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Charlottesville jury fines man \$1 for punching white nationalist

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Jeffrey Winder was found guilty of misdemeanor assault in February for punching white-nationalist organizer Jason Kessler in August 2017. On Tuesday, a jury ruled that his punishment will be a whopping \$1 fine.

Kessler attempted to hold a press conference in Charlottesville, Virginia, the day after Heather Heyer was killed by a white supremacist who drove his car into a group of people protesting the white nationalist rally organized by Kessler's "Unite the Right" group. Winder was among the protesters who showed up to stop Kessler from making a statement, punching him in the back of the head as others booed and shouted over him.

Winder faced a maximum possible sentence of a year in jail and a \$2,500 fine for the punch, which was caught on tape by the local NBC affiliate. He appealed his misdemeanor assault conviction, and while the jury upheld the guilty verdict, they determined that he should serve no jail time and should only be fined \$1, sending a clear message that Winder was justified in lashing out at Kessler.

Winder's attorney, James Abrenio, argued that Kessler brought the punch on himself by holding a press conference while the city was reeling from the so-recent death of Heyer, arguing that he was "going out of his way" to "profit off tragedy"

NPR reports that Winder told NBC 29 (WVIR), "He [Kessler] had an incredible amount of nerve coming in front of the people of Charlottesville after the pain, suffering, and terror that he brought on the community. He should never be allowed to show his face in town again." It appears that a jury of his peers agrees — and may have just settled a long-standing debate over the morality of punching white supremacists.

On Inauguration Day, Jan. 20, 2017, white supremacist instigator Richard Spencer was punched in the face while giving an interview, by a masked protestor. The punch heard 'round the world became a viral sensation, and ignited a passionate and sometimes gleeful debate over whether punching Nazis is a moral necessity or a self-defeating attempt to fight violence with violence. (Spencer doesn't consider himself a Nazi, nor does Kessler — but the meme machine wasn't interested in splitting hairs between the labels Nazi, neo-Nazi, white supremacist, or white nationalist and just went with the catch-all, "Nazi.")

Along with videos of Spencer's punched face set to music, the internet also flooded with op-eds calling for civility, warning that punching Nazis (or people who hold Nazi-like values) would "lead to escalation of political violence across the board," and arguing, "You do not get to punch people even though they are ideologically despicable."

Proponents of Nazi-punching invoked beloved fictional Nazi-punchers Indiana Jones and Captain America, as well as real-life World War II heroes. Supercuts of Nazis being punched in movies circulated, as did the website CanIPunchNazis.com, which is just a single page featuring a gif of

Spencer being punched and the words "yes, it is always ok to punch a Nazi."

Mother Jones published "The Long History of 'Nazi Punching'," and ParentMap considered the question, "My Son Wants to Punch Nazis — Should I Let Him?" Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek weighed in, and Cato Institute in Washington, DC conducted a survey to gauge public opinion (68 percent overall said it's not OK to punch Nazis, but 51 percent of those who identified as "strong liberals" said it is.) But despite the mind-boggling volume of commentary on the matter, the debate was, unsurprisingly, never settled. Until Tuesday, when it seems this Charlottesville jury made an official ruling: Yes, punch away.