**<http://boston.cbslocal.com/2013/05/11/va-woman-has-no-regrets-over-role-in-burial-of-boston-bombing-suspect/>**

**VA Woman Has No Regrets Over Role In Burial Of Boston Bombing Suspect**

**May 11, 2013 7:55 AM**



All the graves in the Doswell, VA cemetery were covered with reddish-brown mulch except for two that appeared newly dug, neither with any kind of marking and one of them presumably Tsarnaev’s.

DOSWELL, Va. (AP) — The Virginia woman whose actions led to Boston Marathon bombing suspect Tamerlan Tsarnaev [being buried about 30 miles north of her Richmond home](http://boston.cbslocal.com/2013/05/10/body-of-boston-marathon-bombings-suspect-buried-in-virginia-cemetery/) said the angry backlash from local officials, some cemetery neighbors and online critics has been unpleasant, but she has no regrets.

“I can’t pretend it’s not difficult to be reviled and maligned,” Martha Mullen told The Associated Press in a telephone interview Friday. “But any time you can reach across the divide and work with people that are not like you, that’s what God calls us to do.”

Tsarnaev, 26, was quietly buried Thursday at a small Islamic cemetery in rural Caroline County. His body had remained at a Worcester, Mass., funeral parlor since he was killed April 19 in a gunfight with police, days after the bombings that killed three and injured more than 260 in downtown Boston. Cemeteries in Massachusetts and several other states refused to accept the remains. With costs to protect the funeral home mounting, Worcester police appealed for help finding a place to bury Tsarnaev.

Mullen said she was at a Starbucks when she heard a radio news report about the difficulty finding a burial spot for

Tsarnaev.

“My first thought was Jesus said love your enemies,” she said.

Then she had an epiphany.

“I thought someone ought to do something about this — and I am someone,” Mullen said.

So Mullen, a mental health counselor in private practice and a graduate of United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, sent emails to various faith organizations to see what could be done. She heard back from Islamic Funeral Services of Virginia, which arranged for a funeral plot at the Al-Barzakh cemetery. “It was an interfaith effort,” she said.

Mullen, a member of the United Methodist Church, said she was motivated by her own faith and that she had the full support of her pastor.

“Nobody is without sin,” she said. “Certainly this was a horrific act, but he’s dead and what happened is between him and God. We just need to bury his body and move forward. People were making an issue and detracting from the healing that needed to take place.”

There was little talk of healing among Caroline County officials and the cemetery’s neighbors, however, and even some members of the area’s Islamic community were incensed that they were not consulted about the burial in advance.

Imam Ammar Amonette, of the Islamic Center of Virginia, said that his group was never consulted and that Mullen had reached out to a separate group, the Islamic Society of Greater Richmond.

“The whole Muslim community here is furious. Frankly, we are furious that we were never given any information. It was all done secretly behind our backs,” Amonette said, adding that it “makes no sense whatsoever” that Tsarnaev’s body was buried in Virginia.

“Now everybody who’s buried in that cemetery, their loved ones are going to have to go to that place,” he said.

The Islamic Society of Greater Richmond didn’t respond to an email seeking confirmation that it was involved in the burial.

Some readers responding to online reports about the burial and Mullen’s role were supportive, others sharply critical.

Jaquese Goodall, who lives less than a quarter-mile from the cemetery, was unhappy that Tsarnaev was buried there.

“If they didn’t want him in Boston, why did they bring him all the way down here against our wishes?” said Goodall, 21. “I am worried because his people may come down here to visit and there will be a whole lot of problems from him being here.”

Caroline County Sheriff Tony Lippa was concerned, too, that the grave site could become a target for vandals and a shrine for those who sympathize with Tsarnaev.

“I know of no Virginia law enforcement agency that was notified,” Lippa said. “No one in county or state government was aware of this.”

Floyd Thomas, the chairman of Caroline County’s board of supervisors, considered Tsarnaev’s possible burial a black mark against the county where President Abraham Lincoln’s assassin, John Wilkes Booth, was cornered and killed 148 years ago.

“We feel as far as this particular burial is concerned, we feel the same way that most of the people in the county feel — most of the way America feels. We’re very angry over the bombing … that’s not something that’s supposed to happen,” he said.

“We don’t want the county to be remembered as the resting place of the remains for someone who committed a terrible crime.”

Peter Stefan, director of the Worcester funeral home where Tsarnaev’s body was held, had some sympathy for the Caroline officials.

“What I really didn’t care much for was the fact that the city or town wasn’t notified,” he said. “Once the family takes over, it’s their responsibility. But there’s a moral issue here.”

Local officials asked Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli to look into whether any laws were broken in carrying out the hushed burial. If not, there’s likely nothing they can do.

“If there were, I think we’d try to undo what’s been done,” Thomas said.

Lane Kneedler, an attorney who represented the Virginia Cemetery Association when the law was drafted to regulate for-profit cemeteries in the late 1990s, said private and church burial grounds are not regulated by the state and only have to meet local zoning requirements. He said that once a cemetery is approved and operating, only its owner controls who is buried there.

The cemetery where Tsarnaev is buried contains 47 graves, all covered Friday with reddish-brown mulch except for two that appeared newly dug and were unmarked. On one of the new graves lay a vase full of roses at one end and a single red rose at the other end. The other new grave was bare.

State police cruisers, county sheriff’s cars and black unmarked sedans with their emergency lights concealed cruised back and forth past the cemetery, officers inside them eyeing everything for any sign of trouble as reporters on the ground and those in helicopters high overhead broadcast the gravesite’s location to the world.

Meanwhile, Tsarnaev’s death certificate was released Friday. It shows he was shot by police in the firefight the night of April 18, run over and dragged by a vehicle, and died a few hours later on April 19. Authorities have said his younger brother, Dzhokhar, ran over him in his getaway attempt.

Dzhokhar Tsarnaev was captured later and remains in custody. The brothers are accused of setting off two shrapnel-packed pressure-cooker bombs April 15 near the marathon finish line, an attack that killed three people and injured more than 260. The brothers are also suspected in the shooting death days later of an MIT police officer.

Their uncle, Ruslan Tsarni of Montgomery Village, Md., took responsibility for the body after Tamerlan’s wife, Katherine Russell, said she wanted it released to her in-laws. He said his nephew was buried in the Doswell cemetery with the help of a faith coalition.

“The body’s buried,” he said. “That’s it.”

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O’Dell reported from Richmond. Lewis reported from Doswell. Associated Press writers Denise Lavoie and Jay Lindsay in Boston and Eric Tucker in Washington contributed to this report.

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Response: Pick at least one of the prompts and write a response in your writer’s notebook.

* Do you think everyone—no matter who they are or what they have done—deserves a proper burial?
* How does this situation parallel or not parallel Antigone’s conflict?