

First day of jury deliberations in trial of fascist shooter Rittenhouse ends without a verdict

Kevin Reed
17 November 2021

The jury in the murder trial of fascist shooter Kyle Rittenhouse deliberated on Tuesday without reaching a verdict. The jury will return and continue deliberations until a verdict is reached or until they are deadlocked with neither side able to prevail.

The 12-person anonymous jury retired for deliberations at 9:15 in the morning following an unusual and bizarre spectacle presided over by Kenosha County Circuit Judge Bruce Schroeder. The judge, who has barely concealed his sympathy for Rittenhouse throughout the trial, requested that Rittenhouse draw from a raffle tumbler the numbers of the six jurors who were to be dismissed from the original pool of 18 who sat up to this point in the trial.

While a process for randomly selecting the six jurors to be dismissed is standard procedure, having the defendant—in this case, Rittenhouse—draw the names is by all accounts unprecedented, having more in common with a beauty pageant or a reality television show than a solemn criminal proceeding in a court of law.

Rittenhouse was 17 years old on August 25, 2020, when he shot and killed two men, maimed a third man and nearly struck a fourth man in Kenosha during protests against police violence that had been under way for three nights. The brutal shooting of Jacob Blake, a 29-year-old black man, seven times by a white Kenosha police officer was the trigger for the protests across the city that lasted for 10 days.

The teenage shooter and former police youth cadet traveled to Kenosha from his hometown of Antioch, Illinois, to join an armed and right-wing militia that had appointed itself to the task of “protecting property” during the demonstrations.

Rittenhouse shot and killed Joseph Rosenbaum, 36, and Anthony Huber, 26, and seriously injured Gaige Grosskreutz, 27. Rittenhouse is also charged with

endangering the life of reporter Richie McGinnis when he fired his rifle at Rosenbaum.

If convicted on the intentional and unintentional murder charges, Rittenhouse, who is now 18, faces a maximum sentence of life in prison. At their lunch break, the jurors, who were reported to be seven women and five men, requested additional printed copies of the jury instructions that were provided by Judge Schroeder prior to the presentation of closing arguments by the prosecution and the defense on Monday.

Throughout the trial, Rittenhouse and his lawyers have not challenged the prosecution’s claim that he shot and killed or injured his victims. Instead, the legal defense has been based on the claim that Rittenhouse—who had previously expressed a desire to shoot people he claimed were shoplifting—was defending himself against a “violent mob” and people who were “rioters” and “looters.”

Rittenhouse’s attorney Mark Richards was permitted by Judge Schroeder during his closing argument to express open hostility to the Kenosha anti-police violence protesters and essentially to suggest that Rittenhouse’s victims deserved to die because they were lawless left-wing radicals.

This contrasts with the judge’s persistent blocking of prosecution from entering into evidence any of the right-wing political affiliations of the shooter Rittenhouse, including his joining with fascist Proud Boys from Wisconsin and flashing white-power hand signals on the day of his release on bail with money raised by the very same political forces.

Prosecutor and Assistant District Attorney Thomas Binger, despite the restrictions placed upon him by Judge Schroeder, characterized Rittenhouse in his closing argument as a “wannabe soldier” who set into motion the deadly chain of events in Kenosha by bringing a rifle to a

protest that it was illegal for him to possess in the first place and pointing it at protesters.

Judge Schroeder has thus far declined to rule on the defense motion for a mistrial with prejudice. The judge is apparently waiting until after the jury returns a verdict before ruling on whether the charges should be thrown out, meaning that if a jury returns a guilty verdict, it is still in danger of being overturned by the judge. If the judge were to grant this motion it would mean that the trial would be declared ended and the prosecution would not be able to refile charges against Rittenhouse.

While the jury deliberated, outside the courthouse protesters demanding justice for the victims of the shooter confronted right-wing supporters of Rittenhouse. Among those supporting the defendant were the infamous McCloskeys from St. Louis, who made national headlines for pointing firearms at demonstrators during the George Floyd protests in their neighborhood in June 2020.

Mark McCloskey, who was pardoned by Missouri Governor Mike Parson on August 3, made a statement across the street from the courthouse advocating for vigilante violence against demonstrators, saying that he was there to support people who are “exercising their Second Amendment rights to defend themselves particularly when the government abdicates that duty and fails to protect their citizens.”

McCloskey, who announced his Republican candidacy on Fox News “Tucker Carlson Tonight” last May, is running for US Senate in Missouri to replace Senator Roy Blunt, who decided not to run for reelection in the aftermath of the 2020 US elections.

The Republican Party has openly embraced Rittenhouse, aiming to elevate him to the status of a national savior. JR Majewski, a 2022 Republican candidate for US Congress in Ohio, posted an image of Rittenhouse’s face photoshopped onto the body of Marvel Comics superhero “Captain America.”



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact