

Marjory Stoneman Douglas reflects on the Ku Klux Klan in Miami

Marjory Stoneman Douglas: So it's always been a very interesting community, much more... Miami has not been a single community simply because as a large, even as a small city, it was growing up with any number of different kinds of people. It was founded by people from the Old South, and then overrun by Damn Yankees like me from the North so that, they complain about us not being a community, well we couldn't be. The people had such different backgrounds, my goodness. When I first came back to Miami from the First World War, the Ku Klux Klan was in Miami and doing dreadful things, and you couldn't be sympathetic with the kind of people that were in favor, you couldn't have a community with the kind of people who had the Ku Klux Klan. I remember my family, my father and my stepmother and I guess some friends, I'd forgotten who, were driving back from the beach one evening, my father was driving, and we came up to 5th Street, up to where my father lived in Spring Garden up the river, and we came along the street and here was the Ku Klux Klan preparing to march in their masks and sheets and a man on horseback, a masked man on horseback rode up in front of my father and said, "this street is closed," and my father said "Get out of my way!" and drove right straight ahead, through them and scattering them and everything; they couldn't stop him. We were all yelling and screaming in defiance we were so mad. But that was overt, you see, it was an overt thing. After a war, there is always that kind of reaction among some people, and that's what happens. And there were some very bad Ku Klux Klan things: a negro was lynched in Homestead, and a white, crippled minister from the Bahamas, who was the minister to a black Episcopal church in Miami, was tarred and feathered and let out on Flagler Street, and of course he nearly died. When he was rescued, he was ill for years, and neither of the papers, and I regret to state, including my father's paper, even mentioned it. That's the kind of reason why Miami is not a community. How could you be a community with people like that? I like Coconut Grove. It was a community of people who had backgrounds other than that, and I'm quite sure there was no Ku Klux Klan in Coconut Grove.