

Opinion: Prayer Matters

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By Savannah Tribune | on December 01, 2021 By Omar L. Douglass

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As I listened to the Reverend Al Sharpton speak outside of the Glynn County Courthouse in Brunswick, Georgia, on Wednesday, November 24, 2021, after Travis McMichael, Greg McMichael, and William R. Bryan were convicted for the February 23, 2020, murder of Mr. Ahmaud M. Arbery, I could not help but think of how surreal the past year and a half has been in my home of Glynn County, Georgia, U.S.A.

The jarring reality in which my hometown and I found ourselves, as the story of the horrific lynching of Mr. Arbery last year became widely known, has been both eye-opening and emotionally draining. Watching the trial and noticing many elements

of my personal and everyday life on display for the world to see, has been bizarre and alarming. Wondering whether the killers would be acquitted for something that was so clearly wrong, immoral, and illegal was stressful. But seeing Ahmaud's family continue to show up to advocate for the justice he was entitled to, with such dignified strength as they shouldered the immense weight of their grief, motivated me in a powerful way. Being galvanized along with the local community and the nation to take peaceful, direct action by marching and agitating for equal rights for Black people in the United States of America in the 21st Century, as our ancestors did in the 20th Century, is an experience that I will never forget.

The thanks and praise that I offered to God this year at Thanksgiving was specifically and uniquely intertwined with the life of Mr. Ahmaud M. Arbery. As both a contemporary of his and as a child of the same soil he hailed from, this year I am especially thankful for life. And I am so proud of and thankful for Ahmaud's family and our community in Glynn County, Georgia, U.S.A.

From the outset of the public struggle to gain justice for Ahmaud, his family alongside clergy and other community leaders from Glynn County, helped to organize and execute one of the most successful campaigns of creative nonviolence in the history of our people. And they did



it with prayer. They cultivated community and persistently engaged the everyday lives of stakeholders of all hues and backgrounds so that their struggle became present in the lives of their neighbors.

Our community saw up close what happens when people who are not Black, take up the mantle that declares that the lives of Black people are precious too. When allies take their consciousness with them into their homes, on their jobs, and into the spaces in which they worship – and do so openly, with conviction – things change for the better.



Demonstrators march for justice for Ahmaud Arbery

Ms. Wanda Cooper Jones and Mr. Marcus Arbery, Sr. are the pride of a community today. They are a lesson in grace and dignity. The movement they led demonstrated creative nonviolence at its best, and showed the world again that prayer changes things, and that organized prayer changes outcomes.

Omar L. Douglass is a poet, writer, and advocate for humanity from St. Simons Island, Georgia, on the Gullah Geechee Coast in the land now known as the United States of America. Based in Savannah, Georgia, he works with the land and the people to bridge divides and create common spaces for healing. He received a B.A. from the College of The Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, where he studied Philosophy and Africana Studies.



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