

Mitch and John

BY ED FELIEN

It recently came out that the new Republican House Majority Whip Steve Scalise gave a speech to a David Duke group of white supremacists and neo-Nazis in 2002. Scalise claimed he had no idea what the European-American Unity and Rights Organization (EURO) group stood for, or that neo-Nazi and former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard David Duke was its head.

Oh, really?

Duke supporters were the base of his support in the suburbs around New Orleans. Scalise never repudiated Duke's ideas, he just claimed to be more electable. He told Washington newspaper Roll Call in 1999, "The voters in this district are smart enough to realize that they need to get behind someone who not only believes in the issues they care about, but also can get elected. Duke has proven that he can't get elected, and that's the first and most important thing." Twenty years ago he told Stephanie Grace of the Baton Rouge Advocate that he was like David Duke but "without the baggage." Scalise was one of only six Louisiana legislators to vote against the Martin Luther King holiday.

It's rare that the covert racism of Southern conservatives actually comes out into the open. The history of prejudice in the South has generally been one of hidden codes and obfuscation. Scalise's case is a rare chance to connect the dots.

John Boehner represents the suburbs around Cincinnati, and Mitch McConnell comes from Louisville. They're just across the Ohio River and less than 100 miles apart, and they're connected by a curious history.

In 1855 both cities were the centers of violent Know Nothing rebellions.

Cincinnati had race riots in 1829 when a thousand blacks were driven out of town, and again in 1839 when several blacks were killed. In 1841 blacks and their white supporters used a cannon to hold off an angry mob. But in April of 1855, the day after the municipal election, an angry crowd of white Protestant nativists marched on the new German immigrant neighborhood. Several people were killed, and the nativists, or Know Nothings, managed to destroy election ballots in two German precincts.

The Know Nothings were a secret society. They were anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant and racist. When asked about their organization, they replied, "I know nothing," which could also mean, "I, Know Nothing" (or, "I am a Know Nothing"). The Know Nothings were supporting the American party in opposition to Andrew Jackson's Democratic party that was supporting Irish and German immigrants. Just a few months later in Louisville, on Aug. 6, 1855, a day that has come to be called Bloody Monday, the Know Nothings attacked Irish neighborhoods. The fighting between supporters of the American party and supporters of the Democratic party in the city elections left 22 people dead. It is not widely known, but Louisville had one of the largest slave trades in the country before the Civil War. Slaves were sold in lots to work sugar and cotton fields and were transported to Mississippi and New Orleans on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. Families were split up, and the phrase "Sold down the river" comes from this Louisville practice. "My Old Kentucky Home" by Stephen Foster, written in 1853, echoes this harsh sentiment:

*The sun shines bright in the old Kentucky home,
'Tis summer, the darkies are gay,
The corn top's ripe and the meadow's in the bloom,
While the birds make music all the day.
The young folks roll on the little cabin floor,
All merry, all happy and bright:
By'n by Hard Times comes a knocking at the door,
Then my old Kentucky Home, good night!*

CHORUS

Weep no more, my lady,

*Oh! weep no more to-day!
 We will sing one song for the old Kentucky Home,
 For the old Kentucky Home far away.
 2. They hunt no more for possum and the coon
 On the meadow, the hill, and the shore,
 They sing no more by the glimmer of the moon,
 On the bench by the old cabin door.
 The day goes by like a shadow o're the heart,
 With sorrow where all was delight:
 The time has come when the darkies have to part,
 Then my old Kentucky Home, good-night!
 3. The head must bow and the back will have to bend,
 Wherever the darkey may go:
 A few more days, and the trouble all will end
 In the field where the sugar-canes grow.
 A few more days for to tote the weary load,
 No matter, 'twill never be light,
 A few more days till we totter on the road,
 Then my old Kentucky Home, good-night!*

This is the official Kentucky state song. It is played by every marching band at every football game. But in a fit of misguided political correctness “darkies” has been changed to “people,” and the original intent of the song has been lost. Frederick Douglass thought the original version was a fine contribution to anti-slavery sentiment.

