

# Texas Governor Greg Abbott pardons fascist killer of protester

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Convicted murderer Daniel Perry was released from a Texas prison Thursday after he was pardoned by Governor Greg Abbott. The decision comes after a unanimous vote by the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles to pardon Perry, who had served less than one year of a 25-year prison term for the 2020 murder of 28-year-old protester Garrett Foster in Austin, Texas.

Perry, then an active-duty US Army sergeant stationed at nearby Fort Hood at the time of the killing, was arrested one year later in July 2021, and released hours later on a \$300,000 bond.

The murder of Foster came amid the eruption of mass demonstrations against police violence that swept across the US and internationally as a consequence of the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

Perry made no secret of his far-right leanings and violent fantasies in posts on social media, as well as in conversations with associates, in which he characterized himself as a far-right racist, and posted openly about his desire to shoot people protesting against police violence.

In one May 2020 text Perry sent, he boasted about his intentions, writing, “I might go to Dallas to shoot looters.”

There is no doubt that Perry, with malicious intent, initiated the fatal encounter in Austin when he drove his car through an intersection and into the crowd of demonstrators. Perry then shot Foster multiple times and drove away. This is a fact established through multiple witnesses’ accounts of his violent actions, and which a jury affirmed with its rendering of a guilty verdict.

Garrett Foster and his common-law wife, Whitney Mitchell, who is quadriplegic and requires a wheelchair for mobility, attended the Austin demonstration when the vehicle driven by Perry drove through a red traffic

light and attempted to drive through the crowd before stopping suddenly.

Foster was carrying an AK-47, legal under Texas law, while acting as security for the marchers. In her account, Mitchell stated that her husband did not point his weapon toward Perry, and did not threaten him; he merely told Perry to “move on.”

During his trial, Perry’s lawyers made the ridiculous claim that he acted in self-defense, pointing to Foster’s legal carrying of the AK-47. Refuting this are Perry’s own statements to police after his arrest, in which he claimed that Foster did not point his gun at him, and stated that he shot him before Foster could fire his gun.

In April 2023, after the jury convicted Perry of murder, Abbott, making an extraordinary intervention, asked the Board to conduct an investigation into the case and directed the Board to recommend a full pardon for Perry. According to state law, the governor can issue a pardon only after the Board recommends one.

For its part, the Board explained its decision in a statement: “The members of the Board of Pardons and Paroles delved into the intricacies of Perry’s case. The investigative efforts encompassed a meticulous review of pertinent documents, from police reports to court records, witness statements, and interviews with individuals linked to the case.”

Expressing his jubilation with the Board’s decision, Governor Abbott told the media, clearly trumpeting his contempt for victims of fascistic violence, “Texas has one of the strongest ‘Stand Your Ground’ laws of self-defense that cannot be nullified by a jury or a progressive District Attorney. I thank the Board for its thorough investigation, and I approve their pardon recommendation.”

Garrett Foster’s mother Sheila Foster told media that she discovered Perry was pardoned from a social media

post by the governor, and that she could not believe it.

“Everything that has happened is wrong on so many levels, and I don’t understand why. It is so crystal clear to me that this man needs to be in prison for the rest of his life—not a mere 25 years. Why he wouldn’t even have to serve a year? I don’t understand.”

Coming amid mass protests by youth and workers against police violence and the genocide in Gaza, the pardon is tantamount to an official license for the far-right to murder left-wing protesters with the promise of state protection.

It is even more egregious than the acquittal of fascist gunman Kyle Rittenhouse in 2021, in a trial for murdering two protesters and wounding a third at a demonstration over the George Floyd case in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Rittenhouse became a hero of Trump and the far right, but his acquittal came about by means of a jury trial, not in defiance of the unanimous verdict of a jury, as in the case of Daniel Perry.

The pardon of Perry flows from the openly fascistic character of Abbott and the embrace of fascism and authoritarian forms of rule by the broader Republican Party, which have attempted to characterize protests against police violence and the current wave of protests against the genocide in Gaza as criminal.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote in April 2023 after Abbott’s first call to the Texas Parole Board to pardon Perry, “Abbott’s extraordinary intervention is a continuation of Republican efforts to encourage and cultivate fascistic tendencies and militia elements to be used against striking workers, political enemies, and left-wing protesters.”

“The Republicans’ embrace of Perry, expresses the immense fear of the working class gripping the entire ruling class. Their statements show that the Republican Party continues its transformation into a fascist organization.”

Whitney Mitchell made clear the reactionary character of the pardon, telling the media, “[Governor Abbott] has made us all less safe. Daniel Perry texted his friends about plans to murder a protester he disagreed with. After a lengthy trial, with an abundance of evidence, 12 impartial Texans determined that he carried out that plan, and murdered the love of my life.

“With this pardon, the Governor has desecrated the life of a murdered Texan, impugned that jury’s just verdict, and declared that citizens can be killed with

impunity as long as they hold political views that are different from those in power,”



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