

The Detroit triple murder: What the media doesn't say

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A private funeral was held over the weekend for Tai'raz Moore, a six-year-old child who was tragically caught in a brutal triple murder in the Detroit suburb of Warren, Michigan on October 1. The other victims were Tai'raz's 32-year-old father, Tukoyo Moore, and his 28-year-old girlfriend, Isis Rimson.

Violent crimes are certainly not unique in the US, but the circumstances of the killings were particularly shocking. According to police, Tai'raz and his father's girlfriend were shot in the head "execution style." The boy's father was murdered in a similar fashion, and his body was left in a burning car 11 miles away on the east side of Detroit.

After nearly two weeks of speculation about the motives of the killing, Warren police announced last Tuesday that Macomb County prosecutors had charged 37-year-old Nicholas Raad Bahri with 15 criminal counts, including three counts each of first-degree murder and felony murder, along with mutilation of a body, arson and several gun charges. According to Warren Police Commissioner Bill Dwyer, "It was all about drugs and money, and I will leave it at that."

The alleged assailant had an extensive record of narcotic possession and other crimes dating back to when he was 17 years old. He had just been released from prison on August 20 after serving seven years for third-degree fleeing of the police.

According to detectives who interviewed relatives and traced security camera footage and GPS data, Bahri and Tukoyo Moore were involved in a drug trafficking scheme that went bad and turned violent. On the eve of September 30, the two met at Bahri's West Bloomfield home and drove for nearly two hours before arriving at Moore's home in Warren around 10pm.

A little more than an hour later, the vehicle left at a "high rate of speed," detectives say, and five minutes later Bahri was seen on a security video at a gas station at Woodward Avenue and Eight Mile Road purchasing a portable gas container and filling it with fuel. He was seen on his home video returning in a taxi several hours later, at 3:45 am on October 1. Twelve minutes later, detectives say, Bahri searched for "expensive watches" on his cell phone and Googled for news reports of a burned-out vehicle in Detroit.

Police say the Warren home had been ransacked, and that

they found hidden drugs, money and firearms after discovering the bodies of the small boy and Rimson. While the police have not made public their theory of the case, there is widespread suspicion that Bahri had gone to the house to force Moore to give him money and drugs and killed him when he refused. Bahri, who was well-known to the family, then allegedly killed the other two victims so he could not be identified.

"Violent acts among drug dealers is not new," Warren Police Commissioner William Dwyer said at a press conference last week, but these were "most ferocious, unbelievable murders in years," which had "shaken not just the tri-county area but the whole nation." The execution of a child, Dwyer said, was "evil, unthinkable and shows no regard for life," adding that "Only monsters or godless creatures would pull the trigger on a six-year-old baby."

Dwyer said he was working with the FBI and US Attorney Matthew Schneider to see if federal charges could be leveled against Bahri so he could be put to death. Under state law, capital punishment has been completely barred in Michigan since 1963 and was first abolished in 1847 for all crimes except treason. Bahri, the police chief said, was a "person that my opinion and many in law enforcement and family and citizens, deserves capital punishment [and is] not going to rehabilitate."

These references to "evil" and "godless creatures" do nothing to illuminate the deeper causes of this or any other violent crime. As for the claim that the death penalty or tougher sentencing would act as deterrents, one only has to note that the US already jails two million of its citizens, a higher percentage than any other country in the world. US prisons are not institutions for "rehabilitation" but of torture and brutality, which tends to create people capable of committing brutal crimes. Finally, the US is still one of a handful of countries that continues state-sanctioned murder through capital punishment, a brutal practice that only reinforces the disdain for human life.

The pandemic, which led to a reduction in economic activity and social interaction, has led to a decline in overall crime in Detroit and other cities but not homicides and violent shootings. Detroit has seen a 12 percent decline in overall crime, driven by a 23 percent drop in property crimes since the beginning of the year, but homicides are up 23 percent and nonfatal shootings by 50 percent.

