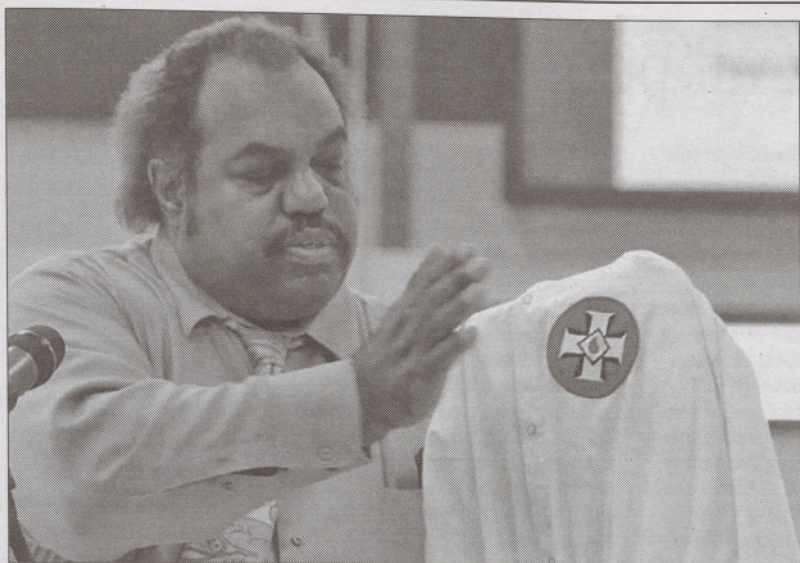




Daryl Davis, a musician and human rights activist, holds one of the many KKK robes given to him by Klan members who renounce their role in the group.

Musician Daryl Davis fights racism in the face of the Klan

BY JIMMY TARDY
CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST

Daryl Davis has something to tell you that you don't want to hear: "I think we should get rid of Black History Month."

While that sentiment might lead you to believe that Mr. Davis is a redneck dinosaur, out of touch with the values of his time, maybe even a little bit biased against Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement in general, let me explain.

As a world-class musician, Daryl hangs and performs with musical royalty: Little Richard, Muddy Waters, Liberace, Tina Turner, Sam Phillips, Mick Fleetwood, Mary Wilson, Marcia Ball, Chuck Berry, Isaac Hayes, Dionne Warwick, BB King, Bob Dylan, Aretha Franklin, Willie Nelson, Placido Domingo, Ted Nugent, Ray Charles, Keith Richards, Eric Clapton, Dolly Parton, Bill Clinton and many many more.

Although Daryl could coast on his credibility as a musician, there is something else about him that should give you pause.

Daryl Davis, a black man who grew up in Chicago and Maryland, has a closet of full of Ku Klux Klan robes. That is not a misprint. Daryl has a closet full of KKK robes. The robes are not his robes, though. They were given to him by former Klan members who decided to renounce their membership in the Klan and to give their robes to Daryl — an acknowledgement of his role in their

development beyond being active racists.

Growing up "an embassy brat," as he calls himself, exposed Daryl to cultures and people all around the world. Returning to the United States to finish his education, he started to see overt racism in the classroom and in the street. Daryl attended schools still segregated and schools that had begun to de-segregate. He also joined American cultural institutions such as the Boy Scouts. It was while marching in a parade as a scout that someone threw rocks at him. Rather than become bitter, Daryl became curious. "I wanted to know how someone could hate me when they didn't even know me."

That quest for understanding, combined with a nudge from fate, led Daryl to begin to meet with Klan members and to get to know them as people. Over the course of more than 20 years of doing his particular brand of outreach, Daryl has become friends with many people in the Klan, including Roger Kelly, the former Imperial Wizard of the KKK. This friendship, although Daryl is reluctant to take any credit, had something to do with Mr. Kelly renouncing his membership in the Klan and giving Daryl his robe and hood. His story sounds like a fairytale, but it is true.

You can hear KBOO's Jimmy Tardy talk with Daryl at 11 a.m. Friday, Feb. 27, on KBOO 90.7 FM. The show will be archived and available by searching Daryl Davis at the KBOO homepage, or go directly to kboo.fm/daryldavisautho.

Two Different/Same Worlds

by Leo Rhodes

Here I sit, stand, lie — talking to myself
I talk about life
Homelessness
Loss of a loved one
Broken system, not enough for everyone
Cops harassing me, taking my survival gear,
Telling me I can't sleep here, I can't get out of the rain
Society (most) treating me without love
Society (few) treating me with love
If I spoke to you would you listen
Or brush me off and say
We're all treated that way

Winter Thoughts

by Kareem Ali

At the edge of the bed,
I swim through a tsunami
Of autumn sheets
Next to me
She sleeps motionlessly,
Her delicate body
Splayed open to pass summer heat
Outside
Through the drain of darkness

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