Ahmaud Arbery: A Call to Outraged Love

This season of apocalyptic pandemic continues to reveal not only our society’s heroes but its marauders and murderers as well. There is no other word for what happened when Ahmaud Arbery went out for a run in the neighborhood next to his own. Two white men, Gregory and Travis McMichael, father and son, the elder a retired police officer, noticed Mr. Arbery and allowed their white supremacist impulses free rein. Video suppressed since February reveals what happened next: in an act of white vigilante-ism, one of the men shot Mr. Arbery dead. For weeks neither man had faced charges, although the district attorney had been in possession of the video. Not until a public outcry led by African American activists who circulated the video – at deep cost to black people traumatized by seeing yet another black sibling murdered – and shamed the state of Georgia into action has any move toward justice been made.

As people of faith committed to "raise prophetic voices for liberation and justice," and to "act to dismantle patriarchy, white supremacy and all forms of abusive power," the Alliance of Baptists’ leadership calls for action in the following ways:

1) Do not circulate the video of Mr. Arbery's shooting. Seeing this video is a traumatic experience no one should be forced or surprised to have. We recognize those who circulated the video did so to call for justice. That purpose has been served.
2) Listen. Listen to the outrage, pain and grief of black/indigenous/people of color as well as white people grieved by the atrocities we are complicit in.
3) We are glad arrests have finally been made and that Gregory and Travis McMichael are in custody. Continued attention and pressure are needed to keep judicial inaction from continuing. We are grateful that censure brought by the Georgia NAACP and Black Lives Matter activists has pressured Liberty County-based District Attorney Tom Durden to move the case to a Grand Jury in Glynn County for criminal charges. However, it is prudent given the long delay in a prosecution that we contact the Georgia Bureau of Investigation office (404-244-2600) to demand swift due process.
4) A federal approach also is warranted. You can call the Georgia field office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation at 770-216-3000.
5) As reported by the Georgia NAACP, repeated recusals were used to delay the process of seeking justice for Mr. Arbery. These judicial delays cannot be allowed to continue. You can communicate this stance by signing the Georgia NAACP's petition demanding Jackie Johnson's immediate resignation at http://chng.it/cSDTbgTDrr.

Our long and murderous history of seeing threat in every black body must be interrupted--and now--with a public outcry of outraged love. Today - May 8 - is Ahmaud Arbery’s birthday. He should be here for it. For his sake, the sake of his family and friends, and the sake of us all, we must cry out for justice, for Mr. Arbery, and every black, indigenous and person of color at risk because of white supremacist and racist ideas turned into murderous rage and violent action. We must meet these actions with our own loving and loud insistence on justice.