

**IT WAS AN HONORABLE POLICE PROTECTION  
AND RESISTANCE ORGANIZATION**

**EXTREME RADICALS WANTED TO EXTERMINATE EVERY  
SOUTHERN MAN WOMAN AND CHILD THAT HAD ANY CSA  
CONNECTION**

A History Lesson for Sen. Ted Cruz

By Samuel W. Mitcham on Jul 15, 2019

Abbeville Institute

I am always annoyed when a conservative political leader attacks Southern heritage. I don't know why because with the present-day crop of cowardly politicians, it is becoming routine, but I am. Unwittingly or not, these modern day Scalawags adopt the "politically correct" line, even though they know (or should know) that political correctness is nothing more than a euphemism for cultural Marxism.

Recently, the courageous governor of Tennessee, Bill Lee, swam against the politically correct stream, obeyed state law, and issued a proclamation calling for a day of observance in honor of Nathan Bedford Forrest as well as commemorating Confederate Decoration Day and Robert E. Lee Day. Governor Lee also stated that he would not be a party to "whitewashing history" by ripping down the bust of Forrest in the Tennessee State Capitol.

For his refusal to join this intellectual lynch mob, Governor Lee was immediately attacked by the usual anti-Southern bigots and Socialist/Democrat/Leftist house organs, such as the Washington Compost and the New York Slimes.[1] This was predictable. What was unusual and absurd about this particular assault on the memory of a brave man is a tweet by Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, who mounted his rhetorical Mount Siani and declared: "This is wrong!"

But was it, Senator? And what do you know about it, anyway?

First of all, I suppose I should confess that I like Ted Cruz politically, generally speaking. We have not yet met but do have some mutual acquaintances, including Phil Robertson of Duck Dynasty fame. Phil is

my preacher at the University Church of Christ in Monroe, Louisiana, and he spoke for Mr. Cruz in Iowa. During the 2016 primaries, I was torn between voting for Cruz, Mike Huckabee, or Donald Trump. I was sorry when he and Donald Trump tore into each other, and I think the future president was wrong to attack Cruz's father. I am also sorry that the senator from Texas cannot see that, in attacking the memory of Bedford Forrest, Senator Cruz is unwittingly making himself a "useful idiot" (to borrow a phrase from Lenin) for the Left, which has gone completely over the edge and is working night and day to turn this country into Venezuela.

But back to my original question: what do you know about it anyway, Senator Cruz?

It is also appalling to me when a conservative such as Glenn Beck or Ted Cruz – who would never allow the politically correct to deceive them on contemporary issues – routinely allow themselves to be hoodwinked on historical topics. Nathan Bedford Forrest is a prime example.

Forrest joined the Klan in 1866. If the Klan were the same organization then as it is today, Mr. Cruz would be correct in condemning it. But was it? To determine if Cruz's denunciation of Forrest is valid, we must ask ourselves some questions. First, was the Klan of that day the same as the Klan of today? Second, what were the circumstances that induced Forrest to join that organization? Thirdly, when it became something he did not intend, what did he do?

What Mr. Cruz and his ilk too often fail to take into account is that organizations change over time. The year 1865 was pivotal in American history. It was the year the Civil War ended, the Confederacy died, the Ku Klux Klan was born, and the Democratic Party transitioned from the party of slavery to the party of white supremacy. Later, it became the party of separate but equal (with white people being more equal) and the party of segregation after that. Today, it is transforming itself again – into God knows what. It is not the same as it was in 1865.

Neither is the Klan. It was born in the law offices of Judge Thomas Jones in Pulaski, Tennessee. Half its original members were attorneys. Its initial standards were high. One had to be in the Confederate Army at the time of the surrender or in a Union prisoner-of-war camp to be

eligible for membership. Its original mission statement called for it to be “an instrument of Chivalry, Humanity, Mercy and patriotism” which was to “relieve and assist the injured, oppressed, suffering, and unfortunate, especially widows and orphans of Confederate soldiers.” (This the government in Washington would not do. They did, however, have a 47% tax on cotton, which they used to subsidize Northern railroads and other large corporations. On the other hand, they did provide pensions to Northern widows and orphans at the expense of Southern widows and orphans.) One had to apply for membership. As far as we can tell (written records are absent), its eighth member was John C. Brown, former Confederate brigadier general and, within eight years, governor of Tennessee. Also a lawyer.

