

BLOC: Statement on Rittenhouse verdict

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We stand with the families of the victims as they are hurting due to this tragedy and injustice that is unfortunately, all too familiar. We also stand with our Kenosha community organizers and community leaders who fought tirelessly to ensure justice and peace in the wake of the verdict of Kyle Rittenhouse. Although we wanted a different outcome, we must now continue to strengthen our fight, our journey.

The verdict given in Kenosha, Wisconsin brings up the issue of equality and white supremacy as it often does when it comes to this injustice system. Given the exact same circumstances, no Black or brown child would have been able to walk through a city street, underage, armed with a large weapon and be met by police officers with a refreshing bottle of water. We do know however, what they would have been met with.

We will continue to demand justice and fight for policies that help us to rebuild, that lets our voices be heard, and that reflects how our lives matter. For far too long, this country has been accepting of, and almost complacent with, the unfair and biased treatment and practices of those in power who are chipping away daily, at our democracy.

This verdict was one that is upsetting but was very well expected. The trial we witnessed was one that reflected on how this system will work in accordance against any action put forth to avenge Black lives. Disappointing as it ultimately is, it is a clear message that we must fight harder, demand more, and not accept less.

We knew that no verdict would have provided real justice.

We remind ourselves that the purpose of this trial was not to determine whether or not Rittenhouse fired the weapon that fatally wounded two and injured a third person. The purpose of the trial was not to determine why an armed 17 year old purposely crossed state lines, had a semiautomatic rifle (a weapon which is by definition created to inflict bodily harm or physical damage) during curfew amid a protest against racialized police brutality to protect property which he had no significant relation to. The trial was not to determine why the police allowed the self described militia group he was with to break curfew, why the police thanked them multiple times for being there expressing their explicit appreciation and approval, or why the police offered them water. All the while, protesters of police violence and street medics were shot at with rubber bullets, tear gassed, and detained. It did not aim to determine why Rittenhouse, who claimed to be there in part to help injured people, fled after shooting people, or how he was able to walk right past police to a vehicle where he drove safely home as his victims bled out. All of these indisputable facts make the cognitive dissonance dizzying. The question of this trial was

about whether or not his actions could be viewed as self defense, and still it doesn't add up, this question of self defense tasked the prosecution with proving intent. Dizzying, disturbing, and disgusting, how a man is made a martyr of white supremacists vigilantism, terrorism, through a system which falsely claims to seek justice, but truly gaslights us all into believing that this is way things are destined to be, and reaffirms white violence through every channel. Black people don't get a chance to defend ourselves when we are often met by aggression, even at the hands of the state.

Throughout this trial, we saw a judge who is held and sworn to impartiality and unbiasedness, making sure that every loophole and every law that could aid in freeing this person was put into motion. This outcome is a slap in the face to so many of us who see the exact opposite outcome when we are in the courtroom, yet we persist.

We know that our judicial system is deeply flawed. We know it all too well. We've seen it. We've seen and heard judges say appalling comments behind the bench. We **MUST** keep fighting to change this.

We know that this fight is long. We need to make sure every single person challenges and rejects white supremacy in all forms. This is a call to action. We

must move forward with collective action and involvement of communities, leaders, and elected officials to pursue justice and liberation