



The Making of Lee Boyd Malvo: The D.C. Sniper

Carmeta Albarus, Jonathan Mack

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In October of 2002, a series of sniper attacks paralyzed the Washington Beltway, turning normally placid gas stations, parking lots, restaurants, and school grounds into chaotic killing fields. After the spree, ten people were dead and several others wounded. The perpetrators were forty-one-year-old John Allen Muhammad and his seventeen-year-old protégé, Lee Boyd Malvo.

Called in by the judge to serve on Malvo's defense team, social worker Carmeta Albarus was instructed by the court to uncover any information that might help mitigate the death sentence the teen faced. Albarus met with Malvo numerous times and repeatedly traveled back to his homeland of Jamaica, as well as to Antigua, to interview his parents, family members, teachers, and friends. What she uncovered was the story of a once promising, intelligent young man, whose repeated abuse and abandonment left him detached from his biological parents and desperate for guidance and support. In search of a father figure, Malvo instead found John Muhammad, a veteran of the first Gulf War who intentionally shaped his protégé through a ruthlessly efficient campaign of brainwashing, sniper training, and race hatred, turning the susceptible teen into an angry, raging, and dissociated killer with no empathy for his victims.

In this intimate and carefully documented account, Albarus details the nature of Malvo's tragic attachment to his perceived "hero father," his indoctrination, and his subsequent dissociation. She recounts her role in helping to extricate Malvo from the psychological clutches of Muhammad, which led to a dramatic courtroom confrontation with the man who manipulated and exploited him. Psychologist Jonathan H. Mack identifies and analyzes the underlying clinical psychological and behavioral processes that led to Malvo's dissociation and turn toward serial violence. With this tragic tale, the authors emphasize the importance of parental attachment and the need for positive and loving relationships during the critical years of early childhood development. By closely examining the impact of Lee Boyd Malvo's childhood on his later development, they reach out to parents, social workers, and the community for greater awareness and prevention.

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