Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Judiciary committee. My name is Carolyn Jessop and it is both a privilege and honor for me to be here today and testify about my experiences in the polygamist world of the FLDS. (Fundamentalist Church of Latter Day Saints)

I am the sixth generation in my family to be born into polygamy. I am fortunate because I am one of the very few FLDS women allowed to get a college education. I graduated with a bachelor's of science degree and became an elementary school teacher within my FLDS community in Colorado City, Arizona. I am the author of ESCAPE, a memoir about my life in the FLDS, which was published in October, 2007, by Doubleday and became a New York Times bestseller.

April 22, 2003, in the dead of night, with $20 to my name and no idea of what lay ahead, I loaded all eight of my children into a van and fled the FLDS community in Colorado City. I left the only community, the only world I had ever known for 35 years. I was desperate because I could no longer protect my children from the increasing abuse within the FLDS as the result of bizarre pronouncements by the prophet, Warren Jeffs. One of Jeffs closeest associates was my husband at the time, Merril Jessop, who is now considered to be one of the most powerful men in the FLDS. Currently my ex-husband Merril runs the FLDS compound, known as Yearning for Zion Ranch in El Dorado, Texas.

I am here today to inform this panel about my firsthand experiences of systematic abuse and disregard for the law within the FLDS, which leads to the isolation of the most vulnerable individuals within any commumity, the women and children who live without protection of laws that-most Americans take for granted. The rural, small town lifestyle and the old fashioned looking clothing worn by this group should not lead anyone to overlook the fact that they have vast resources. They are experts at disregarding laws which they do not like and are equally quick to invoke laws which favor them. I begin with the corruption within the law enforcement systems.

Control over the Law Enforcement

When the FLDS enters an area it moves decisively to assume political and legal control of that community. Members vote as they are told by their leadership. Their religious leaders' goal is to place individuals in public office who will follow the dictates of the FLDS rather than the law. A recent example of this was the FLDS leaders' statement to the press that, after the child protection action in Texas, they had enough of "trusting in local government" and were requesting voter registration for each of their members so that they could govern themselves, or words to that effect.

In my experience, in Colorado City, Arizona, the Mayor, many city officials, the Chief of Police and every police officer were all members of the FLDS and were essentially hand-picked by church leaders.

If a woman who was beaten by her husband called the police, she was typically told by the police officer that she was "married to a good man and if she was obedient, there would not be any problems." The police would not interfere with the religious teaching that gave a man the right to discipline his household.

FLDS women were expected to drive unlicensed, unregistered, and uninsured cars around the community. I was never once pulled over by local police for this infraction. This meant that I had transportation within the community, but I could not drive beyond my community's borders without being stopped. Occasionally, the police would inform the FLDS men that a state trooper would be coming to town. The men would tell their wives they were not allowed to drive their cars on that day.

The night I escaped with my children I knew I couldn't go to the local police for protection because they would be the first men that Merril would contact to hunt me down. They could use the fact that my car was not licensed as a legal reason to arrest me. The result of this collusion between the FLDS and the police is that there is nowhere to turn for a woman who is seeking refuge from an abusive situation. The normal protection

that most Americans expect from their local law enforcement cities does not exist within an FLDS community.

Another example of how the FLDS leadership manipulates standard city functions is the current battle between the cities of Colorado City, Arizona, and Hilldale, Utah, against the United Effort Plan (UEP) Trust, a charitable trust that was formed by the FLDS many years ago to hold property in trust, enabling the church to own everything. In 2005, the state of Utah took over the UEP and has been working on behalf of the families living in homes on the Trust land. The goal of the UEP is to enable these people to take legal ownership of their home. The city governments in Hilldale and Colorado City have repeatedly found excuses for not recording the property surveys conducted by the Trust. As a result, the Trust is unable to complete the legal process required to privatize these homes on behalf of the families living in these homes.

