



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on February 19, 2026

Md. Gov. Wes Moore Refuses to Admit KKK Tale About Grandfather Is False

The old saw warns that when you are in a hole, you should stop digging.

Far-left Democratic Governor Wes Moore of Maryland apparently hasn't heard that one. So he won't admit the truth about his tall tale that the Ku Klux Klan ran his grandpappy and great-grandpappy out of town. As the Washington Free Beacon noted in exposing the falsehood, Moore is a serial fabulist, and not just about his great-grandfather's imaginary trouble with the Klan.

He has lied repeatedly about his own past, including football and military accomplishments.

Yet Moore, who is reportedly preparing to run for president, told CBS News' Norah O'Donnell that he can't be challenged on the tale because he knows his family's history.



AP Images
Wes Moore



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NEW: Maryland Gov. Wes Moore often tells the story of his great-grandfather's "exile" from South Carolina to Jamaica dead of night to escape a Ku Klux Klan lynching.

Just one problem: the story is flatly contradicted by historical records.

Here's what actually happened 📌 [Show more](#)



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Wes Moore Says the KKK Chased His Great-Grandfather Out of Sout...
CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA—Maryland governor Wes Moore, who is widely expected to seek the 2028 Democratic presidential ...

9:07 AM · Feb 4, 2026



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KKK and Great-Grandpa

Trouble began for Moore when the Free Beacon looked into the KKK claim, which Moore has repeated for years. Before now, no one, apparently, has examined the account.

Moore “has a powerful family story of racial injustice that he repeatedly tells during public speeches: His grandfather, as a small boy, fled 1920s Charleston with his family in the dead of night after his father — a prominent black minister and Moore’s great-grandfather — angered the Ku Klux Klan with



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sermons condemning racism,” the [website observed](#):

Narrowly escaping a lynching, the family took refuge in Jamaica. But Moore’s grandfather, just six years old at the time, vowed to return to America, where he eventually raised a grandson who made history in 2022 by becoming Maryland’s first black governor.

Moore, 47 began spinning the yarn in his memoir in 2014, raising the obvious observation that no one but a bona fide war hero should write a memoir at age 35.

That aside, the website learned that Moore’s maternal great-grandfather, Rev. Josiah Johnson Thomas, preached in Pineville, South Carolina, in the 1920s, as Moore has claimed. But the rest of the story is false.

“Historical records housed at the archives of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of South Carolina undercut the three main elements of Moore’s story — that Thomas suddenly fled the country in secret, that he was targeted by the Ku Klux Klan, and that he was a prominent preacher who spoke from the pulpit against racism,” the [website revealed](#):

Detailed church archival records, as well as contemporary newspaper coverage, indicate that Thomas, a Jamaica native, on Dec. 13, 1924, made an orderly and public transfer from South Carolina to the island of his birth, where he was appointed to succeed a prominent Jamaican pastor who had died unexpectedly a week earlier, on Dec. 6, 1924. Amid the copious documentation of the life and career of Moore’s great-grandfather, there is no mention of trouble with the Klan, which operated openly in 1920s South Carolina but never had a chapter operating out of Pineville, according to Virginia Commonwealth University’s Mapping of the Second Ku Klux Klan. ...

Moore’s fantastical tale of his great-grandfather’s escape from the Ku Klux Klan to exile to Jamaica adds yet another asterisk to his remarkably inflated résumé — about which the press have asked him very little.

Moore falsely claimed that he was born and grew up in Baltimore, which he did not; that he was inducted into the Maryland College Football Hall of Fame, an organization that doesn’t exist; that he received a Bronze Star for his service in Afghanistan, which he had not; that in 2006 he was considered a foremost expert on radical Islam based on his graduate thesis, which he never submitted to Oxford University’s library and can no longer locate; that he was a doctoral candidate at Oxford in 2006, a claim he has no documentation to support and on which Oxford refuses to comment; and that he had “a difficult childhood in the Bronx and Baltimore” despite attending New York City’s elite, private Riverdale Country School — where John F. Kennedy went to school — as a child and not living in Baltimore until college, when he attended Johns Hopkins University, another elite private school.

