

“The lives of working class Americans are expendable to the ruling class”—US workers speak on Texas school massacre

Our reporters
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Workers in the United States have reacted with horror and anger over the massacre at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas on Tuesday, which took the lives of 19 students and two teachers. On Thursday, Joe Garcia, the husband of one of the two teachers, Irma Garcia, died of a heart attack after visiting a makeshift memorial for his wife at the school.

The mass killing by 18-year-old high school student Salvador Ramos was the deadliest school shooting in Texas history and third worst in the US, surpassing Parkland and Columbine. It was the 19th school shooting so far this year.

The empty platitudes by President Biden and other politicians, along with commentary in the news media, studiously avoid any examination, let alone criticism, of the social, political and cultural conditions in America behind the repeated eruption of homicidal violence.

In comments to the *World Socialist Web Site*, health care, education, manufacturing and other workers expressed their outrage over the Texas school shooting and grappled with broader issues behind these atrocities.

A pre-school worker from Virginia said, “As someone who works as an educator, I am both horrified and heartbroken about the shooting in Texas. It reminds me of the time I was on a lunch break and an office administrator came up to me and said I need to return to my classroom. She told me that they were going to announce an evacuation soon and I had to prepare to get my students out of the building safely. ‘This is not a drill.’ The words echoed around my head as I tried to remain calm and get back to my students. I was not afraid. I slowly became enraged as I began to put together that the reason we had to evacuate was because of a bomb threat. I could not imagine a scenario where someone would want to blow up a school with children aged 6 weeks through fifth grade. After the anger subsided, I began to question why? Why is this happening? I have read several articles surrounding the Texas incident and they all talk about gun control.

“Guns are here, and they aren’t going anywhere. I feel we need to move past that and go back to the real root of the issue. Why are people frustrated and angry to the point of feeling their only option is to kill people? What is causing this phenomena? How do we prevent people from getting to that point?”

Dennis, a retired school bus driver and currently working as a musician in Santa Barbara, California, said, “I feel the

shootings can’t be viewed as separate from US empire, the most violent and destructive empire in the world. A nation that seeks world domination through force and violence sets violence as an example for how to deal with problems on an individual level. Add to this the refusal to monitor gun ownership and the sorry state of health care, especially mental health care, and these horrible events become inevitable. At the root of these problems is a profit-driven society, profit for the ‘defense’ industry, medical care and the gun industry.”

Beth, an Iowa school bus driver, said, “The school shootings and violence are epidemic. Last year, two teenagers bludgeoned a high school Spanish teacher to death in Fairfield, Iowa. I drive kids to school every day, and at times I can feel their resentment and hopelessness. Sometimes, I think one of these kids could be violent too, and all I think about is getting them home safely.

“I could speak all day on the terrible social conditions these kids face. I drive little children who don’t have clean clothes to wear. I talk to kids whose parents are fighting at home. I know one perfectly beautiful high school student who says she’s suffering from depression and is considering suicide. There are some kids from foster homes or broken homes. Growing up like that they don’t learn to treat each other respectfully and understand that there is more to the world than just you.”

Beth said these social problems were the result of deliberate government policies. “We have a governor in Iowa who cut people off unemployment benefits even when they were struggling. When workers walked out of the meatpacking plants because of COVID, she sent them back to work. At the same time, she handed a \$26 million no-bid contract to a private company for COVID tests that didn’t even work.”

Pointing to the endless wars and military violence, which further poison American society, she said, “We just got out of Afghanistan, and now we’re involved in a war with Russia. We need to look at the broader causes of these school shootings. This can’t be legislated by the oligarchs from the outside, it has to be changed by the working class from the inside.”

Elizabeth, an RN in Los Angeles County, California, said, “As a working class registered nurse, I have come to realize that the lives of working class Americans are expendable to the ruling class. I’m broken hearted, as are my Texas family members right now, seeing a mass shooting in the city of Uvalde, which is the

closest city to Del Río, Texas where my family is from. Some of my family members lived in Uvalde at one time, and I visited this small city on many occasions while visiting my family in Del Río.

“Uvalde is a rural community with a population of approximately 15,000 working class people with many living below the poverty. I imagine employment is scarce in that city because it’s a very rural area. The closest major city is San Antonio, and Laughlin Air Force Base is located in Del Río, which is approximately 70 miles south of Uvalde.

