



# Speak Out Now

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## The Murder of Ahmaud Arbery

A majority white jury in Georgia found three white men guilty of the February 2020 murder of Ahmaud Arbery, a 25-year-old Black man. Arbery was jogging in the mostly white suburban community of Satilla Shores, GA, when the killers riding in two pick-up trucks chased him down. One of the men shot him at close range with a shotgun. The killers claimed that they suspected Arbery of burglary, because they said he had stopped to look at a house under construction.

This was a modern-day lynching. What else do you call it when white men hunt down, attack and kill a Black man? They were like a modern-day slave patrol of the kind that existed before and during the Civil War, which pursued people escaping from slavery.

Racism was behind the murder of Ahmaud Arbery. It wasn't just the racist views of those three white men. That racism is represented by the situation confronting Black people, including the segregated neighborhood where the men lived and could "claim" that only certain people "belong."

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident. Almost exactly 25 years before Arbery was murdered, Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old Black man, was gunned down by a self-styled vigilante in a middle class gated community where his father's fiancée lived. His crime? He was returning from the store where he bought some Skittles and juice. Just like Ahmaud Arbery, he was murdered because he was a young Black man in the "wrong place."

The cops in Florida, where Trayvon Martin was killed, didn't immediately arrest his murderer. They accepted the killer's claim of self-defense. When he was put on trial, Trayvon Martin's murderer was acquitted. In Georgia, the cops did the same. They didn't arrest Ahmaud Arbery's murderers until 74 days after the lynching. It was only when a video of the murder was released by one of the three men who had pursued him went viral and forced the authorities' hands. The video

evidence of Ahmaud Arbery's murder eliminated any claim of self-defense.

Many politicians who claim to stand against racism say that the guilty verdict of Aubrey's killers is proof that justice exists within this this system. Justice? Ahmaud Arbery is dead! Convicting three men, infected with the racism of this society, will not bring him back to life. There will be appeal after appeal, which could result in their eventual release.

Racism was also on display in the courtroom when the defendants' lawyer demanded that Al Sharpton and other Black pastors be removed because of the impact they would have on the jury. But the reason for this verdict wasn't who was in the courtroom. It was due to who was outside. Black people and others in the community were not going to accept anything short of a conviction.

And this is what brings results. During the 1950s and '60s the powerful Civil Rights and Black Power movements confronted the racism of this society and opened a new day for many Black people throughout the country. It didn't put an end to racism, but it limited its open violent and extreme expressions. But as these movements subsided, overt racism, including attacks by the cops and vigilantes, resumed.

It isn't enough to oppose racism, while the system that birthed racism from its slave foundations remains in place. The divisions put in place by these imposed color lines means that some people, usually white people, have access to better paying jobs, schools, neighborhoods etc. This division, even though it doesn't benefit most white people, serves to keep workers divided in the face of the exploitation all of us face. The racism that murders Black people, impoverishes Black people, and degrades the lives of Black people will not end until we put an end to the system that brought it into being. It is a system that only benefits a small minority of wealthy people at the expense of us all.