

Video shows February murder of Georgia jogger by former police officer and his son

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A graphic video emerged this week showing the murder of 25-year-old Ahmaud Arbery in February by a former police officer and his son in Brunswick, Georgia.

Arbery was jogging through a rural neighborhood by himself during the afternoon of Sunday, February 23 when he was targeted by Gregory McMichael, 65, and his 34-year-old son Travis McMichael.

Around 1 p.m. the retired police officer and investigator for the local district attorney's office and son armed themselves with a pistol and shotgun and decided to chase down Arbery when they saw him running down the street.

In the dashcam video, Arbery can be seen running toward the McMichaels truck as they pulled in front of him. Shouting can be heard and the younger McMichael can be seen fighting with Arbery over a shotgun. The older McMichael, standing in the bed of the pickup truck, pulls out a pistol and shots can be heard coming from off screen as Arbery is shot by Travis with the shotgun. Two more shots come from the shotgun and Arbery can be seen with blood on his chest before the video cuts out.

Arbery was pronounced dead at the scene less than 40 minutes after McMichaels went after him.

The McMichaels, who are white, told authorities they suspected Arbery, who was African-American, of committing a series of home burglaries in the neighborhood and attempted to perform a citizen's arrest. Arbery was unarmed and no arrests were made at the time of the incident.

Following the release of the gruesome video more than two months later, Georgia prosecutor Tom Durden, issued a statement this week calling for a grand jury to be commissioned to consider bringing criminal charges against the killers.

"After careful review of the evidence I am of the opinion that the case should be presented to the grand jury of Glynn County for consideration of criminal charges," Durben told reporters. Due to lockdowns related to the coronavirus pandemic, a grand jury will not be able to consider the issue until at least mid-June.

The lawyer for Arbery's family, S. Lee Merritt declared that the video confirms that a murder took place, "The series of events captured in this video confirm what all the evidence indicated prior to its release." The McMichaels for their part are claiming self-defense in the shooting, citing Georgia's Stand Your Ground law.

Georgia Governor Brian Kemp tweeted on Tuesday that the Georgia District Attorney has elicited the services of an independent investigations agency, the Georgia Bureau of Investigations, to look into the killing as well.

Due to previous ties to Gregory McMichael, who used to work for the District Attorney in addition to his previous career as a police officer, the first two prosecutors assigned to the case had to recuse themselves.

Arbery's mother, Wanda Cooper, was initially lied to by local police when informed of her son's death. They claimed he was involved in a house burglary and was killed by the homeowner. It was another several days before she learned he was killed while jogging along his usual route by white men who claimed they believed him to be a burglar.

Benjamin Crump, a civil rights attorney representing Cooper, told reporters that the killing and the lack of arrests were racially motivated: "They were profiling him, saying he's a burglar. The only thing they knew was that he was a young black man."

According to those who knew Arbery and were

closest to him, it is extremely unlikely he was committing any crimes in the area and was a regular jogger. Indeed, neighbors in the area told reporters they had seen him jogging around there for years before the incident.

The video, which has now been viewed over 4 million times, sparked outrage on social media and among civil rights groups. Local activists staged a small protest last week calling for justice, claiming the crime was racially motivated and likening the killing to a modern-day lynching.

The local chapter of the Georgia NAACP has called for an investigation into the killing and for the dismissal of the Brunswick police chief for his initial refusal to arrest the killers. The organization wrote in a statement this week, “We are grateful to see D.A. Tom Durden announce his intention to convene a grand jury in this case. However, we will not rest until the murderers of Ahmaud Arbery are behind bars.”

Presumptive Democratic presidential candidate, former vice president Joe Biden even took to Twitter to condemn the killing. “Ahmaud Arbery was killed in cold blood,” Biden tweeted on Tuesday. “It is time for a swift, full and transparent investigation into his murder.”

Reverend Al Sharpton, a longtime Democratic Party operative, has also spoken out against the killing along with former Georgia Democratic representative Stacey Abrams, a fellow proponent of racial identity politics and leading candidate to be Biden’s vice-presidential candidate. Former Democratic presidential candidate Senator Kamala Harris, another contender to be Biden’s running mate, also reacted to the video on tweeting, “Exercising while Black shouldn’t be a death sentence.”

Bobby Rush, a Democratic congressman from Illinois compared the killing to the 1955 murder of Emmett Till and took to Twitter to push for the passage of his Emmett Till Anti-Lynching Act, named for the 14-year old African-American boy killed by racist whites in Mississippi, which would make lynching a federally prosecutable crime.

According to reports and a statement from one of the recused prosecutors, the McMichaels’ claim of self-defense will be strengthened by Georgia’s Stand Your Ground laws, similar to the laws in Florida that helped George Zimmerman escape conviction in the 2012

killing of Trayvon Martin.



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