

Another school shooting claims two lives at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Jessica Goldstein
3 May 2019

Two students were killed and four injured in a shooting on the final day of classes at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC) in Charlotte, North Carolina on Tuesday. A shooter opened the door and walked into a Liberal Studies classroom where students were engaged in presentations and opened fire on the class of some 30 students.

Three of the wounded have been treated for life-threatening injuries and one is in stable condition. The surviving victims have been identified as Drew Pescaro, 19; Emily Haupt, 23; Sean Dehart, 20 and Rami Alramatin, 20, a student from Saudi Arabia. The two deceased students are Ellis Parlier, 19 and Riley Howell, 21. Witnesses report that Howell attempted to tackle the shooter in order to defend fellow students before he was killed.

No motive for the attack has been released, and according to the press, it does not appear to have been racially or religiously motivated. The shooter is believed to have acted alone.

Students at the scene described how the shooting unfolded as an absurdly nightmarish scenario. Students were sitting down to an otherwise normal day of class when the door was flung open and gunshots erupted. Students scrambled over desks and chairs, tripping on their way to the doors as they tried to escape.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg police took one suspect into custody on Tuesday night, identified as 22-year-old Trystan A. Terrell, a former history student at UNCC. Terrell enrolled in classes in fall 2018 but dropped out this past semester. He was found to have legally purchased a handgun prior to the shooting and according to witnesses, he was apprehended by authorities when he ran out of ammunition.

Terrell told a reporter, “I went into a classroom and shot some guys,” on camera as he was being escorted

into a police station after the shooting.

Police began questioning Terrell on Tuesday night after he was taken into custody. He has been charged with two counts of first-degree murder, four counts of attempted murder, four counts of assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill, possession of a firearm on an educational property and discharging a firearm on an educational property. Terrell waived his right to be in court for his first appearance yesterday and is next scheduled to appear on May 15.

Little is known about the suspected shooter other than what has been gleaned by the press from internet posts by family members and a few acquaintances. Neighbors described him as “quiet” and “reserved,” and a classmate told the press that he was “really quiet, standoffish.” His grandfather, Paul Rold, was apparently surprised at his arrest and said, “This is not in his DNA.”

Terrell is a registered member of the Libertarian Party, and it is not clear whether or not the attack was politically motivated.

He reportedly had no criminal record and was not known to police before his arrest. Terrell’s health has been taken into consideration by the press following his arrest since his father wrote in a blog post that his son had been diagnosed with autism at age three. However, it is well-documented that autism itself, a developmental disorder which affects 1 in 59 children in the US, is not considered a precursor to violent behavior.

Although it is not clear yet whether any mental health issues may have played a role in the UNCC shooting, lack of adequate and affordable mental health care has been a cause behind many mass shootings in the US over the past several decades. The state of North Carolina reported over \$110 million in cuts to mental

health services in 2015. From 2017-2019, an additional \$176 million was cut from programs which covered the costs of uninsured people who needed mental health services.

The nationwide mental health crisis occurs as the US government passes bipartisan budget plans which include some of the largest military spending increases recorded in US history. This year, US President Donald Trump signed a \$686 billion military budget and has requested \$718 billion for next year. If the US continues to increase its military spending at this rate through the next decade, it will spend the equivalent to what it plans to spend on education, infrastructure and public health programs combined.

The reasons why Terrell dropped out of UNCC have not been detailed, yet for many students who drop out, finances are a key factor in the decision. The average student loan debt for undergraduates in the US hovers around \$30,000 per year. The pursuit of higher education, increasingly out of reach for working class students due to high costs, places an immense financial burden on youth and causes an increasing amount of stress.

For an in-state undergraduate student at UNCC, tuition and fees for students enrolled full time cost \$3,522 per year, and for out-of-state students, that cost goes up to \$10,239 per year. Coupled with the costs of room and board, books, and other living expenses, students from working-class and poor families have little choice but to take out student loans to cover the costs of tuition and living even at lower-cost institutions.

The shooting at UNCC is only the latest deadly mass shooting in the United States coming just two days after an anti-Semitic gunman opened fire on the congregation of a California synagogue and killed one woman, and less than 15 months after 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz murdered 17 high school students in a mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

It is no wonder that such tragedies occur with increasing frequency in the United States. For the past 30 years, an enormous amount of wealth has been shifted from the working class to the corporate ruling elite through budget cuts, corporate tax breaks, and deregulation policies pushed through by both Democratic and Republican legislatures.

Billions of dollars have been shifted from health care, education, the arts and social infrastructure to spend on massive military budgets aimed at funding US imperialist exploits around the world to serve US corporate interests. Violence and the military are glorified in popular culture, recreation and media, and criticism and dissent of war are completely absent from the media establishment.

Routine mass shootings in the US are the “new normal,” but they do not need to be. Young people and workers have shown they will not accept this. In 2018, following the shooting in Parkland, Florida, millions of students and workers protested against school shootings in cities throughout the world in a display of opposition to the ruling establishment’s institutionalization of violence.

This movement must be provided with an independent political direction and strategy, aimed at putting an end to the capitalist system of exploitation which perpetuates war and exploits the world’s resources and working class for profit, and replacing it with socialism and calling for an end to massive military spending worldwide to provide ample funding for healthcare, education, the arts and social programs.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact