



The 2:23 Foundation

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Today, we find it almost unbearable to have to release a statement about a tweet that called into question the efficacy and integrity of our work. Yesterday, we spent an entire day in Brunswick, Georgia, grieving with a father, his siblings, and other family members and we organized a memorial walk with them to let the community know that there is much more work to be done to pursue justice for Ahmaud Arbery.

One day after such an emotional event, a prominent civil rights attorney decided he would send a social media message that disparaged our name and the name of members of Ahmaud Arbery's family. Using hashtags like [#blackjudas](#) his post seemed to imply that our organization does not have the support of Ahmaud Arbery's family. And that couldn't be any further from the truth.

Marcus Arbery, Sr. is Ahmaud Arbery's father. As three black men who are fathers, we are shocked that another black man, and civil rights lawyer, would continually trot out this narrative of black fathers and absenteeism when asserting that our organization does not have the "family's" support. It's disingenuous at best, when a majority of Ahmaud's family members live in Brunswick and fully support our work.

From the beginning, we have been fully supportive of Wanda Cooper-Jones. Our team has gone to great lengths to ensure she was aware of the work we were doing to help pursue justice for Ahmaud.

We have addressed this on a previous occasion and are disheartened that we have to once again present factual evidence about the integrity of our work. But the work is too important for uninformed, disingenuous social media tweets to continue to disrupt our local activism.

Here are a few important details:

1. In spring last year, a fund was established through our team's efforts and raised \$2 million dollars through GoFundMe that his mother (according to the GoFundMe narrative) was the sole beneficiary for. None of our team members had any access to the money and when we closed the campaign, every dime went to her.
2. We did indeed reserve the I RUN WITH MAUD trademark after one of our team members uttered the phrase and it became a global movement. But we were very clear to the family that we had reserved it for them. And we held true to that promise when we assigned the I RUN WITH MAUD trademark to Mrs. Cooper-Jones and Mr. Marcus Arbery since they both have survivorship rights to his likeness and name. Again, we paid out of pocket to secure and assign that trademark to the parents and did not use it for any commercial use the entire time.
3. As with many other organizations, the 2:23 Foundation was birth out of tragedy, but its present and future work are dedicated to justice, advocacy, and helping youth thrive who might not otherwise have a chance. We continue to honor Ahmaud because he is the catalyst and purpose behind our work, but we also are intentional about doing preventative work to help prevent tragedies like this in the future. There are several other organizations that are doing the same (i.e. orgs that were prompted to action because of this tragedy; see Just Georgia-who is using his name and likeness with impunity).
4. In the spring, our team attended every event locally with his mother. Coach Vaughn and Mr. Frazier were there with her when she attended rallies and events in the area to honor her son. She took pictures with the team, thanked us profusely for our support, and thanked us fro the work we were doing to pursue justice for our son. One of our team members, Demetris, is Maud's first cousin. He is indeed family. So we were just as surprised when we read that we didn't have the family's support.

5. Demetris' uncle, Marcus Arbery, Sr. is Ahmaud's father. He still lives in Brunswick. He's been around and involved in his son's life. He attends every event that we host. He has been at every bike ride we have participated in monthly. He and the Arbery family in Brunswick have given us plaques for the work that we are doing. Mr. Arbery has publically stated that he supports our organization. He was in attendance and spoke passionately at memorial for his son on the 23rd in Brunswick. He promoted that event personally and publicly. His Mrs. Cooper-Jones no longer lives in Brunswick and has no desire to return (which we understand and empathize with the real pain she feels), but national coverage rarely mentions his father (aunts, and other family members locally) and their presence and passion to see justice locally every month. They continue to show up and demand accountability. We have their support and we need to be clear on that.

Finally, not one of our team members has profited personally from any of the work we are doing. Every dollar from this virtual run is going toward scholarships for black and brown people in our community. It will be a managed, transparent fund that will include Mr. Arbery as a key decision maker on who receives the disbursements of those funds. As with the trademark, it has always been our hope that Mrs. Cooper-Jones would also be involved in the selection process of these students who are future justice fighters. And we are still hoping that will be the case. But we wanted to be very clear that every person on our team is volunteering their time without personal gain. We have no operating budget at all. That's what you do when you care deeply about a cause. You do the work. Period. No other motivation but that.

Again, we have addressed this before. And it's tiring to continue to have this prominent attorney parachute in and out of our city and attempt to dictate the good work being doing by Brunswick's citizens. Locally, the people know the truth. And we hope soon that this matter will be resolved amicably for the sake of the future work and to properly honor a young man whose memory we all are trying to keep alive.