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Dr. Haynes Does Not Owe Anyone an Apology for His Comments on the Rittenhouse Verdict

By: **Opinion Writer**



Kenosha, WI – August 24, 2020: Unrest in Kenosha, Wis., continued after the police shooting of Jacob Blake, a Black resident. – Mic Schmidt / Shutterstock.com

We were among the several doctoral students from the Criminology, Law and Society Department who were in Chicago attending the American Society of Criminology annual conference when news about the [Kyle Rittenhouse verdict](#) circulated on November 19. Within hours, Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Dr. Douglas M. Haynes' email appeared in our inboxes, stating that "the [Rittenhouse] verdict conveys a chilling message: Neither Black lives nor those of their allies' matter." As scholars presenting research related to racial inequities and racially discriminatory practices within the United States criminal justice system, we could not agree more.

Three days later, Dr. Haynes sent an apology for (1) "appear[ing] to call into question a lawful trial verdict" and (2) making a connection between

the case and the broader “racial reckoning in the United States.” To Dr. Haynes: these criticisms against your initial statements are not valid and you do not owe anyone an apology.

First, Dr. Haynes’ original email pointed to the verdict’s implications, not the legality of the ruling. It is, in fact, the legal legitimacy of the verdict that points to broader structural racism plaguing the U.S. legal system.

Second, Dr. Haynes merely contextualized the scene in which the killings occurred — a scene rooted in anti-Blackness. This anti-Blackness plays out as [police violence against Black people](#) on a daily basis, and this was, in fact, the very focal point of the gathering itself. Protesters were marching in the wake of the [shooting of Jacob Blake](#), a Black man, by a Kenosha police officer. So yes, race and racism were central to the events that led to Rittenhouse killing two protestors. The fact that [Rittenhouse killed two white people](#) and injured another does not remove the racist undertones of his actions.

We believe that the original email correctly called out the anti-Blackness that is so deeply embedded in nearly every facet of the U.S. and that [this campus has vowed to confront](#).

As the Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Dr. Haynes must continue to be a voice of anti-racism, which requires him to freely acknowledge anti-Black racism at UCI and beyond.

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