

No place for extremism

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American white supremacist group the Klu Klux Klan, according to historians, was essentially a political organisation serving the needs of the Democratic Party which had taken a beating from the Republicans after the Civil War.

The social changes affecting the US following widespread migration and the increasing number of demands from ethnic Africans for equal rights and for the government to elevate them from the ashes of their roots as slaves, gave rise to whites with inferiority complexes to join the Klan which sought to fulfil its agenda of social engineering through violence and intimidation.

Klansmen included Christian extremists, disgruntled poor white farmers, whites who were fearful of black competition, failed politicians, including those who used the race card, and those with an unreasonable dislike for blacks.

Among its agenda was to curb the economic advancement of blacks by resisting equal opportunity policies. In essence, the Klan wanted to maintain the status quo of white supremacy where non-whites were treated as inferior citizens with limited rights and opportunities.

Although outlawed in many states in the US, the Klan continues to thrive, largely due to the country's robust laws on assembly, association and individual rights.

Its agenda of hatred had also expanded to include Jews, Catholics, unionists, socialists, mixed couples and basically anyone who was not white or Protestant who had a stake in the dwindling economic pie – especially in the advent of the Depression of the early 1900s.

It did not help those who tried to quell the Klan's reach, when its sympathisers included the influential and the powerful. Supreme Court judges and even President Woodrow Wilson were closet supporters of the Klan, although the White House had issued denials that he endorsed the organisation's struggles.

Of course many Klan members were outraged when Barack Hussein Obama – born of a black father – the embodiment of all it despised became the 44th president of the United States. Obama of course was at the receiving end of death threats from several Klan members during his election campaign.

But here's the strange part: the Klan endorsed Obama as the Democratic presidential candidate. The reason, as put by Grand Turk Cletus Monroe: "Anything or anyone is better than having that "crazy a...b...h as president." He was referring to Hillary Clinton. However, after Obama won the presidency, the Klan said it made a mistake in approving him.

Now in the midst of the thriving Klan, came the Black Panthers in the 1970s. The African-American rights faction, was seen as a counter-group to white supremacist organisations. However, its inception was mooted by a spate of incidents involving police brutality against blacks. This included beatings, deaths in custody, questionable arrests and intimidation of blacks by the police and even shooting deaths.

While its manifesto may seem noble, the Panthers alienated many liberal African-Americans as it took on a militant and violent approach to furthering its cause and peppered its rhetoric with hate for the "white man" – pretty much the same way a majority of Caucasian Americans did not subscribe to the Klan's agenda of white supremacy and alienating non-whites.

In its quest for equal rights for African-Americans, the Panthers also (inadvertently or otherwise) alienated some of its own people and sympathisers from other races by their black-centric policies that were against national integration.

Around the world there are many organisations such as the Klu Klux Klan and Black Panthers which have a myopic view of how to pursue the interests of their communities.

While many are doing so via peaceful means, there are others who although do not openly preach hate; hint at extremism and even violence as a means to an end.

What is scary is that they feel that there is nothing wrong in pursuing their agenda through such channels. "After all I am only defending my race," is the common excuse. However, as the saying goes, the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

It is incumbent on the right-thinking majority to nip the problem in the bud and state in no uncertain terms that there is no place for intolerance, chauvinism or extremism in any society.

In a world that is getting smaller and more competitive, bigots, radicals and racists will just have to accept the fact that they are in the minority and that any attempt to disturb the peace with disharmonious rhetoric will be met with the toughest resistance from all right-thinking and peace-loving peoples