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## Whose Nation?

### I. Introduction

#### A. Two Pictures

1. Klan march in Washington, D.C. in 1926
2. Map of Seattle, Washington from 1936

B. In this episode, we are going to explore various ways some people, largely during the middle third of the twentieth-century, implicitly or explicitly claimed that the United States was really for and about white people. In ways both subtle and overt, we live with these claims still, so it's worth knowing where they come from and why they continue to matter.

### II. The Klan and Protestant America

#### A. The Nadir of Race Relations

1. Some white, Protestant Americans were concerned that the continued presence of African Americans and increasing numbers of non-Protestant immigrants undermined the character of the country as a white, Protestant nation.

B. Re-emergence of the Klan in the 1920s part of this fear. Klan argued that:

1. America's success was due to white Protestants.
2. "Winning" showed God's favor. Because the United States had been "won" by white Protestants, people could assume God favored white Protestants.
3. White people the real Protestants (even though most African American Christians were Protestants).

C. Do white Christians today echo Klan thinking?

1. Do some Christians assume that the only stories about Christians doing good that really "count" are stories about white Christians?

D. Even though the Klan declined after the mid-1920s, other institutions, including the government, echoed Klan logic about who mattered.

1. Lynchings continued.
2. African Americans still denied the right to vote in the South.

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3. New Deal programs often excluded black people.

### III. Housing and Race

- A. In early 20<sup>th</sup> century, millions of African Americans moved out of the South.
- B. Depression era housing policies and their aftermath
  1. Created Home Owners Loan Corporation and the Federal Housing Authority.
  2. As the government assessed the risk in its loaning, it considered race.
    - a) Racially homogenous white areas deemed less risky and more likely to get help from HOLC
  3. FHA insured in racially homogenous white areas.
    - a) Led to redlining: banks and real estate agents would not sell to black people in “white” areas or give them mortgages to buy.
    - b) Black people unable to buy homes in the areas that appreciated the most and had the most money for schools, parks etc..
  4. Fair Housing not passed in Seattle or the nation at large until 1968.
- C. Does this history still matter?
  1. Some Christians argue that racism is no longer a problem or no more of a problem than “reverse racism.”
  2. That position does not take equity into account.
    - a) Equity is a multi-generational benefit available mainly to white people (although not accessible to all of them).
      - (1) Equity also has implications for education since property taxes help to fund schools.
  3. Is guilt the point?
    - a) No. Understanding wrongs so they can be redressed is the point.
  4. Are you saying that all white people are rich?

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a) No. But race has usually not played a negative role in wealth creation for white people and it has often played a negative role in wealth creation for black people.

IV. Conclusion

A. Stories of Klan and mid-century housing policy show a pattern in which many white Americans, including white Christians, think of the United States as primarily for white people.