The Klan started out as a social club, but that soon changed. It grew like wildfire and morphed into something else altogether.

The loss of the war and the death of the Confederacy were not isolated events. They also signaled the breakdown of the Southern economy and the collapse of law and order in many localities. Gangs of criminals and individual thugs had a field day throughout the South. Union deserters, Southern outlaws, recently freed slaves who did not know how to handle their freedom, and professional criminals ran amuck. Arson, robbery, rape, and murder were the order of the day. At the same time, Carpetbaggers and collaborators pillaged the public treasuries, increased taxes 300% to 400%, ran up huge public debts, pocketed the proceeds, stole land and farms, and enriched themselves at the expense of a helpless and impoverished people.

African Americans suffered most of all. Much of the South’s land was ruined during the conflict, and 1867 was a year of famine. The new Northern rulers had no interest in the Southern people, black or white. Tens of thousands of Negroes literally starved to death.[2] No effort was made on the part of the new rulers to even keep records of how many died. They were too busy stealing.

Public health was almost completely ignored. Smallpox epidemics periodically raged throughout the South in the 1862 through 1868 period. The weakened and malnourished black folks were especially susceptible, often dying at rates of three or four times higher than Southern whites,

who were themselves not well nourished. Black children were particularly hard hit. In one six-month period in 1865, 30,000 African Americans died in North Carolina and South Carolina alone. The epidemic lasted six years.[3]

Not content with theft and neglect, a significant minority of Northern politicians openly advocated a second Civil War. They included Thaddeus Stevens, the chairman of the powerful Ways and Means Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives; General Benjamin F. "Spoons" Butler; Governor Richard Yates of Illinois; carpetbagger Governor Andrew J. Hamilton of Texas; and Senator Jim Lane of Kansas, among others. U.S. Congressman William Anderson Pile advocated "death to all supporters of the South, past or present." [4] General William T. Sherman wanted Southerners demoted to "demizens": people who were given certain rights (such as the right to pay taxes) but not others (such as the right to vote).

Of particular interest to Forrest was carpetbagger Governor William G. "Parson" Brownlow of Tennessee. A former Methodist preacher, slave owner, and newspaper editor, he believed slavery was "ordained by God." He nevertheless supported the Union and a second Civil War. "I am one of those who believed that the war ended too soon," he declared, and "the loyal masses" should not "leave one Rebel fence rail, outhouse, one dwelling, in the seceded states. As for the Rebel population, let them be exterminated."

This kind of wild talk sounds incredible today, but people like Nathan Bedford Forrest had no choice but to take it seriously – especially in Tennessee.

The Southerners after the war were in the same position as the French Resistance was in World War II. The government were it was functioning at all was often in the hands of criminals, and they felt compelled to take the law into their own hands. There is a point between civilization and anarchy in which vigilantism is an acceptable, temporary measure, until law and order can be restored. Into that breach stepped Nathan Bedford Forrest. He was receiving a hundred letters a day from his former soldiers, relating eye-witness accounts of outrage and lawlessness. He was first told about the Klan by George Washington

Gordon, a former Confederate general and war hero. Forrest applied for membership through John W. Morton, his former chief of artillery who celebrated his 21st birthday commanding a battalion of horse artillery in the Battle of Chickamauga.[5] In the spring of 1866, the leaders of the KKK met in the Maxwell House in Nashville, Tennessee, and created the position of "Grand Wizard," a tribute to Forrest's wartime nickname, "Wizard of the Saddle," and gave it to the general.

The Klan had already transformed into a hybrid neighborhood protection/vigilante organization which met violence with violence and terror with terror. **It was definitely a mixed bag. Under Forrest, it became, as he said, "a protective political military organization," i.e., a paramilitary force, a counterbalance to Brownlow's Loyal Legion.**

Governor Brownlow sought to pass a law making it legal for anyone to shoot a former Confederate on sight. If that law passed, Forrest declared, there would be a second war, although he did not want it, but he would look upon the activation of Brownlow's militia as a declaration of war. He also declared that he could raise 40,000 Klansmen in Tennessee and 550,000 throughout the South in five days. No one wanted to fight a half a million man cavalry army under Nathan Bedford Forrest, especially Brownlow and his cronies. The militia was not activated. A second war was avoided.

