

Sen. Larson: Statement on the verdict in the trial of Kyle Rittenhouse

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MILWAUKEE, WI – The verdict in the trial of Kyle Rittenhouse was disappointing, but sadly not unexpected. Even if Mr. Rittenhouse was found guilty on all charges and sentenced to the fullest extent of the law, it would not undo the damage done to Kenosha or our nation. Nothing can bring back the two people he killed. The deep divisions in our country highlighted by those who saw Mr. Rittenhouse as a hero vs. those who saw him as a monster cannot be healed overnight, but heal we must. It is my sincere belief that in justice, we will find peace. Justice was not served today and it's on all of us to try and change the system so that this horrible situation isn't allowed to repeat itself.

Let us not forget why the teenager from Illinois was in Kenosha in the first place. Peaceful protests in the wake of the reckless and unnecessary shooting of Jacob Blake, a black man, by Kenosha police had in some corners turned violent. Right-wing profiteers used this violence to stoke fear and reinforce racial stereotypes among white Americans, causing then 17-year-old Kyle Rittenhouse to show up in Kenosha, heavily armed and, in his own mind at least, doing the work that law enforcement was either unwilling or unable to do.

Hours later two people were dead, another wounded, and the kid who appeared to surrender to authorities shortly after the shootings was on his way back home to Illinois. A year later, Rittenhouse, now an adult in the eyes of the law, is going home again – this time after being exonerated in court of any wrongdoing for the very killings he himself admitted he had performed.

Where do we go from here, and how can we finally achieve the goals we all profess

to hold dear – those of justice and peace? In my view, it is only in true justice that we can ever hope to find true peace. But what is true justice?

Justice is all people, regardless of race, creed, sexuality, gender identity or national origin having equal opportunity to achieve the American Dream.

Justice is a public health approach to violence prevention, with unarmed first responders handling the vast majority of our communities' calls for service.

Justice is nobody being so afraid of their neighbors that they feel they need to carry a deadly weapon in public.

Justice is not leaving certain neighborhoods to crumble while others teem with investment.

Justice is fully funded public schools where kids of all backgrounds and needs can thrive.

Justice is making sure that when people put others in danger, whether they are a police officer or civilian, they are held to account and made to seek restitution for their crimes.

If we achieve these things, if we truly achieve justice in our nation, unity and a lasting peace will not be far behind. I hope that sooner rather than later, we can finally live up to the American ideals we have strived toward for 245 years.