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KKK, other racist groups disavow the white supremacist label

By Jay Reeves

PELHAM (AP) - In today's racially charged environment, there's a label that even the KKK disavows: white supremacy.

Standing on a muddy dirt road in the dead of night near the North Carolina-Virginia border, masked Ku Klux Klan members claimed Donald Trump's election as president proves whites are taking back America from blacks, immigrants, Jews and other groups they describe as criminals and freeloaders. America was founded by and for whites, they say, and only whites can run a peaceful, productive society.

But still, the KKK members insisted in an interview with The Associated Press, they're not white supremacists, a label that is gaining traction in the country since Trump won with the public backing of the Klan, neo-Nazis and other white racists.

"We're not white supremacists. We believe in our race," said a man with a Midwestern accent and glasses just hours before a pro-Trump Klan parade in a nearby town. He, like three Klan compatriots, wore a robe and pointed hood and wouldn't give his full name, in accordance with Klan rules.

Claiming the Klan isn't white supremacist flies in the face of its very nature. The Klan's official rulebook, the Kloran - published in 1915 and still followed by many groups - says the organization "shall ever be true in the faithful maintenance of White Supremacy," even capitalizing the term for emphasis. Watchdog groups also consider the Klan a white supremacist organization, and experts say the groups' denials are probably linked to efforts to make their racism more palatable.

Still, KKK groups today typically renounce the term. The same goes for extremists including members of the self-proclaimed "alt-right," an extreme branch of conservatism mixing racism, white nationalism and populism.

"We are white separatists, just as Yahweh in the Bible told us to be. Separate yourself from other nations. Do not intermix and mongrelize your seed," said one of the Klansmen who spoke along the muddy lane.

The Associated Press interviewed the men, who claimed membership in the Loyal White Knights of the KKK, in a nighttime session set up with help of Chris Barker, a KKK leader who

confirmed details of the group's "Trump victory celebration" in advance of the event. As many as 30 cars paraded through the town of Roxboro, North Carolina, some bearing Confederate and KKK flags.

Barker didn't participate, though: He and a Klan leader from California were arrested hours earlier on charges linked to the stabbing of a third KKK member during a fight, sheriff's officials said. Both men were jailed; the injured man was recovering.

Like the KKK members, Don Black said he doesn't care to be called a white supremacist, either. Black - who operates stormfront.org, a white extremist favorite website, from his Florida home - he prefers "white nationalist."

"White supremacy is a legitimate term, though not usually applicable as used by the media. I think it's popular as a term of derision because of the implied unfairness, and, like 'racism,' it's got that 'hiss' (and, like 'hate' and 'racism,' frequently 'spewed' in headlines)," Black said in an email interview.

The Klan formed 150 years ago, just months after the end of the Civil War, and quickly began terrorizing freed blacks. Hundreds of people were assaulted or killed as whites tried to regain control of the defeated Confederacy. During the civil rights movement, Klan members were convicted of using murder as a weapon against equality. Leaders from several different Klan groups have told AP they have rules against violence aside from self-defense, and opponents agree the KKK has toned itself down after a string of members went to prison years after the fact for deadly arson attacks, beatings, bombings and shootings.

The Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League, which monitor white extremist organizations and are tracking an increase in reports of racist incidents since the election, often use the "white supremacist" label when describing groups like the Klan; white nationalism and white separatism are parts of the ideology. But what exactly is involved?

The ADL issued a report last year describing white supremacists as "ideologically motivated by a series of racist beliefs, including the notion that whites should be dominant over people of other backgrounds, that

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Newly minted NCCU graduates celebrate Dec. 10. See photos on page 7. (NCCU Photo)

Google Exec Urges NCCU Graduates to Move Forward with Resilience

Belhaven hospital supporters march at Executive Mansion

RALEIGH (AP) - Advocates of reopening a hospital in Belhaven have scheduled a march at the Executive Mansion.

Organizers marched Dec. 8 at the mansion in Raleigh in support of reopening the former Pungo District Hospital in Beaufort County.

