

SUPREME COURT OF NEVADA

Jesse Paul Richt v. State

142 Nev. Adv. Op. No. 32 (2026) · No. No. 89254 · Decided April 30, 2026

SUMMARY

The Supreme Court of Nevada affirmed Jesse Paul Richt’s convictions for murder with the use of a deadly weapon and possession of a firearm by a prohibited person. The court held that a defendant may not establish the foundation for a self-defense theory solely through evidence of the victim’s character, and it upheld the exclusion of related threats, firearm-ownership evidence, and communications. The court also rejected challenges concerning lay testimony about GPS tracking and the omission of a jury instruction regarding reconvening for sentencing.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Nevada
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Bell, J.; Parraguirre, J.; Stiglich, J.
JURISDICTION	Supreme Court of Nevada
DECIDED	April 30, 2026
DOCKET	No. 89254
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Appeal from a judgment of conviction entered after a jury verdict finding Richt guilty of murder with the use of a deadly weapon and after Richt pleaded guilty to possession of a firearm by a prohibited person.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Evidentiary exclusions and jury-instruction rulings were reviewed for abuse of discretion or judicial error. The unpreserved challenge to the lay witness's GPS testimony was reviewed for plain error. Plain error requires an effect on substantial rights resulting in actual prejudice or a miscarriage of justice.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published precedential opinion
PARTIES	Jesse Paul Richt v. The State of Nevada

TOPICS

- self defense
- evidence
- hearsay
- authentication
- appellate procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

criminal law

criminal procedure

evidence

constitutional law

appellate procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether a defendant may establish the foundation for a self-defense theory solely through evidence of the victim's violent character, threats, firearm ownership, or state of mind.
2. Whether excluding the proffered self-defense evidence violated Richt's due process right to present a defense.
3. Whether admitting lay testimony concerning GPS tracking constituted plain error when the witness was not qualified as a GPS expert.
4. Whether the district court erred by omitting a proposed instruction informing jurors that they would reconvene to determine punishment after a guilty verdict.

HOLDINGS

1. A defendant cannot use evidence of a victim's specific violent acts or other character evidence as the sole foundation for a self-defense claim. The defendant must first introduce some evidence, however weak or incredible, supporting self-defense; only then may qualifying victim-character evidence be introduced.
2. Excluding the proffered evidence did not violate Richt's due process right to present a defense because the evidence lacked a proper self-defense foundation and independently lacked relevance or probative value.
3. The district court properly admitted the GPS testimony as lay opinion, and Richt failed to establish plain error.
4. The district court did not abuse its discretion or commit reversible error by omitting the proposed instruction because Richt failed to show that the omission affected the verdict or sentence.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"We hold that a defendant cannot, and so we affirm Richt's conviction on the count of murder with the use of a deadly weapon." (at 4)

"In line with Pearce, we hold that evidence of a victim's specific violent acts cannot provide the foundation for a self-defense claim and can only be introduced once the defendant has laid a foundation for a self-defense claim." (at 6)

"But the right to remain silent does not shield a defendant from the natural consequences of choosing not to testify." (at 7)

"A defendant cannot present a self-defense theory premised solely on evidence of a victim's character." (at 14)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Richt and Jessica Griffin had a tumultuous relationship, and shortly before Griffin's death she reported that Richt had punched her and obtained a protective order. After Richt's release on bail, he repeatedly contacted Griffin, traveled to the Reno area, followed her in rental vehicles, and tracked her workplace and movements with a GPS-equipped vehicle. Surveillance and audio recordings showed Richt entering Griffin's mother's garage, Griffin screaming, and seven gunshots being fired; Griffin died at the scene and no firearm was found in the garage. At trial, Richt did not dispute shooting Griffin but claimed self-defense, offered no supporting evidence, and did not testify.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Richt was charged in the Second Judicial District Court of Nevada, Washoe County, with first-degree murder with the use of a deadly weapon and possession of a firearm by a prohibited person. The jury convicted him of murder and sentenced him to life without the possibility of parole; Richt pleaded guilty to the firearm-possession charge. He appealed the murder conviction, challenging evidentiary rulings concerning self-defense evidence and GPS testimony, as well as the omission of a proposed jury instruction concerning reconvening for sentencing.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Williams v. State, 99 Nev. 530, 665 P.2d 260 (1983)
- Means v. State, 120 Nev. 1001, 103 P.3d 25 (2004)
- Kelso v. State, 95 Nev. 37, 588 P.2d 1035 (1979)
- Runion v. State, 116 Nev. 1041, 13 P.3d 52 (2000)
- Burgeon v. State, 102 Nev. 43, 714 P.2d 576 (1986)
- Chabot v. State, 142 Nev. Adv. Op. 27 (Apr. 9, 2026)
- State v. Pearce, 15 Nev. 188 (1880)
- State v. Arabie, 496 So. 2d 554 (La. Ct. App. 1986)
- United States v. Libby, 475 F. Supp. 2d 73 (D.D.C. 2007)
- Brown v. State, 107 Nev. 164, 807 P.2d 1379 (1991)
- Burton v. State, 84 Nev. 191, 437 P.2d 861 (1968)
- Rodriguez v. State, 128 Nev. 155, 273 P.3d 845 (2012)
- Brown v. State, 138 Nev. 464, 512 P.3d 269 (2022)
- Talley v. State, 141 Nev. Adv. Op. 61, 580 P.3d 101 (2025)
- Wallach v. State, 106 Nev. 470, 796 P.2d 224 (1990)
- Traylor v. State, 627 S.E.2d 594 (Ga. 2006)
- Valdez v. State, 124 Nev. 1172, 196 P.3d 465 (2008)
- Jeremias v. State, 134 Nev. 46, 412 P.3d 43 (2018)

- *Burnside v. State*, 131 Nev. 371, 352 P.3d 627 (2015)
- *Crawford v. State*, 121 Nev. 744, 121 P.3d 582 (2005)

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