“Health care workers in the US have experienced intolerable working conditions and witnessed mass death and illness from an uncontrolled pandemic that the government has allowed to run rampant for 2-1/2 years and kill 1 million Americans. Now we face another war with a nuclear power, Russia, that could end the human race. We face runaway climate change, high inflation, poverty and inequality, while profits for the rich reach obscene highs.

“It’s no surprise to see increased incidents of violence and mass shootings like the horrific shooting in Uvalde. I see it as a mirror of the violence that capitalism commits against the working class here and internationally. The only way to effect change will be through a working class struggle because it has been made quite clear by the capitalist parties that they will not do anything to change the collision course we are on. I believe we must unite with our international working class brothers and sisters and fight for a socialist revolution!!”

Julian, a senior at University of Florida, said, “The thought that sticks with me is about the gun control concept. A resolution to this problem centered on the NRA and arms manufacturers still leaves us in a country where people work, learn and interact in the presence of individuals who relish the thought of killing them and many other people. Making it harder to do may have a material impact, but it doesn’t get us out of this disquieting scenario. The widespread contemporary alienation that I myself am familiar with should be considered a significant threat to people’s safety, given the desperate outbursts it can cause, which range from self-harm to outward hostility and even to organized belligerence.”

A Dana auto parts manufacturing worker in Pennsylvania said, “Sure, in a week there have been three mass shootings that could’ve been avoided if there were stricter gun laws in America, but instead the Texas shooting has been the second deadliest school shooting on record. The president needs to pass something now and take action.

“I mean the pandemic wasn’t taken seriously by either president, in the same way as mental health. We keep seeing these shooters having a history of mental issues that either were never addressed or just not taken seriously, and it results in these tragic events. But it’s the same cycle because it keeps continuing, and there has yet to be some kind of plan for gun control or mental health, and we’re right back here grieving.”

A worker from the Ford Dearborn truck plant in Michigan said, “This is a sick society! How are you going to fix that? The government has a left wing and a right wing, and they are both attached to the same bird. They have nothing to do with the working class. The problem is the working class is going to have to learn the hard way.

“The pandemic has shown that they really want us to die. The way they see it, ‘There are too many of you all anyway. You can drop dead for all we care.’

“People are already stressed out. You cannot get a decent job. Gasoline is \$5 a gallon, and diesel is \$6. They want everybody to work for free. I can see a social explosion happening, and soon.

“I’ve been working in the plant almost 30 years, and I feel like I’ve been wasting my time. It’s even hard to get real food. They have to make a profit on everything, and society cannot work like that. We have to take action ASAP!”

A worker from the Faurecia auto parts manufacturing plant in Saline, Michigan said, “Some of these young people are going berserk. The guy was only 18 years old. He walked into a classroom and said, ‘You’re all going to die.’ What is this world coming to? You have one mass killing after another.

“This is a country that is turning to violence. Trump was organizing these gangs to overthrow the government on January 6 last year, and then Biden did not do anything about it. People get angry because they can’t get a job or don’t have a future. All they see is war and violence all around them. They go crazy because they cannot live.

“And look at (Michigan Governor Gretchen) Whitmer. When everybody was on lockdown, she was steadily trying to get us to go back to work. All she cares about is money for the companies. Who benefited from that?! Not me.

“The UAW didn’t do anything to protect us, either.

“The world is coming to a social explosion. Just one day after the school shooting a student was arrested at a Texas high school with a pistol and a rifle in his car at the school. Apparently that teenager that did the shooting was having a violent argument with his mother just two weeks before. He was losing it then. And nobody did anything to help him.”

Bill, a Mack Truck worker from Pennsylvania, said, “The government has admitted to letting over 1 million people die from COVID. You really can’t lose sight of how many human lives that is, 1 million. As tragic as this shooting was, and it was horrific, it was allowed by a government that does not care if we, or our children, die by means that are preventable, violent or both. The ENTIRE government has been sending weapons of death all over the world for decades, the SMALLEST of which are worse than the kind of rifle this shooter used. How politicians can even open their mouths to feign sympathy, when they are promoting mass death domestically and abroad, whether it is death by COVID or bullets, is beyond me. We need to act to protect ourselves. Lives will continue to be lost needlessly if we wait for politicians for help.”



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