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Chauvin convicted of Floyd's murder

The former police officer faces a potential 40-year jail sentence; Biden slams 'systemic racism' in U.S.

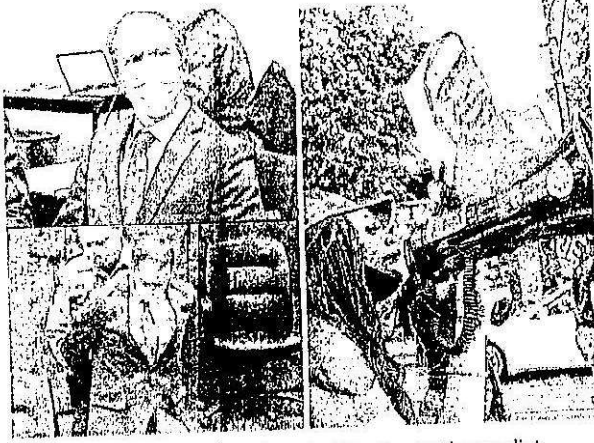
SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

Former Minneapolis cop Derek Chauvin, 45, was found guilty of murder and manslaughter by a jury on Tuesday, nearly a year after he used his knee to pin the neck of an African American man, George Floyd, to the ground, killing him. Mr. Chauvin, who is white, faces a potential 40-year jail sentence.

Floyd's death sparked 'Black Lives Matter' protests for racial justice across America, the likes of which the country had not seen since the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

Floyd's brother, Philonise Floyd, speaking to CNN, described sitting in the courtroom listening to the verdict as, "a moment I would never be able to re-live, I will always have inside of me." An emotional Mr. Philonise talked about his faith and listed the names of other victims of police violence.

Tuesday's result was announced after a jury of six white and six racial minorities reached a (necessarily) unanimous verdict deliberated for some 10 hours and found Chauvin guilty, on counts of second degree unintentional murder, third de-



Day of reckoning: Derek Chauvin listening to the verdict before being taken away and people marching in Atlanta. *AFP

gree murder and second-degree manslaughter.

Floyd had said, "I can't breathe" repeatedly during the approximately nine-minute encounter with Chauvin on May 25 last year, an encounter that was filmed by bystanders, particularly a teenage girl, whose footage went viral on social media. Witnesses to the incident pleaded with the police to let go of Floyd.

Others charged

Three other officers have been charged with aiding and abetting murder in the second degree.

The trial was televised and

Mr. Chauvin, 45, dressed in a grey suit and wearing a surgical mask, appeared to listen intently, eyes darting from side to side, as the judge read out the verdict for each of three charges brought against him by the State of Minnesota. The judge revoked his bail \$1 million and Chauvin was handcuffed and taken into custody immediately.

While the verdict was welcomed in Washington D.C., the expressions of relief were tempered with reminders that this was a beginning and not an end to systemic racism.

"Today a jury in Minnea-

polis did the right thing," former U.S. President Barack Obama wrote, saying justice was done in this particular case at least.

"But if we're being honest with ourselves, we know that true justice is about much more than a single verdict in a single trial," Mr. Obama, said.

Biden's address

President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris, the first African American woman in her position, addressed the nation on Tuesday night after the verdict was announced.

"America has a long history of systemic racism," she said, adding that Black people - Black men in particular - have been treated as "less than human" throughout the course of history.

"Black men are fathers, and brothers, and sons, and uncles, and grandfathers, and friends, and neighbours. Their lives must be valued in our education system, in our health-care system, in our housing system, in our economic system, in our criminal-justice system, in our nation," Ms. Harris said.

"It was a murder in the full light of day," Mr. Biden said,

calling systemic racism "a stain on the nation's soul." Mr. Biden said he had spoken with the family of Mr. Floyd on Monday - he had spoken with them on Monday.

"I'm praying that the verdict is the right verdict," Mr. Biden had said earlier. It is rare for a sitting President to comment on the outcome of a trial before its conclusion. However, Mr. Biden said he had waited until the jury was sequestered (i.e., without access to the outside world) before calling the family.

"Let's also be clear that such a verdict is also much too rare," Mr. Biden said Tuesday night. "For so many people, it seems like it's too unique and extraordinary a convergence of factors. A brave young woman with a smartphone camera, a crowd who was traumatized... a murder that lasted almost ten minutes under broad daylight... officers standing up and testifying against a fellow officer instead of just closing ranks for so many it feels like we took all of that for the judicial system to deliver... basic accountability."

Chauvin will be sentenced in approximately eight weeks.