

Racist murderer in Wisconsin found not guilty on all charges

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Kyle Rittenhouse, who fatally shot two racial justice protesters and wounded a third last year, was found not guilty on all charges by a US jury on Friday [File: Sean Krajacic/Pool via Reuters]?

Kenosha, November 19 (RHC)-- Kyle Rittenhouse's acquittal for the fatal shootings of racial justice protesters last year has spurred powerful reactions from activists and lawmakers across the United States, highlighting the political symbolism of the trial and deep-seated divisions in the country.

Civil rights groups and Democratic activists decried the verdict on Friday as an example of white privilege and a miscarriage of justice, while Rittenhouse's supporters, including associates of former President Donald Trump, celebrated it as a victory.

Rittenhouse fatally shot two protesters and injured a third during chaotic demonstrations against police brutality in Kenosha, Wisconsin, after a white officer shot a Black man, Jacob Blake, in the back, paralyzing him.

But in a trial that captured the nation's attention since early November, Rittenhouse and his lawyers argued that he acted in self-defence and only used his AR-style rifle to protect himself from demonstrators who were attacking him. Prosecutors had accused the teenager of provoking the deadly violence on August 25, 2020.

"You know damn well that if Kyle Rittenhouse were Black he would have been found guilty in a heartbeat – or shot dead by cops on the scene," former Democratic presidential candidate Julian Castro wrote on Twitter.

"If you need a stunning example of white privilege, please see Kyle Rittenhouse's verdict," wrote Andy Levin, a Democratic congressman.

President Joe Biden, who said earlier on Friday that he did not watch the trial, suggested that he accepted the verdict. "While the verdict in Kenosha will leave many Americans feeling angry and concerned, myself included, we must acknowledge that the jury has spoken," Biden said in a statement.

The family of Anthony Huber, one of the protesters fatally shot by Rittenhouse, said they were heartbroken by the jury's decision. "It sends the unacceptable message that armed civilians can show up in any town, incite violence, and then use the danger they have created to justify shooting people in the street," the family said in a statement, as reported by several U.S. media outlets.

"We hope that decent people will join us in forcefully rejecting that message and demanding more of our laws, our officials, and our justice system."

Kimberley Motley and Milo Schwab, attorneys for Gaige Grosskreutz, who was wounded in the shooting, and the estate of Joseph Rosenbaum, who was fatally shot by Rittenhouse, vowed to continue the push for accountability. "That night in Kenosha, Gaige Grosskreutz, Anthony Huber, and many others acted heroically," the lawyers said in a statement.

"They did not seek violence, but to end violence. What we need right now is justice, not more violence. While today's verdict may mean justice delayed, it will not mean justice denied. We are committed to uncovering the truth of that night and holding those responsible to account."

Bernice King, racial justice activist and daughter of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, tweeted a photo of a sign that reads: "The system isn't broken. It was built this way."

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