

May 28, 2020

News Release from the Chairman of 100 Black Men of America, Inc. on the Murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor

Within the period of one month, this nation has been outraged by the senseless killing of Black people for simply being Black in America. It is apparent that the lives of Black people to many with the authority to enforce the laws of this country do not matter unless there is the threat of civil disobedience. As Dr. Martin Luther King has taught us, there is never progress without struggle. However, he also taught us that struggle can be peaceful and still cause a revolution of the mind. We therefore call for a revolution of the mind among the white law enforcement arms of this country. For it is painfully apparent that the wheels of justice run slow and sometimes not at all when it comes to the violent taking of the lives of Black people.

As I mentioned in my letter to Attorney General William Barr, urging his Justice Department to take action against the murderers of Ahmaud Arbery and the district attorneys and police who favored murderers rather than enforce the law, this sickness in ignoring the “lynching” of Black people will not be tolerated; that whether this lawlessness results from profiling or the careless enforcement of the law, we will not allow the clock to be turned back to an era of lynching Blacks with impunity.

Ahmaud Arbery, the young Black man who lost his life while simply exercising his civil rights to jog on a public street, was cornered and killed by these white men because of their racial motivation. You only have to view the video of Ahmaud Arbery to realize the wanton and sick disregard the McMichaels had for the life of this young man. This image raises the memory of other dark days in America, such as the Emmitt Till murder.

The nation is outraged by the senseless killing of George Floyd by a white police officer while he begged for air, called for his mother, and said he couldn't breathe, The officer kept his knee pressed against Floyd's neck ultimately killing him. Thank God for the video which shows this crime in graphic detail because many such criminal acts against Black people have gone unnoticed and the perpetrators never are brought to justice. In other instances, white police officers have been charged only to be exonerated in spite of a mountain of incriminating evidence. This murder of George Floyd must not escape the equal prosecution under the law and a just result.

We are also outraged by the senseless killing of Breonna Taylor in Kentucky by white police officers allegedly seeking to serve a warrant. This young Black woman was murdered in her home, having been shot 8 times by police who alleged to have “mistakenly” killed her while trying to serve the warrant on another. These white officers' actions confirm a disregard for normal protocols in serving warrants because of their racial animus in profiling and a total disregard for equal enforcement of the law when Blacks are involved.

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Chief Executive Officer

141 Auburn Avenue
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Main (404) 688-5100
Fax (404) 688-1028

Website: www.100blackmen.org

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These officers "blindly" fired numerous shots in Breonna Taylor's home without regard to residents not a threat to them. There have been numerous other incidents in America where Blacks have been wrongfully killed by white police officers in their homes after they failed to exercise the normal protocols usually accorded to white citizens.

In the Arbery murder, the local authorities in Brunswick, GA, relying on the statements of the white vigilantes, concluded this was a killing in self-defense. However, Georgia law states that a person can rely on a self-defense claim "only if he reasonably believes that such force is necessary to prevent death or great bodily injury...or to prevent the commission of a forcible felony." The leaked video of the incident shows that not to be the case. The murderers, the McMichaels, were always the aggressors with guns. Georgia law states that a person who provokes an attack or acts as the "aggressor" cannot claim self-defense. Certainly, in this case, Travis McMichael was the aggressor and but for his attempt to threaten Ahmaud Arbery with his shotgun, this young man's life would not have been taken. In spite of these facts, over two months passed without any arrest and the arrests of the McMichaels only occurred after the video surfaced and the outcry from myself and others raised the heat on the Governor and the U. S. Attorney General.

Notwithstanding the reticence of certain white police officers to enforce the law when the victims are Black, we must not succumb to defeat. We must strongly urge the U. S. Justice Department to launch investigations to determine whether the civil rights of these three Blacks were violated and whether federal prosecutions are appropriate. Further, we must beseech the DOJ to pursue federal civil rights investigations when law enforcement officers fail to carry out their sworn duties to enforce the law. We must strongly urge the DOJ to proceed in investigating the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and we must insist on prosecutions under the Federal Hate Crimes Act.

We firmly believe that thorough investigations of all these egregious violations of the civil rights of Blacks, the most important of which is the right to life, must be conducted and appropriate action taken. We understand that these Black lives matter and that these tragedies must not be repeated ever again in this country. We will use all our resources to bring these perpetrators to justice. We owe others who may fall trap to the white supremacists and other white sympathizers in this country our commitment to root out racial hostility and the diminution of the worth of Black lives. These young Black people had the right to live and their deaths must not go in vain; their perpetrators must be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

As an organization of African American men trying to improve the social, educational, health and economic condition of our communities, we urge all people of goodwill to join us in our peaceful effort to force the DOJ and other enforcement arms in this county to demonstrate that our Government is even-handed and that our laws are color blind.

Thomas W. Dortch, Jr., Chairman of the 100 Black Men of America, Inc.