

Fascist Wisconsin shooter Rittenhouse posed with Proud Boys and waved “white power” sign

Kevin Reed
14 January 2021

On Wednesday, the Kenosha County District Attorney’s office filed a motion to modify the bond conditions for Kyle Rittenhouse, the 18-year-old fascist vigilante who shot dead two anti-police violence protesters and wounded another in the Wisconsin city on August 25.

The motion was submitted along with photos of Rittenhouse posing with members of the fascist Proud Boys organization and flashing a “white power” hand gesture just 90 minutes after he pleaded not guilty to multiple felony and misdemeanor charges in a remote court hearing on January 5.

According to the Kenosha DA’s filing, Rittenhouse “along with his mother Wendy Rittenhouse and several other adults, arrived at Pudgy’s Pub, a bar located at 7800 Washington Avenue in Mount Pleasant, Wisconsin.” Local enforcement was notified of the defendant’s presence at the bar and “surveillance video and still footage of the visit was later retrieved and reviewed,” the motion says.

The brief goes on, “Within a few minutes of entering the bar, the defendant was loudly serenaded by 5 of the adult males in his group with the song ‘Proud of Your Boy,’ which is an obscure song written for the 1992 Disney film ‘Aladdin.’ The violent white supremacist group called the ‘Proud Boys’ was named after this song, which is sung by its members as an anthem and for self-identification.”

Rittenhouse—who was wearing a t-shirt that read “Free as F*ck”—posed for photos with two men in the group and “the defendant and the other adult males flashed the ‘OK’ sign, which has been co-opted as a sign of ‘white power’ by known white supremacist groups.” Rittenhouse and his mother remained at the

bar for 90 minutes with the unnamed individuals and was served and consumed “a total of 3 beers.”

The Kenosha DA’s motion requests that Rittenhouse’s bond conditions be modified, requiring the defendant to be “prohibited from possessing or consuming alcohol,” to be prohibited from being “present in any establishment where alcohol is served,” to be prohibited from “making any public display of any ‘white power’ or ‘white supremacy’ signs, symbols or hand gestures” and that the defendant shall have no “contact with any known militia members or known members of any violent white power/white supremacist groups or organizations, including but not limited to the group identified as the ‘Proud Boys.’”

The motion concludes with a warning that Rittenhouse’s “continued association with members of a group that prides itself on violence, and the use of their symbols, raises the significant possibility of future harm,” and “this association may serve to intimidate potential witnesses, who may be unwilling to testify in this case because they may fear that the defendant’s associates with harm them or their families.”

On August 25—in the midst of nightly protests in Kenosha following the police shooting of 29-year-old African American man and father of six, Jacob Blake, two days earlier—Rittenhouse traveled to Wisconsin from his home in Antioch, Illinois. Rittenhouse volunteered, based on a Facebook appeal for a “Call to Arms” by a group of armed vigilantes known as the Kenosha Militia, to guard a car dealership.

Seventeen years old at the time and armed with a Smith & Wesson AR-15 style assault rifle, Rittenhouse fired his weapon multiple times during a series of confrontations with protesters that evening.

The shootings resulted in the death of Joseph Rosenbaum, 36, of Kenosha, and Anthony Huber, 26, of Silver Lake—both of whom were unarmed—and the serious injury of Gaige Grosskreutz, 26, of West Allis. A subsequent autopsy of Rosenbaum showed that he had been struck five times, “a gunshot wound to the right groin which fractured his pelvis, a gunshot wound to the back which perforated his right lung and liver, a gunshot wound to the left hand, a superficial gunshot wound to his lateral left thigh, and a graze gunshot wound to the right side of his forehead.”

Following the shootings, Rittenhouse was permitted by police to leave Kenosha and travel back to his hometown in Illinois, where he then turned himself in to the Antioch police. The Kenosha County Court issued a criminal complaint on August 27, charging Rittenhouse with five felonies, including first degree reckless homicide, first degree intentional homicide, first degree recklessly endangering safety, attempted first degree intentional homicide and one misdemeanor for possession of a dangerous weapon by a person under 18. On December 29, prosecutors added an additional charge of violating curfew on the night of the shootings.

Watch David North’s remarks commemorating 25 years of the *World Socialist Web Site* and donate today.

Rittenhouse had been held in the Lake County juvenile detention center until he was extradited on October 30 by the State of Illinois to Wisconsin to face the charges in Kenosha County. He was released from the Kenosha County jail on November 20 on \$2 million bond—raised by lawyer Lin Wood, a QAnon conspiracy theory fascist and attorney for President Trump, and MyPillow CEO Mike Lindell, a wealthy Trump backer—pending his arraignment and trial.

Over the past four months, Rittenhouse has been adopted as the poster child of the extreme right and held up as an example of “self-defense,” the basis of the legal strategy of his defense team. The coup attempt at the US Capitol in Washington D.C. on January 6 certainly played a role in the moves by the Kenosha District Attorney to tighten the bond conditions on Rittenhouse.

The January 13 motion includes a lengthy section on the nature of the Proud Boys organization as well as the politics behind the “OK” hand gesture.

“The Proud Boys is a national, male-only

organization operating in the United States and Canada that has been designated as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League,” the brief explains. The group was founded in 2016 by Vice co-founder Gavin McInnes and has advocated violence as “a really effective way to solve problems” and “we don’t start fights ... but we will finish them.”

Members of the Proud Boys have been connected with the breach of the US Capitol and “at least one of their leaders has been arrested and charged in connection with the event.” The brief states that the Proud Boys organization has branches and chapters throughout North America and membership in the organization “requires a four step, gang-like initiation process.” The steps include taking a loyalty oath that states, “I’m a proud Western chauvinist, I refuse to apologize for creating the modern world,” getting a Proud Boys tattoo and committing an act of violence “for the cause.”

The “OK” hand gesture has been co-opted by white supremacists as their symbol of white supremacy/white power. In 2017, users of the message board 4chan began a hoax called “Operation O-KKK” to see if they could trick the public into believing the gesture was a symbol of white power. However, by 2019, the gesture was being used widely by “Neo-Nazis, Ku Klux Klansmen, and other white nationalists...in public to signal their presence and to spot potential sympathizers and recruits.”



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact