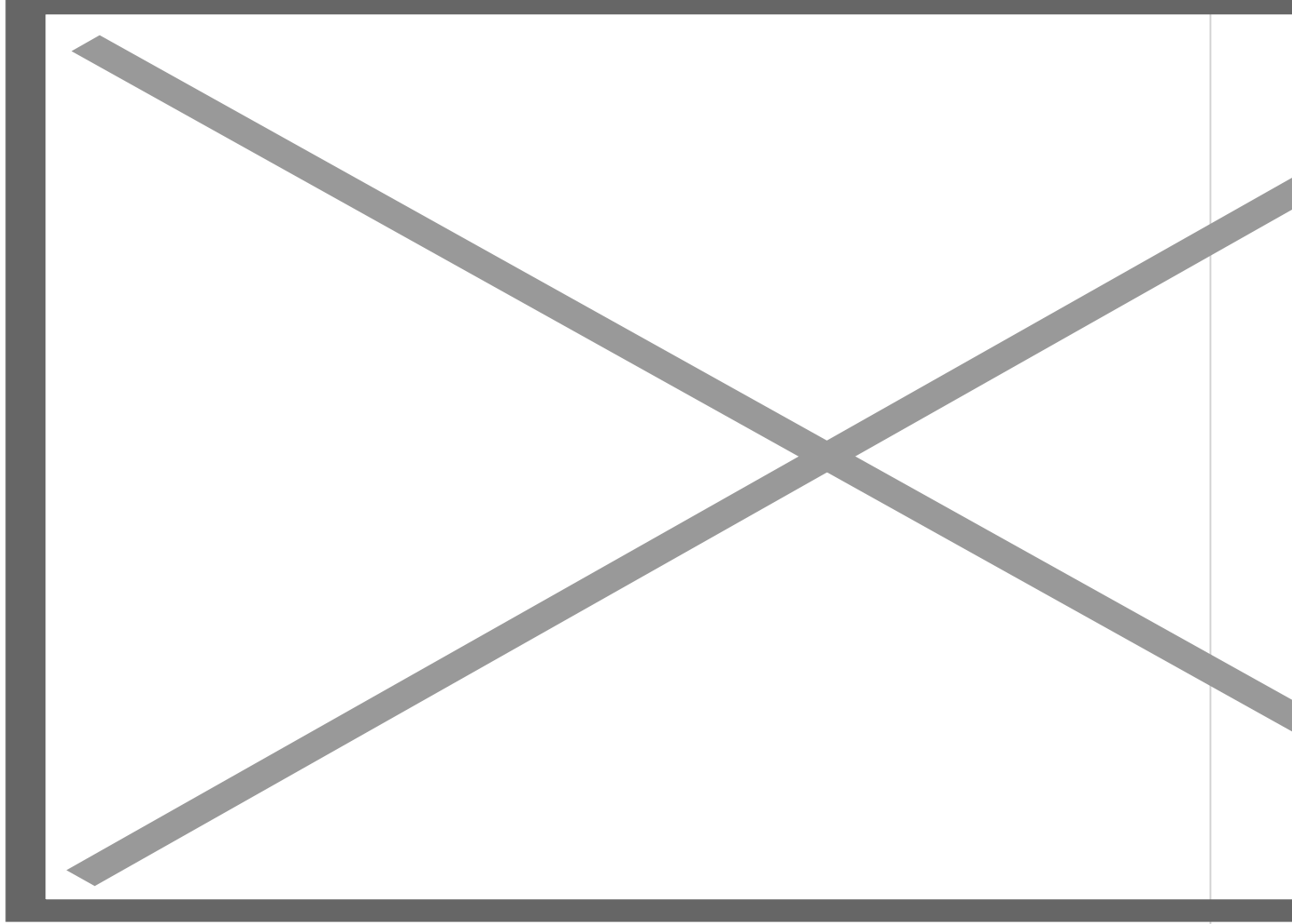


Missouri governor pardons couple who waved guns at BLM protesters

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Patricia and Mark McCloskey drew their firearms on protesters in St Louis, Missouri in June 2020. [Lawrence Bryant/Reuters]

Jefferson City, August 5 (RHC)-- A U.S. couple who pointed guns at Black Lives Matter protesters marching past their mansion in the state of Missouri last year have been pardoned of misdemeanour convictions by the state's governor.

Mark and Patricia McCloskey stood barefoot on their St Louis property and waved guns at the peaceful protesters, threatening to shoot them, as they marched by on June 28, 2020.

The demonstration was part of a larger justice movement that swept the U.S. in the wake of the killings of several Black people by police, including George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky.

Images of the armed McCloskey couple, who were later embraced as folk heroes by the Republican party, came to symbolise the heightened polarisation in the US amid a large racial justice reckoning.

Both were originally charged with felony misuse of a weapon, pleaded guilty to charges of fourth-degree assault for him and misdemeanour harassment for her last month, and were fined \$750 and \$2,000, respectively.

On Tuesday, the office of Republican Missouri Governor Mike Parson announced that the couple had been pardoned, a move Parson had been promising since last year. A special prosecutor who had been appointed to the McCloskeys' case had previously determined there was no evidence that either had been threatened by the protesters on their street.

St Louis Circuit Attorney Kimberly Gardner, upon charging the couple, said: "It is illegal to wave weapons in a threatening manner at those participating in nonviolent protest."

The McCloskey's became cultural lightning rods in the wake of the incident and preceding the 2020 presidential election. They were featured during the Republican National Convention as the party coalesced around a message that U.S. cities were being overrun by violent criminals.

"Make no mistake: No matter where you live, your family will not be safe in the radical Democrats' America," Patricia McCloskey said in a video shown at the August 2020 event, in which then-President Donald Trump was officially nominated as the Republican presidential candidate.

In May, Mark McCloskey announced he was running for one of Missouri's seats in the U.S. Senate. In a campaign video, he highlighted the incident while exaggerating the threat the couple had faced. "When the angry mob came to destroy my house and kill my family, I took a stand against them," he said. "I will never back down."

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