

June 11, 2020

To the New Life SDA Church Family:

During the past several weeks, it has been difficult to imagine a more tumultuous time in our country in recent years. As I listened to the retelling of Breonna Taylor's shooting at the hands of police, it was inconceivable. My mind continues to ask if the officers couldn't have found a better way without needing a law or statute to dictate the process. Shouldn't the desire to serve and protect have redirected them toward handling the situation better? Having had no video or audio of the event, it left open the possibility that there were factors that I hadn't taken into account to fully judge the situation.

Weeks prior to Ms. Taylor's death, the video of Ahmaud Arbery's death at the hands of a former officer and his son surfaced and it was akin to the chasing down of a dangerous animal that had accidentally gotten loose and engaged in some sort of carnage. To watch the full video (not the abbreviated one that was shown on the news) with the crimson mist of Ahmaud's blood being sprayed into the air as a result of the shotgun blast to his torso is a memory that I wish could be erased from my internal hard drive. To see the chase and know that this was more than an overly concerned citizen protecting his neighborhood, somehow I still harbored a sliver of possibility that when Ahmaud jogged around to the passenger side of the pickup truck and then to its front that maybe something was missed that the video didn't declare.

This search for objectivity has served as a false refuge for me to hide away the pain of the obvious. There are other retentions that I wish could be rid from my memory: Emmet Till's swollen face appearing like a balloon with cartoon-looking appendages attached and a tuft of hair at the top; the video of Rodney King being beaten over and over again long after he couldn't possibly be thought a threat any longer. When I viewed the video of George Floyd's death, all search for objectivity ceased.

From the outset of the video footage, when Derek Chauvin's knee was in his neck and George Floyd still had the ability to talk, all I could repeat was, "Wow!" in disbelief that anyone would think to do this. Minutes rolled by and my initial shock transformed into personal trauma. When George Floyd stopped talking, when it was apparent that he was unconscious at best, and when the former officer didn't let up, I was immediately disappointed in myself for trying to find a needle-in-the-haystack reason that any of the victims might have been able to avoid their demise. Granted, I already knew this to be the case, but a version of naïveté always wants to believe that humanity wouldn't stoop this low in the year 2020. No more.

We should all be angered because of these killings at the hands of those who are paid by our tax dollars to protect and serve. We should not attempt to sanitize these events; they should be seen for what they are. We should protest the injustices. We should not loot or harm others in the process. We should declare that "Black lives matter." We should not neutralize the BLM movement by declaring that "All lives matter," as true as it is. We should work for the upliftment of people of color. We should not go back to life as usual.

We should be who Jesus was when he encountered people that were disenfranchised by those in power. He cared and He acted. We at New Life stand in solidarity with all who seek to change injustice and work to heal our communities.



Dr. Troy Levy,
Pastor