

Bio: Abraham Davis

Abraham Davis is a 20-year old white resident of Fort Smith, Arkansas. On the night of October 19, 2016, Abraham Davis borrowed his mother's white minivan and drove it to his friend, Craig Wigginton's house, where the two proceeded to get drunk. Next, Abraham agreed to drive with Craig to the Al Salam Mosque. While Abraham stood watch in the driveway, his friend drew swastikas and wrote curses and threats on the mosque's windows and doors. As the news story of the vandalism broke the next day, Abraham watched the reports on his phone. He was full of regret and felt terrible. In hindsight, he couldn't even explain why he'd done it.

Abraham had grown up in Fort Smith. His father was charismatic, but violent; he died when Abraham was 5 years old. Abraham felt powerless and worked all his young life to overcome that feeling. He grew up poor though he attended a high school on the wealthier side of town. He was the kid who walked while others drove places. He had anger management issues. He got support for this problem in elementary school but as he continued on to middle and high school, he got into lots of fights and did poorly in school. This didn't seem to surprise his teachers or Abraham himself. He slept a lot in class, living up to the adults' low expectations. He dropped out at age 18.

In Fort Smith, poorer families live on the north side of town, while wealthier families live to the south. Race followed the same pattern: The southern part of the city is mostly white. Over time, Latino immigrants settled in town, as did Vietnamese and North Indian communities. Muslims from different countries settled in Fort Smith from 1970s on. Most white people didn't know any Muslims in town. Abraham did. He went to school with Wasim Yasin. The two often had lunch together and according to Wasim, "Abraham was a good guy." Abraham once told Wasim: "I'm with you, man. If anyone bothers you, just let me know. I'm your friend."

Despite the stories in the news about the vandalizing of the mosque, there appeared to be no follow up at first; no one was charged. But at night, Abraham's dreams haunted him. When the police finally came to arrest him four months later, he wasn't surprised. He felt he'd been heading toward prison all along, though he hadn't expected it to happen quite this way. This was not what Abraham had envisioned for himself, and he felt remorse for what he'd done.

Thinking back to that fateful night, Abraham realized that for all the regret and pain the vandalism had caused, the decision to do it had taken no time at all. Abraham and Craig had been drinking and talking about Islamic State (IS) the night they committed the vandalism. Craig was angry about American soldiers being killed and children dying. They had the impulse to retaliate.

Abraham recognizes now how ignorant he and his friends were for lumping all Muslims together. He wishes he would have stopped it: "I wish I could go back in time and say, 'Hey, dumbass, I'm the future you, and I'm telling you, don't do this.'" Abraham's brother Noah drove him to the police station to turn himself in. On the way, they stopped by the family's

home so Abraham could say goodbye. His mother was devastated and sobbing. Abraham described her “like a woman who had just got broken.” He thinks about her a lot. “It’s stuff like that that hurts you while you are in jail. You replay and replay. It’s torture on your mind.”

The family couldn’t afford the \$1,580 for the bail bond, so Abraham stayed in jail until the case went to court. It took a month for his mother, Kristin, to arrange her first visit with her son in jail. They cried when they finally saw each other. Kristin and Noah visited every Saturday after that. Abraham had focused his whole life on being strong enough to protect his family, but in the end he realized that he was the one who had inflicted the most hurt on his family. He felt a powerful urge to make things right.

Discuss the following questions:

- What are your thoughts and feelings about Abraham’s experiences?
- How does Abraham feel now about what happened to and at the mosque?
- If you were to describe Abraham using a word or two, what would they be?