

Testimony of
Stephen Singular

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Ladies and Gentlemen of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I'm an investigative journalist and the author of 19 non-fiction books. Since 1985, I've been writing about that line where religion crosses over into criminal behavior. In early 2006, my wife, Joyce, suggested that I look into the story of Warren Jeffs and the FLDS, because she believed that women in particular would be interested in this story. She was right, and this is a significant point. Historically, societies can be measured by how they treat women and children.

That spring, I began traveling to Colorado City, Arizona, interviewing townspeople, ex-church members, and law enforcement. In 1953, Arizona had raided this community to root out the FLDS polygamous lifestyle, and had failed both legally and in terms of public opinion. Fifty years later, the state was employing criminal investigation techniques to target specific individuals who were breaking the law, and they were having success. Both Arizona and Utah were building a new approach to tackling what many have called religious terrorism.

One victory came with the capture of fugitive Warren Jeffs, the Prophet or leader of the FLDS. In September 2007, he was convicted on two counts of accomplice to rape for forcing a fourteen-year-old girl to marry her first cousin. Back in the 1970s, Jeffs was the principal of the FLDS-run Alta Academy, just outside Salt Lake City, and students there later described how he'd abused them emotionally and physically. His nephew, Brent Jeffs, eventually sued Warren and two of his brothers, alleging that when Brent was five, they'd repeatedly sodomized him in a bathroom in the school basement. Brent's brother, Clayne, another victim of these attacks, committed suicide. In 2004, when Brent filed a lawsuit against the Prophet, Jeffs responded to this legal action the same way he had to the American government and our criminal justice system: he'd ignored them. As the FLDS Prophet, he's also ignored:

1) The child labor laws of Arizona, Utah, and Nevada. Young FLDS boys were sent off to work in the church's construction companies, and because they were hardworking and unpaid, the sect could underbid the competition and generate both private and government business. One FLDS-run company, New Era Manufacturing, has a Department of Defense contract for aircraft wheel and brake

manufacturing worth \$1.2 million. JNJ Engineering has an \$11.3 million deal with the Las Vegas Valley Water District. A third FLDS company, Paragon Contractors Corporation, has been fined more than \$10,000 by the U.S. Department of Labor for employing twelve-to-fifteen-year-old boys, and not paying them.

2) Jeffs ignored the Mann Act, which makes it illegal for minors to cross state lines for sexual purposes. As the Prophet, he routinely commanded men to marry women and teenage girls in secret ceremonies in Caliente, Nevada, across the border from the FLDS home base in the twin towns of Hildale, Utah, and Colorado City, Arizona.

3) Jeffs ignored the laws against bigamy and underage marriage in Arizona and Utah, selecting the men who'd receive new brides and joining them in "spiritual marriages." These "plural wives" with dependent children then became eligible for welfare payments -- and welfare fraud. Colorado City has received eight times the welfare assistance of comparably-sized towns in the area. Despite violating these laws, Colorado City has been awarded \$1.9 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to pave the streets and improve the fire department and water system; more than \$12 million a year from Arizona in health insurance premiums for the poor; and a \$2.8 million airport from Washington, D.C. The FLDS openly despises the American government while taking its money, a tactic they call "bleeding the beast."

4) Jeffs ignored the fate of hundreds of teenage males in his community -- known as "Lost Boys" -- after they rebelled against forced child labor and his other harsh rules. He tossed them out of Colorado City and Hildale, leaving them to fend for themselves on the streets of St. George, Utah, Salt Lake City, and Las Vegas. Some of the young men broke laws and were arrested, burdening local police departments and publicly-funded social services.

5) Jeffs ignored outside law enforcement because the border towns' police force was made up of FLDS members utterly loyal to their Prophet. After Jeffs had gone underground to avoid arrest, Colorado City Police Chief Fred Barlow wrote him the following letter: "Dear Uncle Warren, I would first like to acknowledge you as the one man that was and is called of God to stand at the head of his priesthood and the Kingdom of God on the earth in this day and time. I rejoice in the peace that comes over me when I follow the directives that you have sent to me through Uncle William Timpson...I am praying for you to be protected and yearn to be with you again...And I know that you have the right to rule in all aspects of my life..."

6) Jeffs ignored the genetic disorders caused by the sect's inbreeding. In Colorado City and Hildale, Phoenix pediatric neurologist Dr. Theodore Tarby uncovered the largest occurrence in the world of a rare disease called Fumarese Deficiency, which produces overly large heads, misshapen brains,

deformities, seizures, and even death. The severe condition was one more drain on public monies needed for medical care.

7) Following his arrest, Jeffs and his lawyers successfully fought efforts to get at FLDS financial records, stored on computers in the vehicle in which the Prophet had been traveling. No complete picture exists of the FLDS income streams that supported Jeffs' lavish fugitive lifestyle, paid his colossal legal bills or other vast expenses. In 2003, the FLDS bought the Texas ranch for about \$700,000. Today it has an assessed value of \$20.5 million. Where did all the funds come from for these improvements, and for other purchases of land in South Dakota and more recently in Colorado? Has money been laundered or taxes evaded?

Until the FLDS is thoroughly investigated by those with subpoena power, the full extent of the sect's sexual abuse, forced marriage, underage marriage, and financial schemes will remain unknown. A nationwide network now exists of people who've escaped the FLDS and understand its workings from the inside out. They've spent years trying to get law enforcement to investigate the sect more fully, are willing to testify against Jeffs and his church, and they'd welcome federal action. The FLDS has become both a national phenomenon and a national problem -- creating generations of victims spread across the Southwest. None of this is about religious freedom or faith, and FLDS members should not be treated any differently from any other American citizen. This is about uncovering and prosecuting individual criminal behavior by those who've violated state and federal laws, which is the best way to stop those who terrorize in the name of God. I respectfully ask you to consider these words and warnings from someone who's spent more than two years investigating this sect. Thank you.