstwomen. The oppression of women and violence against womenin particular are a basic part of imperialism. Imperialism needs docile and cooperaitve women in order to maintain itself. A women in america is raped every elven second, and over 28% of women have rep reported being beaten by their husbands. OnAugust 2, an armed right wing religious terrorist held 2 wómen hostage for 14 hours in a Los Angeles women's health clinic because he opposed abortions. When the ultra-right wing Army of God paramilitary organization bombed abortion clinics in Texas, ^{and} ~~or~~ when the Sacramento leader of the klan murdered his wife, ^{and} ~~or~~ when white supremacist mobs gangraped

women in Connecticut and California and were then exonerated by the courts, this has all been part of instilling fear and passivity in women.

There is no contradiction at all between the klan's involvement of women and its fundamental male supremacy. The klan is the enemy of women's liberation, and in fact exposes the fallacy of the assumption of the bourgeois women's movement that "equal participation" is the substance of women's liberation. Women in the klan organize, speak publicly and lead. They learn to shoot and run some of the paramilitary training. But the basis of this is not the liberation of women any more than women armed in the u.s. military or pioneer women armed to shoot Native people was about liberation; those skills are allowed on the basis of commitment to white supremacy. Klanswomen themselves denounce the women's movement explicitly:

Women are not wanting to be equal anymore. Their place is where God intended them to be. If he hadn't intended for us to be a mother, he would not have made it necessary for us to be a mother." --- Klanwoman Phoebe Wair.

Wair's statement is important, because it is completely a part of the underlying ideology that unites and gives impetus to the building of fascism, the "vision" of White Christian America. "America is the new Jerusalem," says James Wickstrom, of the Posse Comitatus' "We are the true Hebrews - the anglo-saxon Hebrews." Army of Elijah. It is turning from a political movement to a religious war...I believe that there will be a new crusade with Jesus Christ as the commander-in-chief, who will bring our nation back to greatness." This is the context in which we can understand the relationship of the klan's white supremacy, male supremacy and anti-semitism.

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At a time when the power of the u.s. system is being challenged everywhere, and the privileges of empire are shrinking, the whole question of "national identity" has been challenged as well. The solution of the klan is the same as the moral majority and all the us state forces of fascism: resolving the uncertainties of a system under attack with the mystical authority of God, Family and Country. God and religion become the authority and power to justify white supremacy and terror. Klanswoman Mary Richardson speaks of klan terrorist cross burnings with reverential awe, saying that ^{they} should not be called "burnings," but "lightings" as they "light up the night as Christ lights up the night." This is the vision that is used to both justify and obscure what the Klan is today: a terrorist organization with 55 paramilitary camps and the blood of Black people on its hands across the country. In 1980 alone, klan racist terror increased 450%. Murder, terror bombings and sabotage are the name of klan activity against Black people in virtually every state.

statistics re klan family

At a time when welfare, prisons, and massive unemployment are ripping Black families apart, the traditional white nuclear family is being glorified and fought for as a critical part of White Christian America. Propaganda put out by the authors of the Family Protection Act reveal its ideological underpinning: "As are families, so is society. If well ordered, well structured, and well governed, they are the springs from which go forth the streams of national greatness and prosperity -- of civil order and public happiness."

The white nuclear family is an institution in which the traditional sex roles oppressive to women are most rigidly defined, and women's choices restricted. Women's role is to serve and maintain the well-being of the man and children, in return for economic and emotional support and social standing. Reagan's "Adviser for Women's Affairs" states this directly when she says: "Women are so good at giving, and serving, and this is what America needs." Families are also the place where basic beliefs and ideology are shared and passed on. The family is an institution which allows white men, women and children to work together in a bonded patriarchal structure of control to further white supremacy.

The klan does everything in its power to build and reinforce the white nuclear family. David Duke's klan in Louisiana, for example, targets "family" membership by promoting women into leadership and offering special programs for children. Across the country, the klan youth corps trains children from 8-18 in racist ideology and weaponry so that at "graduation" they automatically become full fledged klanspeople. The cohesiveness of entire families united in preparation for "race war" is a basic building block of fascism.