Belhaven mayor Adam O'Neal said last week that a judge issued a 10-day restraining order to prevent the current owner of the hospital, Pantego Creek LLC, from demolishing the building.

Vidant Health took over the hospital in 2011. It announced in 2013 that it would close the hospital, saying it could not be made financially viable.

Town and community groups have worked since the hospital closed in 2014 to buy the building and reopen it as a health facility.

More than 580 undergraduate, graduate and professional degrees awarded

North Carolina Central University (NCCU) awarded approximately 583 diplomas on Saturday, Dec. 10, 2016, during the university's 128th Baccalaureate Commencement.

Marketing and entertainment expert Valeisha Butterfield Jones delivered the Commencement address, urging graduates to arm themselves with "resilience and grit" to overcome obstacles, especially those tied to gender or race.

"I, too, face many of these same struggles everyday," said Butterfield Jones, named earlier this year to head the division of black customer engagement for Google. "As an African-American woman in corporate America, I find it takes a level of resilience and grit you didn't know you had."

Butterfield Jones, daughter of NCCU alumni, U.S. Congressman G.K. Butterfield and N.C. Rep. Jean Farmer Butterfield, said when she left her home in Wilson, N.C., for college, she had "big dreams and no idea of how to make them reality."

Butterfield Jones said she believes hard work is one of the keys to her success.

"I may not always be the most intelligent person in the room... but I will outwork, outsmart and outgrind every single person in the room," she said, adding: "Never be too big for the little jobs."

She also advised graduates to maintain a student-like outlook on life, even after leaving formal education.

"The moment you stop growing, you stop learning, and when you stop learning, you will be replaced," Butterfield Jones said.

During the ceremony, NCCU Acting Chancellor Johnson O. Akinleye recognized Amber Richardson-Booker, who was graduating from the School of Business. Richardson-Booker's education was disrupted in 2013 by a car accident that affected her cognitive abilities. She returned to classes after two years of therapy, as well as getting married and starting a family.

"Today, Amber stands among you, a proud Eagle who is graduating with a 4.0 GPA, two Business Administration degrees, in management and accounting, which she completed in a year and half by taking a full course load each semester - and is expecting a second bundle of joy with her husband," Akinleye said.

Also recognized were five other students graduating with a 4.0 GPA: Cody M. Burkhardt, Xaysana Douangara, Morgan Jones, Kathryn M. Manginelli and Jennifer M. Morehead.

Racial slur found on Idaho Black History Museum building

BOISE, Idaho (AP) - Officials with the Idaho Black History Museum say someone wrote a racial slur on the roof of the museum's storage shed.

Museum director Phillip Thompson said Dec. 7 that he found the slur sketched in the snow while heading to a board meeting. Thompson has since shared photos of the slur on the Boise museum's Facebook page.

Thompson says he doesn't plan on reporting the incident to the Boise police because there is nothing they can do. He added that the act is not a representation of Boise, but instead described the incident as a "microcosm" of the racial climate throughout the country.

The last instance of vandalism at the museum was in 2002, when a swastika was carved into the door.

Priest who served Chicago, Quincy moves closer to sainthood

QUINCY, Ill. (AP) - A priest who served in Chicago and western Illinois in the late 1800s is a step closer to becoming a saint.

Father Augustus Tolton was the first African-American priest in the U.S.

WGEM-TV reports his remains were exhumed from St. Peter's Cemetery in Quincy on Dec. 10. They will be examined for historical verification purposes.

Bishop John Paprocki of the Springfield Diocese was at the cemetery Dec. 10. He says having someone from the local area become a saint and show others how to be Christian is "a great thing."

Tolton was born a slave in 1854. His family escaped to Illinois, where he was a priest in Quincy and Chicago. He died in 1897.

The late Cardinal Francis George of Chicago submitted Tolton as a candidate for sainthood in 2010.



First Lady Michelle Obama, with family pets Bo and Sunny, and radio host Rylan Seacrest, greet patients at the conclusion of the Christmas holiday program at the Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C., Dec. 12, 2016. (Official White House Photo by Chuck Kennedy)