Welfare Fraud

There is a religious doctrine among the FLDS know as "bleeding the beast." The "beast" is the U.S. Government. "Bleeding the beast" means two things: FLDS members should avoid paying taxes at all costs and should also apply for every possible type of government assistance that is available.

For example, many men and women were assigned to work jobs for companies controlled by the FLDS. These jobs often required long hours of work. Some might call it slave labor, because these workers were paid far below the federal minimum wage. Companies with such arrangements were required by the FLDS church leadership to "contribute" most of these employees' salaries to the church. These people then applied for welfare, fraudulently claiming they were unemployed. To the best of my knowledge this practice still continues.

Child Labor Abuse

Another way to supply businesses with "slave labor" was to require boys and girls, often as young as 12, to leave school and work for these FLDS businesses which were often

construction firms. It was not uncommon for these children to be required to be on the worksites by 6am or 7am in the morning, and work until dark, which could be as late as 9pm during the summer. These children were trained to hide if anyone from OSHA, or most anyone that was not from the community came on the job site. To the best of my knowledge the practice of using child labor still continues.

My oldest son was one of these children. He was 12 and pulled out of "religious school," the only education available at the time to FLDS children, and sent to work for his half-brother's business. This was not a summer job. This was fulltime, year-round employment…of sorts. He was not paid. He was given a phone card and a small allowance for meals. My son's experience is not unique. What is unique is that after we escaped from the FLDS, my son had a chance to develop his full potential academically and psychologically.

In Colorado City, I did not know of a safe place where I could go to report this child labor abuse. I couldn't report this to local authorities, because they were all part of the FLDS. I feared if I went outside the community to Child Protection Services, I would be held accountable because I was his mother. I lived with the fear that my children would be taken away from me, because I saw women who disobeyed the wishes of the prophet or their husband removed from their homes and their children.

I knew, as does every woman in the FLDS, that polygamy is an illegal lifestyle. We feared going to any service agencies outside our community because of the risk that we would get into trouble instead of being helped. We were all multi-generational Americans, but we had the same fears as any illegal immigrant. I know I did not believe I had the same Constitutional rights as other Americans.

Educational Abuse

I was fortunate to have grown up during a time when FLDS children were allowed to go to public schools. But even so, most of the teachers and all of the administration were members of the FLDS. As a child, I routinely received textbooks with chapters torn out.

As a result, there were big holes in my education. I was taught, for example, that Abraham Lincoln was evil because he opposed polygamy. My children's education was far inferior to mine and this is one of the reasons I risked everything to escape. Merril Jessop has 54 children and this September my oldest son will become his only son to ever go to college.

In 2000, as Warren Jeffs increased his tyrannical hold on the FLDS, all FDLS children were taken out of public schools and placed in "religious" schools. The focus moved teaching reading, writing and mathematics to Warren Jeffs' tapes which indoctrinated the children into such beliefs as: If a man is instructed by the (FLDS) prophet to take the life of another human being, he should do so in humility. He said that the black race was put on this earth to preserve "evil". He said any person who is born with as much as one drop of Jewish blood will never enter the kingdom of God. He said it is a privilege for a woman to obey her priesthood head (which is her father or her husband). Because of the teachings within these tapes, the Southern Poverty Law Center has classified the FLDS as a "hate group".

All school materials had to be authorized and approved by Jeffs, which meant the religious schools did not have access to normal educational textbooks. In the FLDS school my children attended, anyone with a college education was forbidden to teach. To the best of my knowledge, none of the "teachers" were certified, and no standardized tests were ever given to measure a child's learning progress. This is creating a generation that is functionally illiterate. After we escaped five years ago and my children started public school they were already at least three years behind academically.

In 2006, after Warren Jeffs was put in prison, the "religious" schools in Colorado City and Hilldale were closed. Parents were told to keep their children home and to pray for the destruction of "the wicked." Approximately 700 households of FLDS families were affected by this order and for the last two years, the majority of the FLDS children residing in Colorado City and Hilldale have not been registered for either home-schooling or religious schools. Their education has essentially stopped.