

Congressman André Carson
Statement on Trayvon Martin for Judiciary Committee Hearing
March 27, 2012

- Thank you for letting me say a few words today and thank you, Congresswoman Wilson, for bringing us all together.
- I want to start by saying to the Martin family just how sorry I am for your loss.
- It is tragic to lose a child under any circumstances, but I can only imagine that the terrible circumstances and national fervor over police inaction makes your son's death even more difficult.
- In today's society, where racism is less overt than in past decades, it is easy for many Americans to forget how dangerous it still is.
- Members of the Congressional Black Caucus continue to push into the national spotlight—and are often accused of race baiting as a result.
- But it's because we have seen racism up close and personal.
- Even before the national spotlight turned to Trayvon's case, we have known just how often young black men are met with suspicion and judgment, based solely on the way they look.
- Even as a Member of Congress, I still face racist mentalities and assumptions.
- When I was a young man, even at the age of 17, I was profiled and questioned for no other reason than the part of town I was in and the color of my skin.
- Hurtful mythologies still persist, and they contribute to the violence we've seen in Florida, as well as violence all over the country that doesn't make the evening news.
- We have an opportunity and a responsibility to act – to push against the mindsets that hold us back.
- In the state of Indiana, we have a Commission on the Social Status of Black Males that has provided an example on how we can move forward.

- This Commission seeks to address challenges confronting African-American males in the areas of criminal justice, education, employment, health, and social factors.
- It works primarily on education - focusing energy, time and resources on preventative measures that prepare young Black males to become strong adult men that can lead their communities.
- Unfortunately, the Indianapolis local chapter was disbanded under Republican Mayor Greg Ballard—but I'm hopeful that I can help bring its importance to his attention and have it implemented again.
- The presence of this commission at all is clear evidence that racism is still prevalent and is still impacting young African American men every day.
- We are fortunate to have a Commission that is working hard to bring attention to issues facing African American males in our state, but this is no silver bullet.
- Commissions like ours, when organized and operated effectively, help us identify and address the challenges facing our young men.
- But we need community buy in. It doesn't help to pretend that racism is in the past or that young black men can overcome its obstacles on their own.
- We have made big strides—and I'm convinced Congresswoman Wilson's push for a Commission in Florida is another step forward.
- But we need full community involvement, by people of all races, to realize that this is a problem that hurting our young men and, far too often, leading to tragedies like Trayvon's.
- We need everyone from Congress, to our Mayor's, to our neighborhood organizations to stand up and say that enough is enough. Racism has no place in modern America. Every single member of Congress should be standing together in this. This is no reason not to.
- I am proud to be an officer of the CBC because we're fighting to bring these issues to the forefront.

- I just hope that all of my colleagues, all of my neighbors back home, and all of my fellow Americans can join together behind this tragedy to bring an end to racism across our country.