In February 1869, Brownlow resigned as governor. His successor sought to work with the Democrats, was conciliatory to his former enemies, and restored voting rights to Southern veterans and Confederate sympathizers. Forrest, meanwhile, became concerned that white trash elements were taking over large parts of the organization and were using it for their own nefarious and hateful purposes. As a result, Nathan Bedford Forrest issued General Order Number One, disbanding the Ku Klux Klan. "There was no further need for it," Forrest commented later, "... the country was safe."

**Certain branches of the KKK lived on after Forrest disbanded it, under such names as the Constitutional Union Guards, the Pale Faces, the White Brotherhood, the White League, and the Knights of the White Camelia, and a few Ku Klux dens lingered on until 1877 and even after, but the original Ku Klux Klan effectively ceased to exist and faded into history.** As Captain John Calhoun Lester, one of the original

founders, wrote later: “There never was, before or since, a period of our history when such an order could have lived. May there never be again!” [6] Let us pray that the captain was right.

In 1915, Hollywood produced an infamous film, “Birth of a Nation.” Its contents were so incendiary that it led to several race riots, propelled the NAACP into national prominence, and led to the birth of a second Ku Klux Klan.[7] This racist organization became the paramilitary arm of the Democratic Party and was (and is) largely a terrorist organization. Had it not pirated the name of the original KKK, we might look upon the original Klan much differently than we do. But it did. To associate Nathan Bedford Forrest’s name with the depredations of this second incarnation of the Klan of the 20th and 21st centuries is wrong, but many people do, even though it was created almost four decades after his death, and he clearly had nothing to do with it.

General Forrest’s racial views continued to evolve over time. He addressed an early civil rights organization, was denounced by a Freedman’s Bureau officer as being “too liberal” to the African Americans he employed, provoked the outrage of several editors by kissing a young black lady on the cheek after she presented him with a bouquet of flowers, was denounced by the (Confederate) Cavalry Survivors Association for his positive attitude toward African Americans, hired them in responsible positions in his railroad (i.e., as foremen, conductors, architects, and engineers), and was one of two former Confederate generals I know of who advocated allowing African-Americans to vote.[8] I bet you didn’t know that, Senator Cruz. When Forrest died in 1877, twenty thousand people lined the street for two miles with their hats off, respectfully mourning him as his hearse slowly passed by. These included more than 3,000 black mourners. One source placed this number at 6,000.

I would go on with your history lesson, Mr. Cruz, but Rome wasn’t built in a day. I would, however, suggest that you refrain from attacking heroes from other states until you learn more about Southern history. Texas, after all, had more than its share of slaveholding heroes. William B. Travis and Jim Bowie (my personal favorite), the commanders of the Alamo, leap to mind. Already, there are those agents of political

correctness who would hand the Alamo over to the United Nations as a World Heritage Site, so they can “contextualize” it. Eventually – should they succeed – they will want to tear it down, on the grounds that it represents white supremacy, oppression of a minority group, or some other pretext. And don’t think for one moment they wouldn’t try it. The Left wants no heroes to exist except its own.

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[1] Also known as the Washington Post and the New York Times.

[2] Exact numbers do not exist. **The Carpetbaggers and Union Army were so indifferent to the fate of the black people they did not bother to keep records. Estimates as to the exact number who died vary between 80,000 and 1,000,000. Most of them were African American.** See Jim Downs, *Sick From Freedom: African-American Death and Suffering During the Civil War and Reconstruction*. Oxford: 2012, p. 8ff.

[3] Donald W. Livingston, “Confederate Emancipation Without War,” in Frank B. Powell, ed., *To Live and Die in Dixie* (Columbia, Tennessee: 2004), p. 462.

[4] Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: 1964), p. 372. Piles was a former Union general.

[5] Morton was later secretary of agriculture and secretary of state of Tennessee.

[6] John Calhoun Lester and Rev. D. L. Wilson, *The Ku Klux Klan: Its Origin, Growth and Disbandment* (New York: 1905), p. 132.

[7] See Linda Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition* (New York: 2017) and William Rawlings, *The Second Coming of the Invisible Empire: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Macon, Georgia: 2017).

[8] The other one was P. G. T. Beauregard.