In Foster’s sketchbook, the song was titled, “Poor Uncle Tom, Good Night,” and each verse ended with the line, “Den poor Uncle Tom, good night.” Harriet Beecher Stowe lived across the Ohio river in Cincinnati for almost 20 years, from 1832 to 1851. She raised her children there and published the first installment of “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” there, on June 5, 1851.

The American party was a brief offshoot of the splintered and collapsed Whig party, and its two most virulent centers of power were in Louisville and Cincinnati. The Whigs had split over the issue of slavery, and the Free Soil party in the North represented the anti-slavery wing. Eventually, the factions agreed that their differences were not as important as beating the Democrats, so they united in the new Republican party. They both agreed on the preservation of the Union.

Lincoln skillfully danced the tightrope separating these two factions in his party. His Emancipation Proclamation, in 1863, while the Civil War was well underway, carefully declared “that all persons held as slaves” within the rebellious states “are, and henceforward shall be free.” Slaves within Kentucky would remain slaves. Lincoln, of course, understood that once slaves were freed in the South there was no way slavery could be maintained in the border states. The Emancipation moved the process along, articulated the cause northern Republicans had been fighting for, without unduly aggravating the Know Nothings in Louisville and the border states.

But the Unionists who owned slaves felt betrayed by the abolitionists. When Lincoln stationed Union troops in Kentucky in 1861 and 1862, he effectively ended slavery there. After the war, when Confederate soldiers returned to Louisville they took political control of the city. It was said by many, “Louisville joined the Confederacy after the war.”

The Ku Klux Klan has gone through three distinct historic phases. The first was right after the Civil War. It lasted until 1874 when the Grand Wizard Nathan Bedford Forrest dissolved it.

There was some evidence of the Klan in Kentucky, but the power elite didn’t trust the radical populism of the Klan and preferred to keep things under control with their own leadership.

Kentucky had regulators to preserve the white social and political order.

In September of 1879 Judge Lynch declared an “end to lawlessness.” The next month, on Oct. 20, 200 of Judge Lynch’s regulators took two “alleged” criminals out of the Elliot County jail in Sandy Hook (163 miles east of Louisville) and hanged them. By 1880 the movement spread to neighboring counties. On March 17, 1880, they hung two more, and they started breaking their buddies out of county jails. Finally, the governor intervened. He offered an executive pardon for all the past crimes of the regulators if they agreed to disband. Of course, they agreed, and 200 of them surrendered and

were, therefore, forgiven their past sins. And, of course, they continued to enforce their notion of justice in their own way with their same gang of friends and former Confederate soldiers. They just didn't call it "regulating." Masked vigilantism continued in Kentucky until well into the 20th century. As long as it was kept quiet and didn't look like an uprising, the authorities were quite willing to turn the blind eye and the deaf ear. That was the understood relationship between the power elite and the angry mobs. They needed and they understood each other. And it didn't have to be talked about. And it didn't need to be written down.

From 1882 to 1930 there are recorded 118 lynchings of black men by white mobs in Kentucky. At least 60 of those men were lynched in the 20th century.

Ohio had 16 blacks lynched from the period 1882 to 1968.

Cincinnati had a conflicted history during the Civil War. Ohio was a northern state, and George C. McClellan, a prominent Cincinnati citizen, was the leader of the Union forces from 1861 to 1862. He was relieved of that command after the Great Skedaddle of his men facing the stonewall of Andrew Jackson's troops. The Democratic Cincinnati Daily Times openly supported the South, and McClellan ran against Lincoln as a Democrat in the 1864 election. But Cincinnati voted heavily for Lincoln in the election.

The second coming of the Klan happened after the Great Migration of blacks to the north seeking industrial jobs in the cities during the second decade of the 20th century.

