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## BlacKkKlansman

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# BlacKkKlansman

## **Abstract**

This is a film review of *BlacKkKlansman* (2018), directed by Spike Lee.

## **Author Notes**

William Blizek is the Founding Editor of the Journal of Religion and Film, and is Professor of Philosophy and Religion at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He is also the editor of the Continuum Companion to Religion and Film (2009).

What could a greater evil than using religion to justify evil?

While Spike Lee's latest film (joint) is a true story about Ron Stallworth, a black police officer who infiltrates the Ku Klux Klan with the help of a white surrogate, it is so much more. The story itself is fascinating, with its own twists and turns and drama. But, the story also gives us a clearer picture of racism and antisemitism in America during the 70s and 80s, racism and antisemitism that fueled the Ku Klux Klan and other similar organizations. It is the picture of an ugly America.

[Spoiler Alert] When Spike Lee first saw the pictures that came out of Charlottesville, just one year prior to the opening of the film, he knew that these pictures – the pictures of the marchers, the pictures of the violence – and the comments of President Trump and David Duke, would be the final scenes of his movie. What we see in these images of Charlottesville is a picture of an America that is just as ugly as the one shown throughout most of the movie. Things haven't changed much in the 30 or so years since Ron Stallworth's story.

Justice, democracy, and human decency are fragile flowers that must be nourished at every moment. We must be constantly vigilant and never let the seeds of hatred, bigotry, and violence find a place to take hold.

But, there's more. The Klan uses Christianity to justify its racism, violence, ridicule of others, and antisemitism. Clearly, this is a particular version of Christianity, which many Christians would reject. But, also clearly, the disagreeing Christians have not spoken out loudly enough to eradicate the evils of racism, violence, the dehumanization of others, and antisemitism—all features of Nazi Germany. The Christianity of the Klan is white, Protestant (Catholics beware), and virulently anti-Semitic. Remember the chants from Charlottesville: "Jews will not replace us."

Yet, the Klan's version of Christianity and its use to justify evil is not the only use of religion to justify evil. We should be wary of any religion that is used to promulgate evil. And we should be prepared to challenge religion whenever it is used to justify evil, whether that evil be the sexual abuse of children or the beheading of journalists.