Details emerge about St. Louis high school shooter Orlando Harris

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In the early morning on Monday, 19-year-old Orlando Harris, armed with an AR-15 assault rifle and hundreds of rounds, walked into the Central Visual and Performing Arts High School (CVPA) in St. Louis, Missouri, and opened fire on staff and students, killing 61-year-old teacher Jean Kuczka and 15-year-old student Alexandria Bell, and wounding several others. Harris was gunned down in a shootout with police and pronounced dead at a nearby hospital.

Harris' motives were partially revealed, not only during his rampage, where he exclaimed "You're all going to fucking die!" and that he's "tired of everybody," but also in a handwritten note investigators found in the car Harris drove to the school. St. Louis Police Commissioner Michael Sack read a few passages from the note: "I don't have any friends. I don't have any family. I've never had a girlfriend. I've never had a social life. I've been an isolated loner my entire life. This was the perfect storm for a mass shooting."

As of this writing, there is no indication of a political motivation, but the passages cited by Sack express deep social alienation and a position of extreme nihilism and misanthropy.

However, Harris, a recent graduate of CVPA, was remembered by at least one teacher as an outgoing student. "He would laugh and joke with members of his graduating class," Lauren Ogundipe, CVPA Theatre Director, told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. "He would talk with different teachers; he would talk about his school life—he didn't really talk about his home life. He would talk about girls he was interested in."

Ogundipe also mentioned Harris worked in theater production, managing lighting and sound for plays and other arts performances, saying, "He was helpful. He showed himself as a helpful servant of the school. If something was needed, a skill he'd obtained in the arts, he showed himself as ready, willing and able to lend a hand." She continued, "If something needed to be moved physically ... he would show up on his own without being asked."

To know precisely what went through Harris' mind on Monday, and the days and months leading up the shooting, will remain a mystery, but there must be an analysis of the deeper roots of the phenomenon of mass shootings in the United States and that cannot be done by limiting one's investigation to Harris' immediate motivations.

According to *Education Week*, the shooting at CVPA High School was the fortieth school shooting this year and this year already holds the record for most school shootings in a single year since 2018. So far this year 34 people, including 28 students have been killed in school shootings. Since the notorious Columbine massacre in 1999 more than 554 students, educators and school staff have been killed school shootings and more than 311,000 have been directly affected by gun violence at their school.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, the United States has waged unending war abroad, killing millions and destroying entire societies. Generations of youth in the United States have been forced to bear witness to countless atrocities and the barbarism of American imperialism as it seeks to offset its economic decline and assert global hegemony by brute force. Now youth confront the very real danger of a nuclear "Armageddon," in the words of President Joe Biden, as the US and its NATO allies press on with their war against Russia in Ukraine.

At home, youth have known nothing but austerity during this period—continuous attacks on social services, public education and health care—while

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trillions have been handed over the banks and big business in the form of bailouts. And since 2020 the ruling class has allowed the deadly COVID-19 virus to run rampant in the name of profit, resulting in the deaths of more than 1 million Americans and 20 million around the world.

The two parties of capitalism, the Democrats and Republicans, have overseen the creation of this toxic social atmosphere which breeds misanthropy and antisocial behavior.

In a press conference Tuesday, leaders from St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) provided an update on the shooting, making a hollow plea for change. “I hope... I beg... that we learn a lesson,” said Matt Davis, President of the St. Louis Board of Education. “One of the hardest things is that people keep saying that the district did everything right... that there really wasn’t anything more that we could do.”

Davis went onto say “[T]hat the training went off as planned... that the students followed how they were trained... staff followed how they were trained... our security officers acted with unflinching courage.” Davis also mentioned “The police responded immediately and yet; we’re still left with tragedy” Davis noted, decrying that “it’s already become political” with “both sides of an issue trying to score points” with a brief call to “find a solution,” prompting questions whether the school be militarized via armed guards.

The school district’s director of safety and security DeAndre Davis said security officers at the school are not armed with guns and that armed response officers are the ones that arrived minutes later. Director Davis was then asked whether the district would consider changing its policy regarding armed security inside schools, to which he responded the district would “review everything,” and that they are constantly working to “harden schools,” saying the decision to add more security officers offers a “balance.”

When asked if an armed officer stationed at the school could have made a difference, Director Davis said, “I don’t know how much firepower it would take to stop that person. You saw the police response. It was massive; it was overwhelming.”

Yet again, it is clear that there will be no effort from the political establishment to address the root causes of mass shootings, since it is the capitalist system which bears ultimate responsibility and which the Democrats and Republicans uphold. A socialist solution is required to properly address the problems which the youth and the working class confront daily across the United States and internationally.

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