"Birth of a Nation" was an instant sensation when it was released in 1915. D.W. Griffith's film techniques were advanced for the period. The 12-reel film, the longest film in history at the time, was so long it was shown with an intermission. It was a romanticized version of the birth and triumph of the Ku Klux Klan over the opportunism of northern carpetbaggers and criminally depraved southern blacks. When the virtue of southern women was in danger, the Klan rode in to the rescue, and the film concluded "happily" as Klansmen surrounded the homes of black people to prevent them from voting.

Griffith was born just outside of Louisville, and it must be assumed that his racist stereotypes, his sentimental notions of white gentility, and his heroic notion of the Klan were a common narrative among Kentuckians at the time.

"Birth of a Nation" premiered in February of 1915. In June a group of 25 armed men who called themselves the Knights of Mary Phagan stormed into the Atlanta jail and kidnapped Leo Frank, a Jewish factory owner who had been convicted of murdering 13-year-old Mary Phagan, who worked in his factory. The governor believed Frank had been wrongly convicted and commuted his sentence to life imprisonment. The Knights drove Frank 170 miles to Mary Phagan's hometown and lynched him.

By Thanksgiving of 1915, inspired by the movie, William Joseph Simmons founded the revival and reincarnation of the Klan in Stone Mountain, Ga., just 19 miles east of Atlanta. Probably as a result of the popularity of Griffith's film, hundreds of thousands joined. The film was consciously used as a recruiting tool to inspire a new generation.

By 1922 the Klan had grown into a formidable national organization, and there was a power struggle for leadership. Hiram Wesley Evans emerged as the Imperial Wizard of the Klan by out-maneuvering Simmons. He had the help of D.C. Stephenson. In return for his support, Evans made Stephenson the Grand Dragon of the seven states north of Alabama and Mississippi.

Stephenson was a charming and charismatic sociopath. He quickly made a fortune selling memberships to the Klan. Membership cost \$10. The Kleagle, the Klan organizer selling the memberships, got half, and half went to the national organization. It wasn't long before Stephenson saw the advantage in seceding from the South and setting up his own Klan and keeping all the money. His Klan was especially popular among white Protestant men in northern industrial cities who feared losing their jobs or homes to new immigrant Catholics or blacks moving north looking for work. Detroit, Toledo and, especially, Akron, Ohio, where the Klan boasted 50,000 members (the largest in the country—the mayor, judges, county commissioner, etc. were all members), showed how profitable it was to mine the fears of angry white men. Of course, the irony was that most of the new members were themselves new immigrants to the city, but they were mercifully spared from seeing the hypocrisy in their Evangelical Christian, All-American piety.

Stephenson switched the allegiance of the Klan from the Democratic to the Republican party, and

soon it was white suburban Republicans versus inner city Democrats. The southern Klan stayed Democratic until LBJ signed the Civil Rights Bill in 1964.

Stephenson lived in Indiana, and that was the seat of his empire. He was Grand Dragon of the Indiana Klan. The Fourth of July gathering of the Klan in Kokomo, Ind., in 1923 had more than 100,000 members and their families present. Stephenson told the crowd: "My worthy subjects, citizens of the Invisible Empire, Klansmen all, greetings. It grieves me to be late. The President of the United States kept me unduly long counseling on matters of state. Only my plea that this is the time and the place of my coronation obtained for me surcease from his prayers for guidance."

The state konklaves at Buckeye Lake in central Ohio in 1923 and 1925 had more than 70,000 attending.

Stephenson was probably the most powerful political figure in the Midwest at this point. He controlled the destinies of governors, mayors, legislators, judges and lesser luminaries. And then he got busted.

At the height of his popularity, in March of 1925, Stephenson kidnapped Madge Oberholtzer, a schoolteacher, took her on his private railroad car and raped her. She was so distraught she took mercury chloride to poison herself. Stephenson's associates took her back to her home where they assumed she would die. She died from mercury poisoning and from a staph infection caused by Stephenson biting her, but before she died she gave a full description of the event to the police. The sensational trial marked the end of the Klan's wild popularity in the Midwest. Stephenson was convicted of rape and second-degree murder. He expected the governor to commute his sentence. But his influence had gone from a Midas touch to a lightning rod that promised instant electrocution. In prison, Stephenson was bitter and he talked to reporters about government officials that regularly took money from the Klan. All of a sudden, in the eyes of the public, the Klan was a corrupt monster. Membership went from 6 million in 1924 to less than 30,000 in 1930. Frightened and angry white men stopped joining, but that didn't stop them from continuing to be frightened and angry with new immigrants and blacks.

