

The way forward for students and youth in the fight against school shootings

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (US)
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The mass shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas has generated enormous anger and concern among students and youth throughout the country and indeed internationally. Walkouts have been organized at a number of schools, and further actions and demonstrations are planned over the coming weeks.

While the political establishment, Democrat and Republican, along with the media, seek to keep the discussion on the shooting within the standard framework—which addresses nothing and proposes nothing—many youth are asking: What is it in American society that produces such horrific events with horrifying regularity?

For today's generation of young people, school shootings are a significant part of life. This year alone, more children have been shot dead in school shootings than police on the job. According to a report by the *Washington Post*, more than 311,000 students have experienced gun violence in school since the 1999 Columbine High School Massacre in Littleton, Colorado.

At the time, the Columbine shooting was the deadliest school attack in US history. But then came Virginia Tech, Sandy Hook, Parkland, and many others. Indeed, Columbine no longer even ranks among the 10 deadliest mass shootings in modern US history.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality urges young people to look honestly at our society. What does the phenomenon of mass violence say about the health of modern-day capitalism? Of its politicians, political parties and institutions?

Indeed, violence pervades the capitalist system to its core.

First, there is endless war that has become permanent. Those of us in the millennial generation and Gen Z

have not lived a day of our lives when the United States has not been at war—in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Syria or Somalia, to name just a few. Entire societies have been obliterated under the banner of “humanitarian wars” and “spreading democracy.”

Now, as the Democratic Party makes perfunctory statements about “gun reform,” it is simultaneously instigating a major military conflict with Russia that could quickly spiral into a third world war costing the lives of millions of people.

James G. Stavridis, a retired US Navy admiral, and currently Managing Director of the powerful global investment firm the Carlyle Group, expressed the sentiment of the ruling class when he tweeted in response to the Uvalde shooting: “If you are only 18 and desperate to get your hands on an assault rifle—enlist in the @USMC [US Marine Corps]. If you can get in, they will teach you how to use one to protect the country—not to threat[en] its children.”

That is, young people would be better served killing “enemies” abroad than schoolchildren at home.

Second, there is the violence perpetrated by the state every day at home. The same governments that have overseen unending war have also funneled military equipment to police departments around the country. They have granted clemency to police officers who murder with impunity on a daily basis. Both Republican and Democratic administrations have whipped up moods of extreme nationalism, violence, paranoia, xenophobia, fear, suspicion and alienation in order to pursue their war aims.

Every year, over a thousand people are killed by police. Hundreds of immigrants die attempting to cross the US-Mexico border, and a massive apparatus of repression—including the Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Customs and Border

Protection—exists for the sole purpose of jailing and deporting immigrants.

Third, there is the everyday violence of capitalist society, the consequence of enormous levels of social inequality and the indifference of the ruling class to human life.

The sacrificial attitude of the ruling class towards the working class is perhaps most clearly expressed in their response to the pandemic. Over 1 million Americans have died of COVID-19 since January 2020. Schools were forced open amid the historic and global health crisis in what can only be understood as a mass medical experiment on children. The impact has been a devastating loss of life on a scale not seen since the Second World War.

For decades, social services have been starved. The ruling class insists that there is no money for education, mental health services, basic health care or any semblance of a social safety net, even as the workers have suffered through unthinkable consequences of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

While the rich profit off the misery and exploitation of the working class, millions are being pushed to the psychological breaking point. Conditions of social despair and alienation produce a wave of drug abuse, depression, anxiety, even suicide. In the most extreme cases, they also produce homicidal outbursts such as school shootings.

This violence is perpetuated by a political system that is completely impervious to the needs and interests of the broad mass of the population. What does the ruling class offer us? On the one hand there is Trump and the Republicans, fascistic coup plotters seeking to overturn the Constitution and establish a dictatorship.

On the other hand are the Democrats, now the main party of war, which time and time again demonstrate the futility of changing anything within the existing political system. In relation to mass shootings, the Democrats propose gun reform measures, which they know will never pass and, in any case, do nothing to address the underlying social and political factors responsible.

Young people are angry, and rightfully so. Just four years ago, in 2018, after the Parkland shooting, over a million people participated in demonstrations to demand an end to mass violence in the schools. A demonstration in Washington D.C. under the banner

“March for Our Lives” was one of the largest in the city’s history, with more than 800,000 people in attendance.

In 2018, framing the issue around a legislative effort served to funnel the movement back into the safe confines of the two-party system. Within a matter of weeks, the “March for Our Lives” organizers were traveling the country on a “Get out the vote” tour aimed at whipping up support for supposedly “progressive” Democratic candidates.

Students and youth cannot fall into the same trap again! The way forward for youth and students is to turn to the decisive revolutionary force in society—the working class.

There is an enormous social movement that is already emerging in the US and throughout the world. The impact of the pandemic, massive levels of social inequality, decades of endless war, the starving of social services—these conditions are generating social opposition in the working class. Workers are drawing the conclusion that many youth are drawing: “It can’t go on like this, a fundamental change in social relations is necessary.” This conclusion is the first step to ending mass shootings as well.

The source of all the fundamental problems confronted by workers and youth lies in the social structure and the political system of capitalism. Therefore, it must be overturned. The basis for doing so is the class movement of the working class. We urge students and young people to channel their anger, passion and energy into building this movement.

We call on all youth and students to join the International Youth and Students for Socialist Equality, the student and youth movement of the Socialist Equality Party, today! Take up the fight for socialism. There is no time to lose.



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