Pointing to this apparent paradox, Detroit Police Chief James Craig told the *Detroit News* last month, “A lot of our violence is argument-based...It was up last year, but it's gotten worse this year, with a lot of stress related to COVID.”

In the last month in the metro Detroit area alone there have been two murder suicides, one on October 6 involving a 28-year-old man who killed his 31-year-old girlfriend before taking his life, and another the next night, the murder of Kenya Goodman Simmons, 57, by her estranged husband who then killed himself. In another case, on September 27, a 17-year-old Detroit teenager shot and killed Douglas Reese, a 29-year-old welder from Detroit, after accusing him of cutting the line outside of the popular haunted house attraction in Pontiac.

Baltimore, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Washington, DC, and Chicago have all seen a 30 percent drop in crime but a rise in murders. Chicago has recorded more than 600 homicides, far surpassing the 495 murders in all of 2019, with nearly a third of the year left.

Nowhere in the sensationalized media reports is there any serious treatment of the social causes of such violence. However, if a society treats people brutally, showing no regard for human life when it comes to poverty, police killings, endless wars or the deadly COVID-19 contagion, it will produce all sorts of social diseases.

It is no coincidence that Detroit had the highest rate of violent crimes last year and was also the second poorest big city in the nation, right behind Cleveland. Nearly 35 percent of the city's adult population live below the official poverty line—nearly three times the national average—and more than 50 percent of its children are poor. A staggering 140,000 working-age residents in the former Motor City are not in the labor force, according to a recent study by the University of Michigan.

With tens of thousands suffering from health problems associated with poverty or forced to work in low-wage service jobs, Detroit quickly became an early epicenter of the deadly disease. More than 1,600 city residents have died, and nearly 3,700 in the tri-county area.

The economic fallout has been no less severe, with nearly a quarter of Detroiters unemployed in July and nearly half saying they could not afford to buy more food, according to the University of Michigan's Detroit Metro Area Communities Study.

As working-class families face hunger and mass evictions, real estate mogul Dan Gilbert, who bought up much of downtown Detroit for pennies on the dollar after the city's 2013 bankruptcy, has seen his personal fortune rise nearly tenfold during the pandemic, to \$45 billion.

Speaking about the rise in murders in Chicago earlier this year, Democratic Mayor Lori Lightfoot hinted at the deep social causes of violent crimes. “That's poverty, lack of hope, despair, not enough access to the things that we know build healthy and strong families and communities—those challenges remain and are being kind of compressed” by the pandemic,

Lightfoot said. She added lamely, “We have to look deeper into this.”

Such comments from a long-time Democratic Party machine hack like Lightfoot are meant to cover up the role of her own party in creating the poverty, despair and lack of resources in Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles and other urban centers, even as both parties handed over trillions in corporate tax cuts and other handouts to the rich.

At the same time as they were gutting welfare and funding for public education, health and housing, both parties expanded funding for the police, passed brutal sentencing guidelines, and built hundreds of prisons. The choice of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris as the Democratic Party's flag bearers is fitting in this regard.

Biden was the sponsor of the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, which led to mass incarceration, particularly of black men. As California attorney general, Harris defended the state's death penalty and blocked the release of prisoners even after the US Supreme Court found that overcrowding in the state's prisons was so bad that it amounted to unconstitutional cruel and unusual punishment.

Facilitating the decades-long attack on the jobs and living standards of the working class have been unions like the United Auto Workers (UAW), which long ago abandoned any defense of workers and became a bribed tool of corporate management. UAW-backed wage and benefit concessions since the 1980s have systematically lowered the living standards of each successive generation to the point in which Fiat Chrysler or Amazon workers in metro Detroit today are making a third less in wages than their counterparts in 1972.

In the end, it is the decades of endless social crimes committed by the capitalist ruling class that have created the conditions of social deprivation that give rise to street violence and tragedies like the death of Tai'raz Moore. This can only be stopped by the collective action of the working class to put an end to capitalism and redirect society's resources so that working class children can thrive in a future that is free of want and violence.



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