The new Klan was never very active in Kentucky. The Invisible Empire looked way too visible for the Louisville power elite, but Kentucky vigilantes lynched six people in the period from 1920 to 1929 without white sheets and without too much fuss.

Warren Harding and the Republican Party platform in 1920 supported a federal anti-lynching law. It passed the House in 1922 but Southern Senate Democrats filibustered and blocked its passage, and the Senate and Harding did nothing to stop the filibuster. Harding's campaign in 1920 from his front porch in Marion, Ohio, talked about a "return to normalcy" and a return to homespun 19th century values. It was easy for Klan members in 1923 to believe that Harding actually did sit down on his front porch and consult with their Grand Dragon.

The '20s were a time of roaring prosperity, and people believed it would go on forever. Business was booming in Cincinnati. Procter and Gamble was manufacturing Ivory Soap. Midwest Radio Corporation began making radios and did the first broadcast there in 1919. Ford had opened an assembly plant in 1915. Four local factories were building trucks, and Chevrolet opened an assembly plant in 1923.

Also in 1923, the very exclusive Brown Hotel in Louisville introduced the Hot Brown Sandwich. It was an open-faced turkey and bacon with melted cheese and tomato. Bowman Field opened in Louisville in 1921. It was one of the first airports in the world. Eastern, TWA and Continental offered flights. Prohibition stopped the production of Jack Daniels until the mid-'30s. But the big industry in Kentucky was coal. Nine hundred seventeen million tons of coal has been hauled out of Harlan County:

*They say in Harlan County
There are no neutrals there
You'll either be a union man
Or a thug for J.H. Blair
Which side are you on, boys?
Which side are you on?*

There was a different sensibility between Cincinnati and Kentucky. Cincinnati was becoming industrial, and there was a hard-nosed pragmatism built into social relationships. Procter and Gamble had begun a profit sharing program for employees in 1887 because they understood their

employees wouldn't strike if they thought they owned part of the business. Likewise, in the '30s unions were tolerated by management as the best way to insure continued production and profitability.

Kentucky, on the other hand, still had a plantation sensibility. There was no pretense of equality between owners and workers. The owners owned everything: the homes, the store, the churches, even the mail was read and censored and certain newspapers and publications weren't allowed.

You load sixteen tons, what do you get

Another day older and deeper in debt

Saint Peter don't you call me 'cause I can't go

I owe my soul to the company store

The Great Crash of 1929 cost thousands of jobs in Cincinnati. But when Prohibition ended in 1933, more than a couple dozen breweries opened again. People weren't buying Fords and Chevrolets as much, but Cincinnati was still manufacturing the basic necessities: Ivory soap, Dreft laundry detergent, playing cards at The United States Playing Card Company and barrels of beer.

The Depression was driving poor southern blacks and new East European immigrants into Cincinnati looking for work, and the second and third generation German immigrants used their unions to protect their jobs and moved to suburbs to protect their homes.

It is one of ironies of American immigration that children reject the revolutionary radicalism that brought their parents to this country. They want to belong. They want to fit in, and they've been taught that radicalism is un-American.

Cincinnati was the sixth largest city in the U.S. in the middle of the 19th century, and the largest major city inside the country. Its population was fueled by the failure of the 1848 revolutions in Germany.