Moore: Stop Picking on Me!

Instead of fessing up, Moore remains steadfast.

His spokesman, Ammar Moussa, [told Fox News](#) for a story on February 10 that “we’re not going to litigate a family’s century-old oral history with a partisan outlet.” More importantly, despite the Free



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Beacon report, Moussa continued, “the broader reality is not in dispute: Intimidation and racial terror were pervasive in the Jim Crow South, and it rarely came with neat documentation.”

“Broader reality” and “larger truth” are often the reply from leftists when caught in a race hoax.

“Your obsession with having the only Black Governor and his family tell you their family history is.....weird?” Moore communications chief David Turner wrote on X. “It’s weird.”

David Turner
@A_Tall_Turner · Follow

Your obsession with having the only Black Governor and his family tell you their family history is.....weird? It's weird.

Andrew Kerr ✓ @AndrewKerrNC
My thanks to @FoxNews for picking up this story.

This statement from Moore's office should be read as confirmation my research is correct. His great-grandfather wasn't run out of town by the KKK -- that story is debunked thoroughly by the historical records linked in my story.

s not independently verified the claims in the report and Moore's office tement to Fox News.

tigate a family's century-old oral history with a partisan outlet," Moore ar Moussa told Fox News Digital, in reference to the Washington Free broader reality is not in dispute: intimidation and racial terror were Crow South, and it rarely came with neat documentation. Even Bishop uerry – whom they cite to suggest there was no hostility – was later ise backlash tied to his racial equality work. The Governor is focused on nders elected him to do."

11:29 AM · Feb 10, 2026

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Disastrous Town Hall

Then came the disastrous town hall on CBS. O’Donnell asked about the KKK story, citing the Free Beacon’s takedown. Moore hit the website as a “right-wing blog.”

“I’m the grandson of someone who was born in South Carolina, and when he was just a child, the Ku



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Klux Klan ran my family out,” Moore said:

And not out of South Carolina, they ran them out of the United States of America, and they went to Jamaica. And much of my family has always said they would never come back to this country.

It’s the reason why Mom ... is in Jamaica and she’s visiting with family members.

But my grandfather came back to this country. He got his degree from Lincoln University [an historically black college] in Pennsylvania. He became a minister, just like his father. And he became the first black minister in the history of the Dutch Reformed Church. I know my family’s history. So if some blog has a question about the Klan’s history, maybe they should ask the Ku Klux Klan.



The image is a screenshot of a tweet from Wes Moore (@iamwesmoore) on X. The tweet text reads: "I know my family's history. The @FreeBeacon can ask the KKK about theirs." Below the text is a video thumbnail showing Wes Moore in a blue suit sitting in a town hall setting. The video title is "CBS NEWS THINGS THAT MATTER A TOWN HALL WITH GOV. WES MOORE". The tweet is dated 8:29 PM - Feb 15, 2026, and has 3.3K likes. Interaction options include Reply, Copy link to post, and a button to Read 714 replies.

O’Donnell also pressed Moore about his time at Oxford and the missing thesis.

“Oxford says it doesn’t have a copy of your thesis,” [O’Donnell said](#), again citing the Free Beacon. “Did you ever submit it to Oxford, and do you have any idea why it’s now missing?”

Replied Moore:



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I think Oxford has said that I have completed my degree. There is no denying that. And that I received a Master's degree at Oxford University in international relations. I am a person of honor and integrity — I take that very seriously. I was raised right by my family, and I was trained right by the Army.

That was the same Army [that didn't award](#) Moore a Bronze Star, as *The New York Times* revealed in 2024, when Moore was a campaign surrogate for failed Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris.

Bottom line: Moore's KKK tale is just another race hoax.



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