

KA JOOG

ENRICHING THE LIVES OF SOMALI-AMERICAN YOUTH

My name is **Mohamed Farah**. I am the Executive Director of Ka Joog. I am here today as a concern citizen of this great nation, and on the behalf of the largest Somali-American youth organization in the U.S., Ka Joog was formed back in 2007 by a dozen of students, from high school level to college students, who had few things in common such as education, art, positive role models in the community and proud citizens of a country with limitless opportunity for those who are willing to work hard. The term Ka Joog means to stay out or stay away, and the message behind that is to get youth away from any negative influences that hinders their success or reaching their best potential.

We are all wondering the same thing in this room this morning. How is it that, our American youth can succumb to radical recruitment? Sure, anyone of us today sitting here wouldn't dream of strapping explosives on let alone even fight alongside extremists for whatever overly glorified cause. But Why?, Why, because we have been all well-educated to understand that our human potential is worth far more than an explosive vest, and that our human purpose transcends the murderous agenda of extremist. The number one issue of our community is the recruitment of our youth.

As Americans we must constantly assure ourselves, that these attempts made by Al-Shabaab and their affiliate entities are acts of desperation. Religious scholars have already denounced their claim to legitimacy in the light of Islam. At this particular point the veil slowly has been lifting to reveal the true agenda and political intent of this extremist group. We shall no longer be victims of their terror, we shall no longer let their actions affect our children, and most certainly we shall not be generalized by the actions of a few individuals who have tainted the name of the Somali people.

Al Shabaab has taken every possible measure in full capacity to cloak their ideology with an appealing message to our youth. They have targeted the disenfranchised, marginalized, and socially estranged youth with a message of restitution infused with religious righteousness. Those young men that felt victim to deception are no longer with us today. And thus will be the same fate of so many more youth unless we act with swiftly. Why is it that we spend millions of dollars on counter terrorism and still American citizens are disappearing and fighting alongside with Al-Shabaab.

In conclusion I would like to thank you for the time to address this concern. I would like to finish by saying that this is an uphill battle that must call on the cooperation of all agencies, communities, and organizations who share a vested interest in the safety of our youth, and who wish to cease the efforts of extremist entities. We must empower local partners to be more adequately equipped to deter youth from becoming radicalized and recruited. Ka Joog and the rest of our community lack the vital resources to safeguard our children and most importantly to safeguard of freedoms here in the United States of America.