

H A R L A N   R I C H A R D S

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The Klu Klux Klan

Before reading about the Jim Crow south, I had a misconception about the Klu Klux Klan (KKK). I believed that they acted primarily to inflict vigilante justice on unruly blacks - those who caused problems that the police couldn't effectively address. As wrong as this is, it is not as destructive as what really occurred.

The KKK went after good, law abiding blacks who became too successful. They didn't focus their attacks on renegade blacks. They went after any black man or woman who was able to start a business, run a prosperous farm or do anything else that showed that black people were as good as (and often better than) their white neighbors.

Instead of being a misguided attempt to prevent anarchy and lawlessness in the post-Reconstruction South, the KKK was a pernicious evil. They were wrong then and they are wrong now.