

# Donald Trump meets with Kenosha shooter Rittenhouse at Mar-A-Lago

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25 November 2021

On Tuesday evening, Donald Trump said during an interview on Fox News that he recently met at his resort in Palm Beach, Florida with Kyle Rittenhouse, the teenage vigilante shooter who was acquitted of homicide charges in a court-rigged jury trial on November 19 in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Although he did not say precisely when he met with Rittenhouse at Mar-A-Lago, Trump told Fox News' Sean Hannity that he "got to know him a little bit" and that the shooter was a "really nice young man." Trump further said that the meeting was prompted by a request from Rittenhouse. "He wanted to know if he could come over and say hello because he was a fan," Trump said.

Trump went on to claim that Rittenhouse, "should never have been put through" a trial to face multiple criminal charges for murdering Joseph Rosenbaum, 36, and Anthony Huber, 26, both of whom were unarmed, and for injuring Gaige Grosskreutz with an AR-15-style rifle that he brought to protests against police violence on August 25, 2020, in Kenosha.

Trump told Hannity that the case against Rittenhouse was "prosecutorial misconduct, and it's happening all over the United States right now with the Democrats." As reported on the *World Socialist Web Site* on Monday, Trump and his right-wing Republican supporters have been celebrating the acquittal of Rittenhouse. They are using the outcome as means or rallying their fascistic base for further attacks against the democratic rights of protesters and the mass struggles of the working class.

Kyle Rittenhouse was 17 years old when he volunteered with a group of armed vigilantes to "defend property" and assist the police in suppressing mass protests in Kenosha following the shooting of Jacob Blake two nights earlier. Blake, a 27-year-old

black man, was shot seven times in the back and paralyzed by Kenosha policeman Rusten Sheskey. The brutal attack was captured on smartphone video.

Although his political history and affiliation with fascists were concealed by the judge during the trial, Rittenhouse was a gun enthusiast and police cadet who was recorded two weeks prior to the shootings in Kenosha saying he would have liked to "start shooting rounds" at people he claimed were shoplifting. Furthermore, Rittenhouse's support for Trump was well-known, since he had been recorded on video in the front row of a 2020 reelection rally of the former Republican president in January 2020.

The right-wing campaign supporting Rittenhouse's claim of self-defense in Kenosha began immediately upon his arrest, including a fundraising effort that generated the \$2 million needed for the shooter to post bail at his arraignment in November 2020. After his release, Rittenhouse appeared with members of the fascist Wisconsin Proud Boys at a local bar, sang their anthem and flashed "white power" symbols. Judge Schroeder blocked any of these critical facts from being entered into evidence by the prosecution.

Trump's enthusiasm for the fascist shooter as a "really nice young man" is reminiscent of the statements made while he was President following the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017. After a white supremacist drove his car into an anti-fascist protest, killing Heather Heyer and injuring 35 others, Trump said there were "very fine people" among those participating in the neo-Nazi rampage.

The Fox News report of Trump's meeting with Rittenhouse followed by one day the appearance of the teenage shooter in a Fox News interview with Tucker Carlson. Contributing "an observation" prior to the

interview, Carlson said the fascist youth is not “especially political” and “never wanted to be the symbol of anything.”

In a politically significant comment, Carlson went to elaborate on a false narrative that Rittenhouse is a representative of the working class, saying, “It is hard to ignore the yawning class divide between Kyle Rittenhouse and his critics in the media. Rittenhouse comes from the least-privileged sector of our society. In high school he worked as a janitor and cook to help support his family.”

During the interview, Rittenhouse reviewed his well-rehearsed account of the events of August 25, 2020, emphasizing how he was trying to “help our community,” cleaning graffiti from buildings and offering medical assistance during the protests in Kenosha when he was inexplicably set upon by the men who he shot.

However, Rittenhouse was set upon because he aimed his AR-15-style rifle at protesters and it was they who were entirely within their rights to defend themselves against him. In the words of Assistant District Attorney Binger during his closing argument, “You cannot hide behind self-defense if you provoked the incident. If you created the danger, you forfeit the right to self-defense by bringing that gun, aiming it at people, threatening people’s lives. The defendant provoked everything.”

The effort to lionize Rittenhouse and use his not guilty verdict as a vehicle to legitimize far-right politics continues. At least three fascistic Republican Congressmen—Matt Gaetz of Florida, Paul Gosar of Arizona and Madison Cawthorn—have offered Rittenhouse an internship in their government offices.

Candidate JD Vance, who is seeking the Republican nomination for US Senate in Ohio, called the trial of Rittenhouse “child abuse” and said that the teenager “saw a bunch of thugs and rioters destroying his community and no one was doing anything about it.” Vance said the prosecution “slandered and lied about him” and “treated basic manly virtue as white supremacy.”

On Wednesday, QAnon supporter and January 6 coup-plotter Republican Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia introduced a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal, the highest honor of the legislative branch of the US Congress, to Kyle Rittenhouse. Although the full text of Greene’s

proposed legislation has yet to be drafted, an official summary states, “H.R.6070 - To award a Congressional Gold Medal to Kyle H. Rittenhouse, who protected the community of Kenosha, Wisconsin, during a Black Lives Matter (BLM) riot on August 25, 2020.”



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