

Shooting at suburban Minneapolis, Minnesota school leaves one student dead

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One student was killed and another was injured Tuesday afternoon when two shooters opened fire at the entrance of South Education Center in Richfield, Minnesota, a suburb of Minneapolis. The altercation began around noon on Tuesday between a group of five teenagers, including the shooters, who all attended South Education Center high school.

Jahmari Rice, 15, was pronounced dead at the scene. He had just transferred to the school. There were two additional victims; one student who was 17 is still in critical condition following the shooting, and another, 19, sustained minor injuries.

Two suspects, identified as Fernando Valdez-Alvarez, 18, and Alfredo Rosario Solis, 19, were apprehended by Richfield police officers Tuesday evening following the discovery of two handguns allegedly used in the shooting. In a news conference on Wednesday afternoon, Richfield Police Chief Jay Hawthorne stated that they are being held in the Hennepin County Jail without bail, and the department would be filing formal charges against Solis and Valdes-Alvarez as soon as Thursday. He went on to state that “no lingering threats exist to [the Richfield] community.”

Following the shooting, many family members, friends and community members gathered in Richfield to commemorate Rice. Shyrese James, spoke with CBS Minnesota at the gathering. “Jahmari was the life of the party. Everywhere he went, he shined. He made everything OK, and they took my son!” she exclaimed.

Rice “was a real good person. He wanted to make it big in football,” his cousin, Deonte Turner, told the *New York Times*. He had just transferred to the school from Richfield High School, and Tuesday was his second day at South Education Center.

Several schools across Richfield were placed under lockdown Tuesday, but the lockdowns were lifted

before the end of the day. Students at South Education Center will resume classes Friday. Richfield Middle School, another school, less than a mile from South Education Center, saw some officers responding to the shooting by “accidentally” swarming the building with weapons drawn. The situation generated concern among parents, leading to a statement being released by Richfield Middle School principal Erica Barlow. The statement read, “The officers had weapons drawn and were in bulletproof vests. It is unlikely that many students witnessed the event, as they were in class at the time. However, it is important that you are aware of the incident in the event that your child hears about it, as some children may be deeply impacted by this type of news.”

One point not raised in the discussion about this “accident” is that if the police swarmed Richfield Middle School with their weapons ready, how ready would they have been to open fire on an innocent student who matched the description of the suspected shooters?

Student experiences with active shooter drills or actual shootings are all too common in American schools. South Education Center, in fact, had just experienced a shooting threat-induced lockdown last September, when a student entered the high school and brandished a loaded weapon.

Richfield is a primarily working class suburb with a population of 37,000 located immediately south of Minneapolis. The Richfield Public School system is the city’s third-largest employer, only behind US Bank and electronics retailer Best Buy, which is headquartered in Richfield. The median individual and household incomes are \$37,896 and \$66,908 according to 2020 census data.

This shooting is only the latest in a wave of school

shootings in the US which has grown in intensity since the notorious massacre in Columbine, Colorado more than two decades ago. According to the Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS) database for K-12 school shootings, 2022 has already seen six deaths and 10 wounded from school shootings alone. This shooting also follows the tragic events that unfolded at Oxford High School in Michigan, where four students were killed and seven other people were injured in a premeditated school shooting.

The increasing frequency of shootings in American society originate from social inequality and the brutal conditions workers and students face. These are, without doubt, compounded by the attitude of the US government and media normalizing mass death, most aptly characterized by the open adoption of the murderous “herd immunity” policy that explicitly places the profits of billionaires before the protection of students such as those involved in these shootings from the spread of COVID-19.



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