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## Woke Justice at Its Most Horrifying—the Ahmaud Arbery Case

By Jack Cashill

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“Ahmaud Arbery was murdered,” said Judge Timothy Walmsley with the solemnity befitting the Chatham County Superior Court in Brunswick, Georgia.

“A resident of Glynn County, a graduate of Brunswick High, a son, a brother, a young man with dreams was gunned down in this community,” Walmsley continued. “As we understand it, he left his home apparently to go for a run and he ended up running for his life.”

So saying, Walmsley summed up what the jury was allowed to know about Arbery, 25 at the time of his February 2020 death in the coastal community of Satilla Shores, Georgia. Either out of fear or ambition or some combination of the two, Walmsley had grossly misrepresented the reality of Arbery’s troubled life and death to justify the draconian sentences he was about to hand down to the men who “murdered” him—Greg McMichael, then 64, his son Travis, 34, and their neighbor Roddie Bryan, 50.

Unknown to the jurors, America was entering its tenth year in the era of woke justice, an all but unremarked break from the leftist past. Historically, to highlight racial injustice, real or imagined, leftists had made a practice of romanticizing the guilty—Sacco and Vanzetti, Leonard Peltier, Mumia Abu-Jamal etc.—and proclaiming their innocence.

The 2012 arrest of George Zimmerman for the shooting death of Trayvon Martin signaled a dark turn in American history. With the tacit support of Barack Obama’s DoJ, activists now felt free to frame innocent citizens and proclaim their guilt. Mob-dictated and media-driven, woke justice would indict the not guilty, almost all of them white, in case after case for the next decade and more.

The year 2020 would see a major escalation in the woke reign of judicial terror. Appropriately perhaps, the troubles for Travis McMichael, a Coast Guard veteran turned escort boat pilot, began on January 1 of that fateful year.

“I need a police officer. I need to report a stolen pistol,” he told the 911 dispatcher late that morning. Living with his parents after breaking up with his son’s mother, Travis had left the door

of his truck unlocked for less than an hour in the driveway of his family's humble suburban home.

As was admitted in court, the neighborhood was "on edge." Other residents of Satilla Shores had been calling 911 to report break-ins and suspicious behavior. Among the callers was Travis's father Greg McMichael, a U.S. Navy veteran and retired chief investigator for the Glynn County district attorney's office.

"We got a lot of break-ins in this area out here, automobile break-ins," he calmly told a supervisor. He and Travis had discovered a "shady looking fellow" living under a nearby bridge. "We just wanted to make someone aware there was someone living under there," he told the dispatcher.

On February 11, 2020, at 7:27 p.m., a nervous Travis called 911 for a second time. "We've got a string of burglaries in the neighborhood, and I just caught a guy running into a house being built," he said. The house, in question, was just two doors down from his own.

When asked what the man looked like, Travis described him as "a black male, red shirt, white shorts." Upon seeing Travis in his truck, the man reached into his pocket, "acting like he was armed." With the police on the way, Travis wanted them to be "mindful of that."

The parallels to the 2012 Zimmerman case in neighboring Florida are stunning. A neighborhood watch captain in a crime-ridden community, Zimmerman called the dispatcher from his truck upon seeing Martin lurking in the shadows. Martin, too, feigned having a gun. Zimmerman also identified Martin as black only after being asked to describe him. In each case, that identification would be used to suggest racist intent.

As Travis sat in his truck across from the house awaiting the police, he was startled to see the man use a flashlight to navigate through the house. Travis, now joined by other neighbors, stayed on the line. "About four us over here now," he told the dispatcher. By the time police showed up, the man was gone.

Unknown to the jurors, other relevant people had called 911 to report on Arbery's troubled behavior. These included Arbery's own mother who confessed to being frightened of her own son. Much like Trayvon Martin, Arbery was caught in a downward emotional spiral that, in this case, turned a "young man with dreams" into a pathological thief and chronic troublemaker.

In December 2018, Arbery was diagnosed with Schizoaffective Disorder. He claimed to have had hallucinations that instructed him to hurt people. In March 2019, he told his probation officer he wasn't taking the prescribed meds because they upset his stomach. No one appeared to have followed up. In the final months of his life, Arbery engaged in reckless, obsessive shoplifting and, when caught, proved capable of resisting forcefully.

The jury heard none of this. In his pretrial rulings, Walmsley barred any testimony about Arbery's "bad acts," observing that the "character of the victim is neither relevant nor admissible

in a murder trial.” Citing medical privacy, he ruled out Arbery’s mental health records as well. True to form, Walmsley did allow photos of the Confederate flag emblem on Travis’s truck.

At the outset of his sentencing lecture, Judge Walmsley chose to engage in some “theatrics.” For one minute, he said nothing. He wanted the court to absorb just for a moment the angst of Arbery’s last five minutes. Upon reflection, said a somber Walmsley, “My thoughts kept coming back to the terror that must have been in the mind of the young man running through Satilla Shores.”

Based on the [audio](#) and [video evidence](#) and Arbery’s history, if anything ran through Arbery’s mind it was rage. Much like Trayvon Martin, anger appears to have driven him—anger at anyone representing authority, from his mother to the store clerks who restrained him to the frustrated Satilla Shores neighbors trying to protect their community. Just as the reckless Martin attacked Zimmerman, Arbery even more recklessly, suicidally even, would attack Travis McMichael.

