

# Urban League Leaders: Call Rittenhouse verdict “painful affirmation” of systemic racism in U.S. criminal justice system

Posted on Friday, Nov 19, 2021

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NEW YORK (November 19, 2021) – National Urban League President and CEO Marc H. Morial, Urban League of Racine and Kenosha Interim President James Hall, Urban League of Greater Madison President and CEO Dr. Ruben L. Anthony, Jr., and Greater Milwaukee Urban League President and CEO Dr. Eve M. Hall issued the following joint statement in response to the acquittal of vigilante killer Kyle Rittenhouse:

“From the moment Kyle Rittenhouse heeded the call to ‘take up arms’ against peaceful protestors last year to his acquittal in the courtroom today, this case has been a long and unrelenting exercise in the power of white privilege and the racism inherent in the American system of justice.

“It is a painful affirmation that the nation still tolerates a dual system of justice – one for whites and one for people of color. The white police officer who shot and paralyzed Jacob Blake, triggering the protests which drew Rittenhouse to Kenosha, has faced no consequences for his actions. Officers encouraged Rittenhouse and his fellow armed vigilantes, telling him, ‘We appreciate you guys, we really do.’

“After the shootings, Rittenhouse nonchalantly carried his assault-style rifle past police who did nothing, despite the cries of witnesses alerting them that Rittenhouse had just shot someone. The judge presiding over Rittenhouse’s case declined to raise or revoke his bail after he violated the conditions of his release.

“It’s impossible to imagine police and the courts showing the same deference to a Black defendant accused of Rittenhouse’s crimes.

“American jurisprudence holds that that no one is above the law, that self-defense does not apply to those who provoke danger for themselves and others, that

vigilantism is not to be tolerated or condoned. Today's verdict flies in the face of these principles.

"The judge's dismissal of the gun charge underscores the urgency of closing gun possession loopholes for those who circumvent the law to possess weapons illegally. Our nation is less safe when these issues are left unchecked.

"Our thoughts today are with the victims and families of those Rittenhouse wounded and killed, who have tragically been denied the justice they deserve. Our work in social justice and equality remains a clarion call."