

Statement by Melvin Bledsoe

Father of  
Carlos Leon Bledsoe (aka) Abdul Hakim Mujahid Muhammad

“The Extent of Radicalization in the American Muslim Community and that  
Community’s Response”

Committee on Homeland Security  
US House of Representatives  
Washington DC  
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Thank you very much for allowing me to come here and tell the country what happened to my son. This hearing today is extremely important to begin the discussion about the issue of Islamic radicalization in America and my hope is that this Committee can somehow address this issue in a meaningful, productive way.

First, I would like to express my deepest sympathy to the family of Private William Long, and to the wounded soldier, Quinton Ezeagwula. I would like to talk about those complicit in Private Long’s murder – the Islamic radicals who programmed and trained my son Carlos to kill.

I want to tell the American people and the world what happened to my son. We sent him off to college at Tennessee State University in Nashville, Tennessee in the fall of 2003. Our dreams about his future ended up in a nightmare.

Carlos is my only son. He grew up in Memphis, Tennessee. My wife and I operate a tour company in Memphis, Tennessee and Carlos started helping out with the family business at the age of eight. He loved talking to the traveling public; and he had a lot of fun interacting with the customers.

After graduating from high school, he wanted to get a degree in Business Administration. We thought perhaps he would come back to Memphis to run the business and give my wife and me early retirement.

After the fall of 2005 – his sophomore fall in Nashville –Carlos came home that Christmas for the holidays.

We were sitting around in the family room, Carlos’s only sister, Monica, her husband and I, having a normal conversation about life in general. But at a certain point, Carlos and his brother-in-law Terrell got into a heated conversation about the Muslim religion. Then and later, we felt like Carlos’s personality changed when we spoke about Islam.

We thought maybe he had some Muslim friends in college and was offended by our comments.

The next time Carlos came home, we saw another side of him that we hadn't seen before. During the night, he took down all the pictures from the walls in the bedroom where he slept. He even took Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. picture off the wall. We asked Carlos: "What is going on with you?"

He replied that he is now a new convert to Islam and that everything he does from now on will be to honor Allah. We got very concerned: While he was growing up, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's picture had always hung on his bedroom wall; but now treated the picture as if Dr. King was nobody to him.

We asked Carlos not to take Dr. King's picture off the wall, but he took it off the wall anyway. This became a big concern to us. We went to visit him in Nashville because we wanted to learn more about what was really going on with Carlos.

We discovered that Carlos had dropped out of school, at the beginning of the 2005 fall semester. He was working a temporary job. He had gotten a dog while in college, and now we found out that he had turned the dog loose in the woods because he was told that Muslims consider dogs dirty creatures. I really couldn't understand how he could do that, because Carlos grew up with a dog in the house since he was five years old.

So my wife and I thought that there something or someone was getting in his head and changing the way he thinks. It had gotten to the point where he had no interest in coming home, even for the holidays.

All of this was part of brainwashing him, and changing his thinking a little bit at a time.

He had a job in Nashville, together with some Muslims, who would tell him that according to Islamic law, his employer had to let him pray at certain times of the day, regardless of what was going on at the job. As a business owner, I told Carlos that it would be very difficult for an employer to do this for all of his employees.

As the next step on his process of radicalization, Carlos was convinced to change his name. He chose the name Abdulhakim Muhammad. At this point, his culture was no longer important to him, only the Islamic culture mattered.

Some Muslim leaders had taken advantage of my son. But he's not the only one being taken advantage of: this is going on in Nashville and in many other cities in America.

In Nashville, Carlos was captured by people best described as hunters. He was manipulated and lied to. That's how he made his way to Yemen. Carlos was hoping to go there for a chance to cross over to Saudi Arabia and visit Mecca, as he was taught all true Muslims must do at one time in their life. He was taught that he would get to

walk on the ground where Prophet Muhammad walked be able to travel around the area. But these hunters had other plans for him. They set him up, telling him that he could teach English at a British School in Aden in South Yemen, This school turned out to be a front and Carlos ended up in a training camp run by terrorists.

Carlos's joining in with Yemeni extremists was facilitated by their American counterparts in Nashville. We have since discovered that the former Imam of a Nashville mosque, the Al Farooq Mosque, wrote the recommendation letter Carlos needed for the school in Yemen. We also discovered that the school functions as an intake front for radicalizing and training Westerners for Jihad.

From what I understand, the FBI had been following Carlos since before he left Nashville and continued to do so after he came back from Yemen. When Carlos was arrested for overstaying his visa in October of 2008, he was interviewed by an FBI agent based in Nashville even before the U.S. Embassy was alerted about the arrest. According to the Embassy, the FBI was alarmed about what they learned from Carlos. We wish they could have told us - his family – about what they learned. If we knew how serious his extremism had become, we could have put in every effort to prevent the tragedy in Arkansas from happening.

When my son was arrested in Yemen, my family cried out for help in bringing our son back to America from our Government. We got in touch with the U.S. Embassy and the State Department. We also asked for help from our U.S. Representative, Steve Cohen's office, and from FBI Special Agent Greg Thomason, who had been tracking my son since Nashville.

After our son was finally released and brought home to us. No one said anything to us about what might have happened to him in Yemen or what they may have learned that so alarmed the FBI agent who interrogated Carlos while he was in the custody of Yemen's Political Security Organization.

Carlos's experience in Yemeni political jail was the final stage of his radicalization. He was in there with true evil-doers – hard-core Al Qaeda members who convinced him to get revenge on America.

Something is wrong with the Muslim leadership in Nashville. What happened to Carlos at those Nashville mosques isn't normal. I have other family members who are Muslims, and they are modern, peaceful, law abiding people, who have been Muslim for many years and are not radicalized.

I also have several uncles and brothers in the military. Our family has fought for the United States in every war since the Civil War. I have nephews who are currently in Afghanistan, as I speak, fighting for democracy and freedom for all Americans.

It seems to me that the American people are sitting around and doing nothing about Islamic extremism, as if Carlos's story and the other stories told at these hearings aren't true. There is a big elephant in the room, but our society continues not to see it.

This wrong is caused by political correctness. You can even call it political fear - yes, fear. Fear of stepping on a special minority population's toes, even as a segment of that population wants to stamp out America and everything we stand for.

I must say that we are losing American babies – our children are in danger. This country must stand up and do something about this problem. Yes, it's my son's tragic story you're hearing about today, but tomorrow it could be your son or your daughter. It might be an African-American child that they went after in Nashville, but tomorrow their victim might have blonde hair and blue eyes. One thing is for sure, it will happen again.

We must stop these extremist invaders from raping the minds of American citizens on American soil. Here in America today, there are people with radical Islamic political views who are organizing with one goal in mind: to convert our citizens and to turn them against the non-believers. This is a big problem now in Nashville, on college campuses and in the nearby area. Nashville has become a hot bed for radical Islamic recruiting.

Carlos grew up a happy-go-lucky kid. He always had a big smile on his face, and loved to crack a joke or two. Everyone liked him. He loved to play team sports like basketball and football. He loved swimming, dancing, and listening to music.

Today we have two families that have been destroyed. This could have been prevented. I would like to see something change so that no other family in this great country of ours has to go through what our family is facing now.

**GOD HELP US! GOD HELP US!**