At 1:08 p.m. on the fateful Sunday, February 23, 2020, Satilla Shores neighbor Matthew Albenze called 911 to alert the police to “a black guy, white t-shirt” rummaging through a house under construction. Albenze added, “And he’s been caught on camera a bunch at night. It’s kind of an ongoing thing.” Albenze was correct. Security camera videos captured Arbery entering the unfinished house five times between October 2019 and February 2020, including on that very day.

Working in his driveway, Greg saw this same black guy run by. He called out to Travis and said, “The guy is running down the street; let’s go.” The two climbed into Travis’s F-150, Travis behind the wheel, Greg initially in the passenger seat wedged in against his grandson’s car seat.

When the McMichaels pulled up parallel to the jogging Arbery, Greg yelled out to him, “Hey, buddy, we just want to talk to you. The police are on the way.” This was one of several attempts the McMichaels made to reason with him during this five-minute sequence.

For his part, Arbery just stared at the McMichaels blankly and then ran in the opposite direction. Upon learning of Arbery’s Schizoaffective Disorder, that look made sense to the father and son.

Without being asked, neighbor Roddie Bryan joined in the pursuit in his own truck. At one point, Arbery reached out and tried to open Bryan’s door, leaving a mark on the vehicle. Having moved to the truck bed to ease his recently replaced hip, Greg saw the encounter from a distance.

Travis stopped the vehicle to give Greg his cell phone to call 911. Now, Arbery was running *toward* their truck. Bryan, following behind Arbery, recorded the critical sequence on his cell phone while driving.

The viewer first sees Arbery from a distance running, his pace almost casual. Alarmed by Arbery’s earlier behavior, Travis had dismounted from the truck and was standing by the open left front door with a shotgun at his side. A boarding officer during his time in the Coast Guard, Travis was well trained in its use.

Greg, standing in the truck bed, holds the phone up against his ear with one hand, his revolver in the other hand. "I'm out here at Satilla Shores," Greg told the dispatcher. "There's a black male running down the street." When asked where at Satilla Shore, Greg replied: "I don't know what street we're on," then shouted at Arbery, "Stop! ... Watch that. Stop, damn it! Stop!" He then dropped the phone.

Approaching the truck from the rear, Arbery had seen Travis on the left side and headed around the right. For reasons unknown, Arbery chose not to escape into an unfenced green space on his right. Instead, he abruptly turned left at the front of the truck, headed towards Travis at full speed, and grabbed the barrel of his shotgun.

Caught off guard, Travis found himself engaged in a life and death struggle for the gun. One shot went off in front of the truck, and a second was fired after the men moved out of frame.

When the two moved back into view, both were still holding on to the barrel of the gun. At this point, Arbery let go of the gun with one hand to punch Travis in the head, the fifth or so time he struck him. Now, the third shot was fired. All three shots had hit Arbery, the last shot fatally.

As with the Zimmerman case, local authorities ruled the homicide justifiable, citing in this case Georgia's citizen arrest law. In both cases, under mounting pressure from national media and various race hustlers, the state attorney general's office—Republican in each case—took control of the case away from the locals.

On May 7, 2020, within 36 hours of taking over the case, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation swooped down on the McMichaels' home. With some 20 heavily armed officers backing him, and several news crews capturing his every move, GBI Agent Richard Dial arrested Greg and Travis and led them away in handcuffs while Travis's 3-year-old son looked on in horror.

Although both men were veterans with unblemished records, each was charged with felony murder and denied bond. The one advantage George Zimmerman had is that Black Lives Matter did not exist until the day after his July 2013 acquittal. When the McMichaels entered the portal of woke justice, BLM was in its ascendancy. The timing could not have been worse. The McMichaels faced their preliminary hearing on June 4, 2020, nine days and \$2 billion worth of damage after George Floyd's death. By this time, even GOP worthies were taking the knee.

At the hearing the McMichaels learned that on his fourth interview with the authorities, Roddie Bryan, likely hoping to avoid punishment, remembered that Travis had said "fucking nigger" over the dying Arbery. Testifying for the State, the GBI's Dial repeated those words in the televised hearing. Now, all hope was truly lost for the McMichaels.

In the show trial that began in November 2021, just months after Derek Chauvin's trial ended in Minneapolis, prosecutors chose not to enter Travis's alleged racial slur into evidence. They knew the McMichaels could prove Travis did not say it. The 911 dispatcher was still on the line when Travis allegedly used the slur. Prosecutors settled on "asshole" instead. In a curious parallel, the media insisted George Zimmerman had called Trayvon Martin a "coon." Prosecutors in that case settled on "thug."

Before handing down the sentence, the pious Walmsley offered the court a bromide so counter to common sense it is worthy of disbarment. “Assuming the worst in others we show our worst character,” said the judge. “Assuming the best in others is always the best action.”

If Walmsley even half-believed what he said, how did he possibly justify sentencing the McMichaels, father and son, to life without parole. Bryan got life as well. His cooperation earned him a “with parole,” woke justice at its most merciless.

I’accuse!

Jack Cashill is the author of *If I Had a Son: Race, Guns, and the Railroading of George Zimmerman*. Also referenced for this article is filmmaker Joel Gilbert’s deeply researched film and companion book, *The Trayvon Hoax*.