

Donald Trump and fascist right celebrate acquittal of Kyle Rittenhouse

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Former US president and January 6 coup-plotter Donald Trump celebrated on Friday the acquittal of the fascist teenage shooter Kyle Rittenhouse by a jury in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

In a statement released after Rittenhouse was found not guilty on all counts, Trump said, “Congratulations to Kyle Rittenhouse for being found INNOCENT of all charges. It’s called being found NOT GUILTY—And by the way, if that’s not self defense, nothing is!”

After more than three days of deliberations, the jury ruled unanimously in favor of Rittenhouse on the five charges remaining against him in a trial that was rigged by presiding Kenosha County Circuit Judge Bruce Schroeder, who made no secret of his sympathies for the shooter and his right-wing political supporters.

On August 25, 2020, Rittenhouse fired his AR-15-style assault rifle at the protesters who had been demonstrating against police violence in Kenosha for three days. He shot and killed two men, Joseph Rosenbaum, 36, and Anthony Huber, 26, and seriously injured Gaige Grosskreutz, 27.

While Judge Schroeder blocked any presentation or review by the prosecution of the political ideology and motivation behind Rittenhouse’s decision to volunteer with a right-wing militia group and then pull the trigger eight times against protesters, the jury was also instructed to accept the bogus “self-defense” narrative of the shooter’s legal team.

Immediately following the travesty of justice in Kenosha—which emboldens further armed attacks on protesters and left-wing and socialist political activity—right-wing and fascist figures such as Trump have hailed the verdict as a vindication of their assault on the movement against police brutality and violence that swept across the US and internationally in the summer and fall of 2020.

Later Friday, Trump gave an audio interview with Laura Ingraham on Fox News and said that the case against Rittenhouse should never have been brought and “somebody should have ended it earlier ... I thought the judge could have ended the case early.”

Trump went on to tell Ingraham that the verdict vindicated the use of federal police to repress the anti-police violence demonstrations, “I helped to save Kenosha, as you know. I went there and I sent in a lot of people, a lot of people ... And if you look at Minneapolis, that place was burning down, and we really got it stopped. I would have liked to have done it a lot earlier, but we finally we got it done. We saved it and we saved Kenosha very early.”

The Rittenhouse verdict has also become a rallying point for those intimately involved with Trump in the conspiracy to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election through a mob riot and assault on the US Capitol on January 6.

For example, Republican US Representative Madison Cawthorn of North Carolina said, “Kyle Rittenhouse is not guilty, my friends. You have a right to defend yourself, so be armed, be dangerous and be moral.” Cawthorn was intimately involved in the planning of the right-wing assault on the Capitol with Trump and his inner circle of conspirators and spoke at the rally near the White House on January 6.

Following the offer made by Florida Republican Representative Matt Gaetz to Kyle Rittenhouse the day before, Cawthorn also said that Rittenhouse was welcome to take an internship in his office as did the fascist Republican Representative Paul Gosar from Arizona. On Wednesday, Gosar was censured by the House of Representative for his public threat of violence against Democratic Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

Trump co-conspirator and QAnon supporter, Republican Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, tweeted, “Kyle Rittenhouse ACQUITTED on ALL charges! May Kyle and his family now live in peace. Those who help, protect, and defend are the good guys. Kyle is one of good ones.”

Although Judge Schroeder blocked any discussion of the political context of Rittenhouse’s shooting rampage, it was precisely the open incitement of right-wing vigilante violence by then-President Trump and others against the protests that erupted following the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officer Derrick Chauvin on May 25, 2020, that created the environment for the events in Kenosha.

Throughout the protests against racism and police violence, which involved as many as 20 million people and took place in more than 2,000 towns and cities across the US, the Trump administration used federal police forces to attack the demonstrations. In numerous speeches, Trump labeled the protesters “domestic terrorists,” called for the use of “overwhelming force against the bad guys” and stated, “when the looting starts, the shooting starts.”

It was precisely the whipping up of right-wing hysteria that encouraged armed vigilantes, white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups to begin patrolling the streets of cities such as Kenosha during the protests. It was a post on Facebook by a group calling itself the Kenosha Guard that urged armed individuals to take to the streets to “defend the city” from protesters following the brutal shooting of Jacob Blake by white Kenosha police officer Rusten Sheskey on August 23, 2020.

According to a report in the *New York Times* on Sunday, a former city alderman and local private investigator, Kevin Mathewson, created the Kenosha Guard and declared on Facebook his intention “to deter rioting/looting” during the demonstrations against the shooting of Blake.

The *Times* report said that Mathewson’s “call to arms was one of several in Kenosha that day, which collectively brought dozens of mostly white armed paramilitaries into the streets of the city’s small downtown, creating a heavily armed confrontation with demonstrators that came to a head with the Rittenhouse shootings.”

When asked by the *Times* about the verdict in

Rittenhouse’s trial, Mathewson said, “It vindicates Kyle. I felt vindicated by it. It vindicates people that say, ‘Look, no one’s coming to help, we have to help ourselves.’”



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