

"Get your knee off our neck!"

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Excerpt of eulogy delivered on June 4, 2020 at George Floyd's memorial by Reverend Al Sharpton in Minneapolis, MN.*

—Soon as I talked to the family and got the details and heard that among George's last words was, "I can't breathe," with a knee on his neck, I immediately thought about Eric Gardner. I did the eulogy at his funeral and I called his mother. I said, "I know we're not going out because of the Coronavirus but this is so much like Eric. If we could arrange some private way to go to Minneapolis, would you go?" And she said, "Reverend Al, I'm already packing. Let me know." Tyler Perry said, "I'll give the families, the plane, whatever y'all need, because this is wrong." Robert Smith said, "Don't worry about the funeral costs."

George Floyd's story has been the story of black folks because ever since 401 years ago, the reason we could never be who we wanted and dreamed to be is you kept your knee on our neck. We were smarter than the underfunded schools you...put us in, but you had your knee on our neck. We could run corporations and not hustle in the street, but you had your knee on our neck. We had creative skills, we could do whatever anybody else could do, but we couldn't get your knee off our neck. What happened to Floyd happens every day in this country, in education, in health services, and in every area of American life, it's time for us to stand up in George's name and say get your knee off our necks. That's the problem no matter who you are.

even blacks that broke through, you kept your knee on that neck. Michael Jordan won all of these championships, and you kept digging for mess because you got to put a knee on our neck. White housewives would run home to see a black woman on TV named Oprah Winfrey and you messed with her because you just can't take your knee off our neck. A man comes out of a single parent home, educates himself and rises up and becomes the President of the United States and you ask him for his birth certificate because you can't take your knee off our neck. The reason why we are marching all over the world is we were like George, we couldn't breathe, not because there was something wrong with our lungs, but that you wouldn't take your knee off our neck. We don't want no favors, just get up off of us and we can be and do whatever we can be. There have been protests all over the world. Some have looted and done other things and none of us in this family condones looting or violence. But the thing I want us to be real cognizant of is there's a difference



A mural depicting George Floyd appeared on a part of the former Berlin Wall in Mauerpark in Germany. His murder by police has awakened people worldwide to the issue of racism.

between those calling for peace and those calling for quiet. Some of y'all don't want peace, you just want quiet. You just want us to shut up and suffer in silence. The overwhelming majority of the people marching wasn't breaking windows, they were trying to break barriers. They weren't trying to steal nothing, they were trying to get back the justice you stole from us. Those that broke the law should pay for whatever law they broke, but so should the four policemen that caused this funeral today. We don't have a problem denouncing violence, Mr. Governor, we don't have a problem, Mr. Mayor, denouncing looting, but it seems like some in the criminal justice system have a problem looking at a tape and knowing there's probable cause and it takes a long time for you to go and do what you see that you need to do.

But I'm more hopeful today than ever. Why? Well, let me go back. Reverend Jackson always taught me, stay on your text, go back to my text, Ecclesiastes. There is a time and a season, and when I looked this time, and saw marches where in some cases young whites outnumbered the blacks marching, I know that it's a different time and a different season. When I look and saw people in Germany marching for George Floyd, it's a different time and a different season. When they went in front of the Parliament in London, England and said it's a different time and a different season, I come to tell you America, this is the time of building with accountability in the criminal justice system.



Graffiti in the Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone of Seattle, Washington

BLACK LIVES

The Morning After, San Antonio's response

By Maria Salazar

EDITOR'S NOTE: Local activist and attorney, María Salazar documented San Antonio's protest and march on May 30th co-sponsored by The Autonomous Brown Berets De San Anto. She shares her facebook post with La Voz readers. The protests continue.

