

# Shooting near a Detroit school injures seven youths

Walter Gilberti, Joe Kishore  
2 July 2009

Seven youths, ranging in age from 14 to 17 years old were shot on Tuesday while waiting for a bus on Detroit's west side. Five were students attending Cody High School's ninth grade summer academy, one of the schools offering free summer school classes.

While no one has died, three remain in critical condition at Detroit hospitals; four have been released. On Wednesday, police reported that a suspect in the shootings had turned himself in.

The shootings occurred nearly two miles from Cody High School, but it is being treated as a school-related incident. Reports that there was an altercation at the school provoking the shootings in retaliation have been denied by Cody High School Principal Jonathon Matthews, who described Tuesday as "a normal day."

The response from the upper echelons of Detroit's political establishment has ranged from indifference to hypocrisy. Detroit Mayor David Bing, a wealthy businessman, has been conspicuously silent on the shootings. Meanwhile, Robert Bobb, the financial overseer to the Detroit Public Schools, appointed in March by Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm, has adopted the position of surrogate spokesman for the entire Detroit city administration.

Bobb commented that he is "very confident" that the shooters would be arrested. He then issued this description of the security situation: "This incident did not occur on our school campus. We have a very strong security presence, between the Detroit Police Department and the Detroit Public Schools Department. We are going to make sure these campuses remain secure, where teaching and learning continue to take place."

The implication is that somehow the schools of Detroit can maintain a secure and vibrant learning

environment even as the conditions outside the schools have been devastated.

In fact, Bobb is leading the campaign to further dismantle public education, exacerbating the social problems that gave rise to such violent incidents. On Monday, Bobb announced sweeping cutbacks that will involve laying-off more than a thousand teachers and other employees and privatizing much of the support services, including security. The district is shutting down 29 schools this year, followed by another 20 next year.

Bobb has threatened to initiate bankruptcy proceedings for the school district, claiming that the DPS debt of more than \$400 million is impossible to eradicate in one year.

A *Detroit News* editorial on Wednesday reacted approvingly to Bobb's bankruptcy proposal, while also giving some indication of the ultimate end game. It praised Bobb for "moving like a bulldozer" in dealing with the Detroit schools. Warning that all his actions might not be enough, the *News* threatened, "If that's the case, the legislature has to face reality and move swiftly to dissolve the district and replace it with options that guarantee Detroit's children a quality education within a fiscally responsible system."

In other words, the complete dismantling of the public school system is now considered a real possibility by the city's political establishment. The ruling class has little interest in educating the youth, as it has no profitable labor to employ them in.

The media has presented Tuesday's shooting—which was given substantial coverage in the local and national press and television news—as entirely abstracted from the social devastation of Detroit.

A case in point was a June 30 editorial in the *Detroit Free Press*, one of the two papers of the political

establishment in the city. Under the headline, “Bold crime demands bold response from mayor,” the newspaper warned city administrators that violence is driving away “middle class families that are supposed to provide the foundation for Detroit’s rebirth.”

The “level of lawlessness” in Detroit, the paper continued, “is wrong on so many levels.... Kids with access to guns. Kids who think the way to resolve disputes is to use guns. Kids who obviously believe that in Detroit they can probably get away with this.”

This utterly superficial analysis has a political content. The paper concluded by chastising Mayor David Bing, calling on him to take a “bold,” “take-charge tough” response. The implication was clear: it is necessary to take a law-and-order approach toward the city’s residents and youth, in order to provide a secure environment for the attempted gentrification of part of downtown.

For the vast majority of young people in Detroit, future prospects are bleak. After decades of the systematic destruction of auto and other manufacturing jobs, there is hardly any decent-paying work to be found. More than a quarter of the population is unemployed, and more than a third lives in poverty. Large sections of the city are in even worse shape.

Out of these conditions, and without a progressive social and political movement of the working class, it is only natural that all sorts of social problems will proliferate—drug abuse, school dropouts, gangs, and violence.

The layer of corrupt politicians, wedded to the various parasitic financial and business operations that run the city, are indifferent to these conditions. Tuesday’s shooting, in their minds, is simply a confirmation that whole sections of Detroit, and the people who live there, should be written off.



To contact the WSWWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**