The 48ers came mostly from northwestern Germany in the Rhine Valley. They left the old country because of their failed attempts to overturn feudal privilege. At the end of the eighteenth century France controlled the west bank of the Rhine. The French Revolution had abolished feudalism, overthrown many of the taxes on peasants and established sensible property rights that recognized the rights of women. The Napoleonic Code also legalized birth control and the right of women to get a divorce. Peasants, small business people, professionals and the newly emerging working class wanted the same rights on the east bank of the Rhine. They wanted the right to vote. They wanted public meetings of the legislature and the village councils and an end to religious taxes. There had been massive demonstrations in the major cities. Barricades had been set up. The liberals and the working class fought the aristocracy and the military with hunting rifles and pistols. But by the end of 1848 it was over. They had lost, and more than 30,000 48-ers moved to Cincinnati.

They settled in cheap housing next to the Erie Canal and came to dominate the neighborhood.

Crossing the Canal came to be called going Over The Rhine.

German immigrants had not been shy about expressing their political beliefs. It was probably earlier German immigrants who stood with blacks when angry nativists tried to murder them in 1841, set up barricades and fired a cannon shot over the heads of the crowd and dispersed them. And in 1853 the new immigrants marched in protest against the visit of Catholic Archbishop Bedini who had come to Cincinnati to argue for the ownership of local church property by Rome and against Catholics being taxed to support public education. Five hundred men and 100 women marched to the local bishop's residence. The police fought with them. One person was killed and 50 were arrested.

But their defining moment came in 1855 with the pitched battle between them and the Know Nothings in Over The Rhine. They may have lost the ballots to two precincts, but they won the right to be heard and participate in the governance of their city.

By the 1920s their children's children had begun to move to the suburbs, and they now carried with them prejudices against new immigrants and blacks. In trying to protect what they had, they were no longer concerned with the values of the French Revolution, with liberty, equality and freedom from privilege.

World War I and World War II knocked the wind out of any remaining puffed up German cultural nationalism. By the third and fourth generation, they were no longer German-Americans. They were Americans.

When Prohibition ended, Andy Boehner (John's grandfather) saw an opportunity. He followed his German community up to the north suburbs and in 1938 opened a bar, Andy's Café, in Carthage. His

son Earl married a German-Irish woman and they raised 12 kids just a few miles down the road in Reading. Earl and his two brothers took over the business and worked the bar for 45 years. John started cleaning floors there when he was 8. He later said he threw his back out lifting crates of pickles. He enlisted in the Navy just out of high school in 1968, but his bad back got him an honorable discharge after just eight weeks.

If someone wanted to avoid the draft, there were lots of ways to do it in 1968. You could get a 2S, a college deferment. But none of John's relatives had ever gone to college. That seemed remote. You could be married with children, but that was a ways into the future.

You could check the box. One of the boxes you had to answer was, "Are you a homosexual?" If you answered "Yes," then they wouldn't draft you. But that would not have seemed like a plausible option to a macho linebacker from the Archbishop Moeller High School football team.

The option many working class kids chose was to enlist in the Navy. Sure, it was for three years rather than two in the Army, but you were a lot less likely to get killed in the Navy. And, if you didn't like the Navy, you could always get a D.D. Technically a Disability Discharge, people called it a Dumb Discharge.

Those were some of the options to be considered in 1968.

Some kids went to Canada:

"So I'm headed for the nearest foreign border

Vancouver may be my kind of town

Cause they don't need the kind of law and order

That tends to keep a good man underground" --Gram Parsons, Chris Hillman, The Flying Burrito Brothers, 1969

Boehner would have probably been eligible for Vietnam-era G.I. benefits after his D.D. to help with college tuition at Xavier University close to downtown. Working part time, he took seven years to get through the new Business College. When he got out he got a job as a salesman with Nucite, a small plastic packaging company.

He was making pretty good money as a salesman. He got married and settled down, started raising a couple of girls, and then took an interest in politics. He met Jim Webb, a lobbyist for Armco Steel, at a golf outing when he was thinking of running for the Ohio General Assembly in 1984. Webb says, "I was looking for someone from Armco to continue our legacy in the Statehouse, and John said, 'Would you consider supporting me?'"

Webb helped him out. He helped him meet "the right people." He introduced him around to all the movers and shakers, and John Boehner got elected. And John Boehner continued the legacy of Armco at the legislature.

