

American carnage: Fired Wisconsin casino restaurant manager kills two co-workers, injures another before being killed by police

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Three people are dead and another seriously injured after a workplace shooting this past Saturday at the Radisson Hotel & Conference Center in Ashwaubenon, Wisconsin, which is attached to the Oneida Casino just outside the city of Green Bay.

Former food and beverage manager, Bruce K. Pofahl, 62, shot and killed former co-workers Ian J. Simpson, 32, and Jacob T. Bartel, 35, before seriously injuring another former co-worker, 28-year-old Danny Mulligan, in a targeted attack that began Saturday evening inside the Duck Creek Kitchen + Bar, which is located inside the Oneida Casino. According to authorities, Pofahl was looking to target his former manager who was not working at the time.

There were roughly 50 people inside the restaurant, with several hundred spread out throughout the Oneida Casino Complex at the time of the shooting. Witnesses described seeing Pofahl walk into the restaurant and approach the waiters' station where he confronted Simpson and Bartel, whom he shot and killed at close range with a 9mm handgun. After leaving the restaurant, Pofahl was confronted by Mulligan, who he shot in the face.

Mulligan is in stable condition and recovering after being flown to Milwaukee to have emergency surgery, which required having his jaw wired shut. Testifying to the growing social crisis in the US, a GoFundMe account, set up by Mulligan's family to help pay for medical expenses, notes that his older sister, Sarah, died in 2017 after battling an opioid addiction.

After Pofahl shot Mulligan, three Green Bay police officers confronted the gunman in the parking lot and shot him. Witnesses reported hearing anywhere between 20 and 50 gunshots.

During a Monday press conference, Brown County Sheriff Todd Delain claimed that Pofahl's actions were deliberate and that "the whole incident transpired in about 10 minutes or less." Delain said that Pofahl had intended to shoot his female manager, whom he had previous disputes with and

was apparently harassing outside of work. Delain said that Pofahl had been prohibited from the property following his termination earlier this year.

Newspaper archives reviewed by the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* show that Pofahl had worked in the restaurant industry most of his adult life, including at previous hotels and restaurants in Detroit, Michigan, Naples, Florida and Asheville, North Carolina.

Delain said 75 police officers responded to the incident and that the three officers who shot and killed Pofahl would be placed on administrative leave pending an investigation. Despite the incident ending before 8 p.m. Saturday night, multiple roads leading to the complex were closed for hours as family members tried to ascertain the whereabouts and safety of their loved ones.

As was the case in the massacre at the Indianapolis FedEx Ground facility last month that left eight people dead, police had contact with the shooter prior to his rampage.

On Monday, the *Journal Sentinel* confirmed that Pofahl was under an active restraining order after he had repeatedly threatened his former boss at the restaurant. According to court records, Brown County Court Commissioner Phoebe Mix had granted a temporary restraining order against Pofahl on March 9 based on "threatening text messages and emails" Pofahl had sent her over several weeks, which "included pictures of her home and threats against her family," per the *Journal Sentinel*.

The threatening messages allegedly included comments such as "time's up." Pofahl continued to send messages even after police had been contacted multiple times. Pofahl's former manager told the *Journal Sentinel* that he had been fired "for a few things, including harassment."

ABC2 reported that by March of this year, Pofahl had been cited for harassment and was also found guilty by the Green Bay Municipal Court of "Unlawful Use of Computerized Communication System." Pofahl was officially served with

a temporary restraining order on March 17.

However, six days later, despite Pofahl's antisocial and threatening behavior, the courts did not deem it necessary for him to relinquish his firearms. Pofahl refused to appear for the restraining order hearing on March 23, citing in a letter to the court coronavirus risks, including the fact that he was in a "vulnerable population having high blood pressure and diabetes" and that he did not think the court could "provide a safe, healthy environment."

While Court Commissioner Paul Burke granted Pofahl's former manager a permanent restraining order against Pofahl, Burke did not find "clear and conveying evidence that the respondent may use a firearm to cause physical harm to another or to endanger public safety."

Whatever the immediate circumstances that led to Saturday's mass shooting, the loss of employment and/or income coupled with the ongoing spread of the coronavirus has seriously impacted the health and social well-being of billions of people around the world.

In a recent study by the National Centre for Social Research conducted in the United Kingdom, 42 percent of those who reported losing income described their mental health as "poor" this past January, a 13 percentage point increase from before the pandemic.

Speaking to the *Guardian*, Neil Smith, head of analysis at the National Centre for Social Research, said: "The pandemic took people who had been for decades living on a comfortable income into a totally different world overnight. The shock of that sudden drop towards the poverty line was enormous."

In a brief statement issued the evening of the shooting, Democratic Governor Tony Evers offered his "thoughts and support" to "all those affected by this tragedy." Demonstrating the complete inability of the capitalist ruling class and their political representatives to offer any actual solution to the growing problem of gun violence, Evers released virtually the same terse statement on March 17 after two workers at the Oconomowoc Roundy's Distribution facility west of Milwaukee were shot and killed by a coworker.

Unable and unwilling to seize the ill-gotten wealth of the capitalist exploiters and put society's resources toward the betterment of all instead of the enrichment of a privileged few, Democratic and Republican politicians are forced to rehash the same tired phrases in the face of now tragically routine outbursts of violence.

Cuts to social services, such as mental health resources and unemployment benefits have been coupled with ballooning police budgets and the transfer of millions of dollars in military equipment to departments around the country. The over \$115 billion spent by local and state governments on

policing last year has not lessened the frequency and lethality of mass shootings in the US but has contributed to over 1,000 people killed by the police every year for the last seven years.

While there are varying definitions as to what constitutes a mass shooting, the crowd-sourced Mass Shooting Tracker defines any event in which four or more people were injured or killed, including the shooter, as a "mass shooting." As of this writing, Mass Shooting Tracker has recorded 211 shootings in the US this year, while last year they recorded a staggering 696 events, or roughly two a day.

Using a more conservative definition of "mass shooting," by the end of April 2021, Wikipedia had logged 178 events in the US, with 52 instances in April leading to 64 deaths and 208 wounded. By this same juncture last year, Wikipedia had recorded 108 mass shootings leading to 129 deaths and 409 wounded.

The Gun Violence Archive has recorded 180 mass shootings in the US. The Archive uses a similar standard for determining a "mass shooting" as the Tracker, but does not include the shooter in their tally.

In another grim milestone, on Tuesday, Wisconsin passed 600,000 coronavirus cases since the first case was confirmed in Madison on February 5, 2020. According to WBAY 2, the state has averaged roughly 1,322 cases and 15 deaths every day for the last 15 months. Despite another 721 people testing positive for the virus in the state on Tuesday, the officials at the Oneida casino announced their doors would reopen on Thursday for business after closing in response to the shooting.

Following a brief two-month shut-down last year, the casino reopened at the end of May, calling back 300 employees before ramping up to the roughly 1,200 who are employed when the casino is fully operational.



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