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 Women join the klan and right wing movements to find the social, economic and psychological security afforded by families and communities united in like thinking to prevent any crack in the power and privileges of white america. But the "security" of white supremacy depends on wiping out all possibility of alternatives. Anyone or any group that is not a force for the bourgeois nuclear family comes to represent a potential threat, both to the family structure and to the White Christian America it stands for.

This is the context in which we have to understand the significance of klan attacks on gay people. Richard Viguerie, a right wing theoretician writing in the Coinervative Digest, states: "American business will pay an enormous price if the traditional family should be smashed by militant feminists and their allies who insist that our civilization must be restructured to meet the diverse preferences and passions of individuals." Lesbians and gay men do not fit into the mold of the bourgeois nuclear family in the traditional way. Particularly in the context of the struggle against male supremacy, gay relationships, particularly between lesbians, who as women do not depend on men for their emotional support, have the potential to challenge the domination of women by men on which the nuclear family depends. Many lesbians have been part of leading a self-conscious struggle in the women's movement against male supremacy and the sex roles defined by class society, and codified in the nuclear family structure.

But the klan hates all gay people, because it depends on male supremacy to exist, and because the existence of large numbers of consciously out gay people threatens the inevitability of the nuclear family as the only possible family structure. In Kalamazoo, Michigan, the klan fought to censor books like *Our Bodies Ourselves*, and others dealing with lesbian and gay men's sexuality. Public attention

to Aids sufferers has exposed a new breadth of right wing homophobia, with gay men being left untreated in hospitals, and moral majority spokesmen like Jerry Falwell calling for the closing of gay social clubs and bath houses. In Connecticut, the klan also targetted National Gay Pride day for a mass racist anti-communist, anti-semitic an anti-gya rally, and in Michigan, Connecticut and Texas, they have called for the death penalty for lesbians and gay men.

There are many consequences to the klan recruitment of women. First and foremost, it reflects the successful attempts of the klan to broaden and deepen its base of support, both its mass and clandestine formations. When the Posse Comitatus leader Gorden Kahl was killed in a shootout in North Dakota, a vast base of support was revealed that had housed, fed and sheltered him for months, as well as providing a base for his clandestine activities. The proliferation of paramilitary training camps could not exist without the support of a more and more mass base, and specifically the support and commitment of women.

A second consequence related to the klan's strategy of projecting itself as a law-abiding organization that has put violence aside. Almost every klan spokesperson puts out this face: in electoral campaigns, on television interviews, at every opportunity. But the most effective weapon for this strategy is when it comes from klanswomen. When Jerry Thompson, a tv reporter who "infiltrated" and researched the klan spoke about its violence on the same Phil Donahue show, Donahue interrupted him asking if women were in the organization, didn't that prove that they were no longer violent. The klan has an interest in projecting this image in order to legitimize itself - to win a broader base of support based on their ideology. Male supremacy reinforces their strategy and makes it all the more effective.

As anti-^{women} klan activists, we have a vision of what we are fighting for as we build a movement against the klan and white supremacy. We want to see Black people free. We want to see the the realization of land and independence for Black people in their national territory in the south, New Afrika. We want to see the end of the most disgusting system in the world: u.s. imperialism, because we don't

want to live in a society where killer cops kill 400 Black or Latino people every year, and where children are not safe from the police. We don't want to live in a system where one out of every four young women is raped, molested or attacked through incest before she is 18; where lesbians are "legally" proscribed from parental rights, and where gay people are threatened with death. We want to see an end to male supremacy and gay oppression and the victory of women's liberation.

As ^{an} anti-klan movement, we understand that the klan cannot be destroyed without the destruction of white supremacy and the u.s. empire. We also understand that male supremacy cannot be destroyed or the liberation of women won without the destruction of the empire, and the liberation of captive and colonized nations. But the u.s. government is going all out to convince us otherwise. The police and military, even the space program is recruiting women across the boards in an attempt to offer women money, security and skills in return for a commitment to enforce the colonial oppression of Black and Latino people inside and outside the borders of the u.s. In other words, they are offering women fascism instead of liberation.

We want to be part of a culture of resistance that says No! to all of this, and to build a movement that will not compromise with fighting for liberation.

Connections with other ut wing movements
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