And what was that legacy?

In 2006 Armco (now AK Steel after a merger) locked out 2,700 union employees because AK Steel wanted to cancel their union contract. The lockout lasted a year. Also in 2006 they agreed to a \$12 million settlement for PCB contamination, and in 2010 they were named the "Number One Polluter in the Country" by Mother Jones for dumping over 24 million pounds of toxic chemicals into the Ohio river.

The owner of Nucite died and Boehner bought the company, and he was finding out that taking care of Armco's legacy and looking after the interests of some of the other "right people" was lucrative, but it was taking a lot of his time. Playing golf one weekend, he and Webb came up with a rather strange business agreement. Webb would run Nucite for him, and Boehner would still own it and get the profits. Running the company, Webb could launder "contributions" that might otherwise prove embarrassing for his legacy legislator. Boehner would get the profits and own the company, and Webb would own Boehner. They continued that relationship when Boehner went to Congress in 1990, but Webb finally bought the company in 2003.

Like any good salesman, Boehner actually enjoyed making sales and raising money. He quickly became the glad hand and bagman of Congress. In 1996 he was caught handing out checks from tobacco lobbyists to his Republican colleagues on the floor of the House. In the last election cycle Boehner raised more than \$98 million for Republican candidates. If money is the mother's milk of politics, Boehner has come to control the teat.

Mitch McConnell's upbringing was quite different from John Boehner's. Addison Mitchell McConnell Jr. was raised to be a comprador, the person best suited to work for the interests of the owner of the

plantation. His father moved the family from Alabama to Louisville when Mitch was just 13. Mitch Sr. became the employee relations superintendent for E.I. DuPont de Nemours & Co. in Louisville. He held that position for almost 25 years, from 1955 to 1979. He was the Company Man, the one who tried to boost morale, the man the union came to with a grievance. He was the overseer of the plantation.

DuPont started making gunpowder in 1802. They have been part of the war industry ever since. During the Second World War, the federal government asked DuPont to operate a factory in Louisville with other war contractors it had assembled. DuPont bought the factory after the war and continued to manufacture synthetic rubber there. In 1955 they started manufacturing Freon as a cooling agent for refrigerators. Freon produces chlorofluorocarbons that according to the Environmental Protection Agency are 140 to 11,700 times more dangerous to the ozone level than carbon fuels. Dupont released 6 million metric tons of HFCs in 2011 and 4 million in 2013. In 1993 Mother Jones named DuPont “the country’s number-one emitter of toxins, releasing poisons at the rate of just under a million pounds a day, according to the EPA’s 1989 data; is the world’s largest producer of ozone-destroying chlorofluorocarbons (CFCS); and leads all other companies in domestic deep-well injection of toxic wastes (254.9 million pounds in 1989).”

In 1965 explosions and fires had raced through the DuPont plant and killed 12 workers and injured another 37.

Mitch Sr. was also chair of the Shelby County Republican party. Shelby County is the suburb just east of Louisville. The current Shelby County Republican party honors the tradition of apologizing for DuPont by saying on its website: “The group Free Market America says the environmental agenda has ‘been infected by extremism’ and has ‘become an economic suicide pact.’ ”

Mitch Jr. learned from his father which side of the bread the butter was on, and he learned from politics how to get the biggest slice off the loaf.

He was elected student council president in high school, student body president at the University of Louisville College of Arts and Sciences and president of the Student Bar Association of the University of Kentucky College of Law. In the summer between college and law school, Mitch interned in the Washington office of John Sherman Cooper, the Republican senator from Kentucky, probably by using his dad’s political connections. Mitch loved the Senate and decided that’s where he wanted to be.

