



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 26, 2020

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As elections approach, death of Ahmaud Arbery will be subject of national Zoom panel May 31

- WHO:** National guest panelists join “Cross and Lynching Tree” preacher, the Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III of Chicago
- WHAT:** A public, online panel discussion of race relations in the U.S.
- WHEN:** Sunday, **May 31**, from **6:00 to 7:00 p.m.** EDT
- WHERE:** Via the webinar platform Zoom. Register [here](#)
- WHY:** To explore how the Christian church can be actively involved in dismantling racism.
- VISUALS:** Excerpts from the video “The Cross and the Lynching Tree: A Requiem for Ahmaud Arbery” – [now available on YouTube](#) – will be shown

REPORTERS AND EDITORS: With racial tensions escalating as U.S. presidential conventions approach, a prominent pastor who has described the shooting death of jogger Ahmaud Arbery as a lynching will join panelists to discuss race relations in a national online conversation on Sunday, May 31.

The event, to be held on the webinar platform Zoom at 6p.m. EDT (5 p.m. CDT), will include a 22-minute [cinematic sermon](#), “The Cross and the Lynching Tree: A Requiem for Ahmaud Arbery.” Its preacher, the Rev. Otis Moss III, senior pastor of Chicago’s Trinity United Church of Christ will be one of the panelists. Media and the public can attend the event by registering at [this link](#).

The event is sponsored by Justice and Local Church Ministries of the United Church of Christ. Its leader, Associate General Minister Traci Blackmon, says she hopes the event will stimulate discussion and action on urgent issues. “COVID-19 has laid bare the systemic inequities present in this country,” Blackmon said. “Vigilante justice is rampant, as armed white rebel groups defy state orders by marching on state capitols. Undocumented residents are ignored in all stimulus packages. COVID infection rates rise among the most disenfranchised among us. White vigilante justice goes unchecked until communities demand attention. The state-sanctioned murder of Ahmaud Arbery offers a new and important opportunity for conversation.”

Moss’s video, first shown during Trinity’s online worship services May 17, dramatically connects the Feb. 23 killing of Arbery, who was jogging in Brunswick, Ga., to the history of oppression of African Americans. (Its title echoes that of a 2011 book by Union Theological Seminary Professor James H. Cone.) Moss will be joined on the panel by another Chicago pastor, the Rev. Julian DeShazier; national Women’s March leader Linda Sarsour of Brooklyn, N.Y.; and the Rev. Naomi Washington Leapheart, of the mayor’s Faith-Based Affairs office in Philadelphia. The Rev. Velda Love of the national UCC staff will moderate. Their full titles are below.

PANELISTS ON MAY 31 (photos available upon request):

- The Rev. Dr. **Otis Moss III**, Senior Pastor, Trinity UCC, Chicago
- The Rev. **Julian DeShazier**, Senior Pastor, University Church, UCC, Chicago, and Emmy Award-winning musician
- **Linda Sarsour**, Co-founder and Executive Director, MPower Change, Brooklyn, N.Y.; Co-Chair, national Women's March (2017 and 2019), Day Without a Woman (2017)
- The Rev. **Naomi Washington Leapheart**, Philadelphia; Director, Faith-Based and Interfaith Affairs, City of Philadelphia
- The Rev. Dr. **Velda Love** (moderator of panel), Minister for Racial Justice, UCC Justice and Local Church Ministries, Cleveland

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The [United Church of Christ](#), a mainline Protestant denomination, has more than 825,000 members and over 4,800 congregations nationwide. Headquartered in Cleveland, it is a church of many firsts: the first mainline denomination to ordain a woman, the first to ordain an openly gay man and the first predominantly white denomination to ordain an African American. More on the UCC's justice ministries is [here](#).