

11-year-old Milwaukee boy to be tried as adult in mother's shooting

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Last week, Milwaukee County Circuit Judge Jane Carroll declared an 11-year-old Milwaukee, Wisconsin, boy competent to stand trial as an adult for his mother's alleged shooting and killing over a dispute about a virtual reality headset. He faces one count of first-degree reckless homicide. An initial hearing is scheduled for September.

The child, who remains unidentified and has a documented history of mental illness, was assessed by a pair of psychologists before Judge Carroll concluded to prosecute him as an adult last Thursday. According to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, the psychologists examined the child's comprehension of the offense's gravity and the allegations brought against him.

Dismissing the boy's defense attorney's argument that he was not fit to stand trial as an adult, the judge concluded he was, stating he had not received a "major mental diagnosis" and could understand and grasp what was happening around him. According to *Fox News*, the Milwaukee County prosecutor Sara Waldschmidt told the judge the child "knew his case was in adult court, that he knew his case was a felony, he knew that there were two types of cases—felonies and misdemeanors and he knew it was serious."

The shooting occurred just before 7 a.m. on November 21, 2022, on the city's northwest side. The boy claimed he obtained the gun from his mother's room, housed in a lock box to which he had the key, and went to the basement, where his mother, Quiana Mann, was doing laundry. According to his initial account, he swung the gun around his finger when it fired.

A day later, relatives revealed that the boy had admitted to pointing the gun at his mother before firing it. Upon re-interviewing the boy, the police found his account had changed. He admitted to intentionally

pointing the gun at his mother, aiming to "scare her." After his mother's death, the boy logged into her Amazon account to order an Oculus virtual reality headset. According to prosecutors, the boy became angry with his mother and shot her because she refused to purchase the device.

While the media has sought to present the boy as a stone-cold killer, his family reported multiple unsettling events that point to emotional issues and mental illness.

The same morning of the shooting, the boy physically attacked his 7-year-old cousin and had to be physically restrained. After the shooting, his aunt drove him to his grandmother's house, where he met with child welfare workers. According to his aunt, the boy said, "I'm really sorry for what happened. I'm sorry for killing my mom," allegedly without empathy or compassion.

His family told police he had a history of emotional and violent outbursts. In the criminal complaint submitted by his family, they shared a story about when the boy was four and he had grabbed and swung the family's puppy by the tail until it screamed in pain. His mother got rid of the dog because she feared it would attack him out of retaliation. His family stated that he had "rage issues" while claiming he was intelligent and manipulative. They also noted that no one would agree to babysit him because of his emotional and mental health problems. Some six months before the shooting, the family told police the boy filled a balloon with a flammable substance and set it on fire in the family's home, exploding and burning the furniture and carpet.

Speaking to the Milwaukee NBC station WTMJ, the boy's aunt, Rhonda Reid, also confirmed he suffers from mental health issues. She said her nephew was taking mood disorder medicine at the time of the shooting and that he had said he heard numerous imaginary voices. A therapist also recommended that

he spend less time on electronic devices, which his mother attempted to do.

Wisconsin is among only three states requiring all 17-year-old defendants to be tried as adults. And it is one of few states where children as young as 10 can be tried as adults for specific serious crimes. According to state legislation, children aged 10 and above must initially face adult charges for specific severe offenses, including first-degree deliberate homicide, first-degree reckless homicide, and attempted first-degree intentional homicide.

Attorney Craig Mastantuono, who previously defended a 10-year-old boy charged in the 2002 death of 36-year-old Charlie Young Jr., stated children placed in the adult criminal justice system face a “disaster” as it lacks the appropriate resources for treating juveniles and fails to account for their limited cognitive and emotional development.

Speaking to the *Journal Sentinel*, he said, “The reason that’s important is because the criminal justice system operates on a rational response model, meaning if people are fearful of consequences, like jail, they don’t do something wrong,” he said. “And when they are still developing, their level of ability to appreciate right from wrong is very limited.”

The killing of a mother by her child is horrifically tragic but no justice will come from trying a child as an adult. It will do nothing to address the underlying social factors and pressures that played their part in producing this tragedy—chiefly the glorification of violence, militarism, and profit.

A massive mental health crisis is sweeping young people in the United States. The American Academy of Pediatrics proclaimed a nationwide crisis in children’s mental health in October 2021.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) earlier this year released its “Youth Risk Behavior Survey [YRBS] Data Summary & Trends Report: 2011-2021.” The CDC found that in 2021, 42 percent of US high school students experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness. The handling of the pandemic, in which capitalist governments sacrificed lives—the caretakers of many youth experiencing hopelessness—for stock market portfolios and profit, as over 1 million people in the United States and over 20 million worldwide succumbed to COVID-19, is a significant factor in this

growing mental health crisis.

For the capitalist ruling class, the youth are the cannon fodder for their wars and a cheap source of labor with more and more states stripping away anti-child labor laws. The only justice to come from this latest tragedy would be the overturn of capitalism in the fight for socialism and finally bringing an end to a society in which youth are so brutalized.



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