In 1967 Mitch was serving time in the Army Reserves as part of his military obligation. Alan Lynch was working for the major in McConnell’s unit, and he remembers the major coming in one day saying that McConnell was going to be discharged on medical grounds for an eye problem. Some doctor said he had optic neuritis, an inflammation of the optic nerve—for which the symptoms were a pain in the eye or temporary blurred vision. Senator Cooper had written a letter to the commanding officer asking to expedite the discharge. The reason for the rush, according to what the major told Lynch, was that McConnell had been caught having sex with another man, and the Disability Discharge would avoid a court martial for sodomy.

McConnell has dismissed these allegations as a “tempest in a teapot.” Tearoom Trade, in gay slang, is sex in a public toilet.

From 1968 to 1970 he worked as a legislative aide to U.S. Senator Cook from Kentucky. Cook had been elected to the state House in Kentucky, but Cook’s political star grew brighter when he was elected judge executive (the equivalent of the mayor of Louisville) in 1961, the first Republican in 28 years. Cook showed the young McConnell what a springboard that could be for a Republican. A Republican who could carry Louisville could carry the state and become a United States senator. When McConnell ran for judge executive in 1977 the position was in transition. The legislature had just changed the job description (probably at the urging of the senator’s office and the prodding of Republican County Chairman Mitch McConnell Sr.) to give it major financial responsibilities, and those traits tended to favor “fiscally responsible” Republicans. McConnell ran and beat the Democratic incumbent. In 2003 all the powers of the judge executive were transferred to the mayor. McConnell was swept into the U.S. Senate in 1984 on Reagan’s coattails.

McConnell and Boehner share more than their role as chief apologists for their respective state’s biggest polluters and their D.D.s to get out of fighting in Vietnam. As the leaders of their party in the Senate and House, they are responsible for keeping their delegations in line, and their respective Tea Party factions have done a lot to upset the smooth operations of a functioning government.

Who are the people in the Tea Party? Where did they come from? What do they believe? In "Wither the Tea Party? The Future of a Political Movement," published by the Brookings Institution, Christopher S. Parker argues: "The Tea Party does have an overarching agenda that extends beyond simple opposition to the president and his agenda. Fear and anxiety drives their desire to arrest change by any means necessary. If nothing else it's a first step in a process that promises a return to an America in which 'real' Americanism is defined as white, male, native born, heterosexual, and paternal. For now, simply directing their representatives to say 'no' serves that end."

In a survey of Tea Party members, Parker found them to be racist: "the survey asked respondents if the president is trying to destroy the country. Only 6 percent of establishment conservatives believe this to be true, versus 71 percent of Tea Party conservatives." Thirty-eight percent of establishment conservatives want Obama's policies to fail, while 78% of Tea Partiers do. But they're more than just racist.

In an interview with Salon, Parker said, "People who tend to support the Tea Party, they tend to be sexist, they tend to be homophobic, they tend to be xenophobic; so it's not just about race. It's about *difference*. It's about anything that violates their phenotypical norm of what it's supposed to mean to be an American: white, mainly male, middle-class, middle-aged or older, heterosexual, and native born. Anything that falls beyond that description is considered not to be a true American and therefore ... these groups are encroaching on what they see as the 'real' America, the America that they've come to know and love through their lifetime."

Parker believes, "this was the case with the 1920s Ku Klux Klan, this was the case with the Know-Nothing Party in the 1850s. Same demographic group, every time."

The Klan today has probably between 5,000 and 8,000 members as opposed to the millions enrolled in the 1920s. But it still exerts a strong influence. White nationalist groups continue to get invited to speak at Tea Party conventions. Sometimes some media critic notices their pedigree, and the public stink means they'll get uninvited, but they seem to have a comfortable and cordial long-term relationship. One major difference between the two is that White Nationalists or Klan members tend to be old-fashioned anti-Semites and hate Jews and Israel, while Tea Partiers tend to be nouveau anti-Semites and hate Arabs and their Evangelical wing loves Israel.

How do McConnell and Boehner deal with these factions? What do they say to them?

I can imagine Mitch, who reminds me of the nervous nerd in high school who was painfully repressed, telling John, the flashy Good-Time Charley, "Go tell Steve Scalise to put on his hood and go over and talk to those guys."