

# Voices: Am I worth fighting for?

May 8, 2020

I went for a bike ride today. Aside from what seemed to me like gale-force winds, it was a pretty standard ride that took me down the streets of an affluent North Dallas neighborhood and spilled out into scenic White Rock Lake.

My guard always is up as I travel these roads, because I know how easily a nervous finger can transform me from human to hashtag, how quickly a particularly jumpy homeowner can displace me from this earth and onto an increasingly long list of Black bodies lost to “misunderstandings” and “tragic accidents.”

So, I follow the rules. I do not let my eyes linger too long on any of the sprawling properties or the magnificent homes at their center, no matter how much I would like to admire their beauty.

I do not cover my face. I try to look as friendly as possible. I am small and lighter-skinned; so, I do not look especially threatening in the first place.

I never let my guard down on this relaxing, scenic bike ride through what I consider to be the most beautiful part of Dallas.

Yet as I came over a hill, I saw a parked truck with the tailgate down, father and son standing behind, rummaging through their tools. An innocuous enough sight, but it was all it took to send a stark reminder shooting through my brain: One day, all that might not matter in the slightest.

I can do everything right and still find myself splayed out on the hard ground surrounded by a chalk outline.

# What's on my mind

I am reminded of how easily I could be [Ahmaud Arbery](#). As though I could ever forget.

I am reminded of a month ago when my neighbors called the police on me for hammocking at my own apartment complex because I “didn’t belong here.”

I am reminded of being followed into the parking lot of the church where I work by a squad car during a youth lock-in.

I am reminded of being pulled over in high school to have my car searched because I matched a description.

I am reminded of relatives thrown in the back of patrol cars without cause, friends detained on the sidewalk on the way to work without any real explanation, brothers and sisters I never will get to meet because they were not as lucky as the rest of us when our skin shined too brightly.

I am reminded of all the times I was not given the benefit of the doubt or a voice, even as an innocent child.

In the wake of this heart-rending reminder, this latest in a long line stretching back further than I can see, I have but one question for my white brothers and sisters in the church: How much value do I have to you?

## What is my value?

We fight so fiercely and shout so loudly for the unborn, for religious liberty, for democracy, for right doctrine, yet when black bodies lie rotting in the streets of our cities, so many in the church fall silent, or worse.

It terrifies me to think of how many people I grew up with, who watched me

grow up, who have gone to school with me, worked with me, worshipped with me, served and laughed and cried with me, how many of them would rush to the defense of my killer if one day I wound up in the wrong place at the wrong time, if I stumbled across a place someone else decided I did not belong.

So, I ask again: How much do you value me?

How much did you value Ahmaud Arbery, or Botham Jean, or Atatiana Jefferson, or Tamir Rice, or dozens of other God-imaging smiles turned tombstones?

Am I or any of them worth fighting for? Does God desire justice or mercy or grace for us? Do we have a right to life?

I think I know what answers you would give me. I am significantly less certain of what answers truly lie in your heart.

## **My value in God's sight**

What I do know is what answers Jesus would give, and I know we should be striving to look like him. I know Jesus came to “set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18), because I serve a God who fights for the downtrodden and vulnerable. I serve the God of the oppressed.

Because make no mistake, a people living in fear of a system that can grind them underfoot without consequence or reproach is oppressed. A people who can watch one of their own be hunted down and slaughtered like an animal in broad daylight—a modern-day lynching, make no mistake about it—is oppressed.

There is no middle ground or neutrality in the face of oppression. Not to choose a side is to give the advantage to the oppressor, to be complicit in his atrocities. So long as the church stays silent, she has the blood of Black

men and women on her hands.

I will not be silent. I will declare to the world what value we have until my voice is gone. I and Ahmaud have infinite value in the eyes of God, because we have been made in his marvelous image.

Do you see God's image in us, or do you see a threat?

Do you see me?

Do you value me?

Am I worth fighting for?

*Trent Richardson is a student at Dallas Theological Seminary and the student ministry intern at Valley Ranch Baptist Church. The views expressed are those solely of the author.*

*EDITOR'S NOTE: While the views expressed are those of the author, I personally stand with him in asking his questions.*