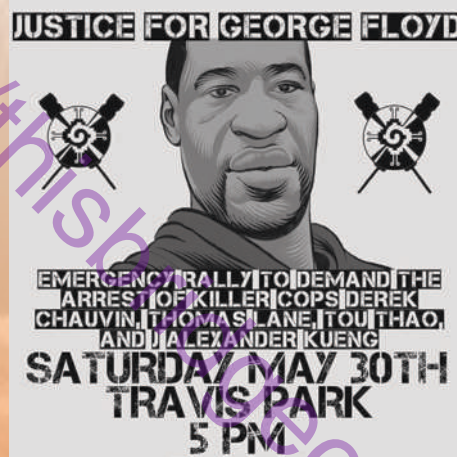
Let me just say, I grieve for the family of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmad Arbury. All who were recently murdered. With Mr. Floyd, I see a lynching. With Ms Taylor, I see recklessness. With Mr. Arbury, I see vigilantism. With all of it, I see contempt for Black lives. I am angry that we are so far away from the promised land. And I am sad that my generation is experiencing a pivot from building on an American Dream to living an American nightmare of rot, racism—and all with the backdrop of a plague. I write these words to document what I experienced on Saturday, May 30th, 2020 at Travis Park, San Antonio. I caught wind of a peaceful vigil & march for George Floyd. I am angry at the policeman and the police force that murdered George Floyd. There is so much wrong with what we all saw. And I say to police, you do not have that power to take a life. Not in my name. And never with my vote. So when I saw the vigil, I wanted to go but wondered how to safely participate with COVID19 still very much a threat to our individual & collective health. I also wondered how I could help ensure that this vigil be peaceful.

A few attorneys and I talked & offered our insight & assistance to the organizers. We made suggestions to the organizers on what to reinforce with the participants. They had this information and intuition already, but with a rapidly growing attendance list, I think they appreciated our suggestions. We managed to convene a meeting with the Police Chief at Travis Church. The Pastor offered to open their doors for us to converse. It was productive. I think this meeting helped to keep this gathering as a planned peaceful protest. This was all very informal but I can tell you that all were committed to keeping everyone safe.

The event began at 5 pm. And the march began at about 5:30 pm. From Travis Park, folks marched through town up to Police Headquarters. The protest ended there. The whole event ended at about 7pm. Anything beyond that was not a part of the event at Travis Park.

I was overwhelmed to see about 5000 people gather for this event. I saw folks I know as teachers, artists, neighborhood association presidents, drivers & students. I saw folks of all ages & from all over this City, yes, folks from the Dominion to folks from Roosevelt.

Lots of young people were out, I was especially struck by that.



Poster by The Autonomous Brown Berets De San Anto

A young, Black woman, between 15 to 18 carried a sign that read, "Am I next?"...

I wanted to say, "no child, you are not. You have your whole life ahead of you"

But I couldn't say that, because I wondered too. This broke my heart.

Before leaving the police headquarters, a parking attendant at the lot on San Saba & Nueva asked me how things were at the park. He went on to tell me that this was the biggest protest he had ever seen in SA & that it was loud but peaceful. I then returned to Travis Park where folks were still hanging out.

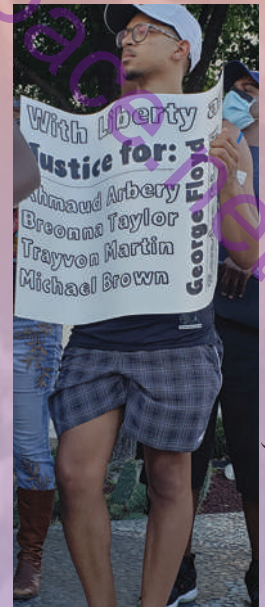
Some colleagues were now at the Alamo to observe what was unfolding. We all confirmed with one another that the gathering was officially over & the organizers had announced this as such. So whatever was happening at the Alamo was on impulse. We all agreed this was a dangerous situation to have a crowd mingle without organization or objectives while armed counter-protestors agitated. I know folks were telling people to leave for their safety.

We know now there was vandalism including the smashed doors of Travis Church. I know some were arrested but I don't know if these folks are from San Antonio. I am angry that these actions diminish the message of what we desperately need to do which is to mourn the death of George Floyd, to demand justice, to end police brutality & to respect Black Lives.

It's a chaotic world with an incompetent president tweeting violent madness. But there are good people desperately trying to make a difference. I know what I saw yesterday presented some hope but it is going to be so much work to have a better world materialize...

Some of my doubt was lessened late this morning after I read that volunteer citizens were downtown scrubbing off graffiti & cleaning up the mess left by vandals. We are in the middle of a pandemic and it's the morning after mayhem & my City reminded me to pick up the broken pieces so we can build. We must build.

My thoughts drift back to that young lady. I cannot let the generation behind me wonder if she is next. We are lost if we cannot give our youth hope...



San Antonio protest photo by Gloria A. Ramirez

ES MATTER