

Mass shooting at Michigan State University leaves three students dead, five critically wounded

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On Monday night, a lone gunman shot and killed three students on the campus of Michigan State University (MSU) in East Lansing and critically wounded five others.

The episode was the latest in an unprecedented wave of mass shootings in the US. Since the beginning of 2023, there have been 68 mass shootings, according to the Gun Violence Archive, which defines a mass shooting as one in which at least four people are killed or injured, not counting the shooter.

The gunman fired first into Berkey Hall, an academic building, beginning at 8:18 p.m., and then walked to the nearby Student Union and continued firing. Within minutes, hundreds of police and federal agents descended on the campus as students sheltered in place or ran for their lives.

The shooter was identified as Anthony Wayne McRae, 43, a resident of nearby Lansing, the state capital. The authorities said McRae had no past or present affiliation with the university. Police went to the home of McRae's father, where the shooter had been living for the past two years. McRae was later found dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound, according to the Michigan State University Department of Police and Public Safety. Some reports said he shot himself in his father's house.

On Tuesday, the MSU Police Department identified the three students, all from the metro-Detroit area, who died in the attack. They are:

Alexandria Verner, 20, from Clawson, Michigan. Verner was a junior at MSU who graduated from Clawson High School in 2020.

Brian Fraser, a sophomore from Grosse Pointe, Michigan, who was 20 as well.

Arielle Diamond Anderson, 19, a sophomore, also from Grosse Pointe.

The five wounded students have not been identified. All were taken to Sparrow Hospital in Lansing. According to hospital officials, four required surgery and all five remain in critical condition.

While the authorities say they have not determined a motive for the shootings, there have been multiple reports that McRae was a very troubled individual who had mental health issues.

ABC News, among other media sources, reported that police found a "three-page document" in the deceased shooter's pocket. According to ABC, the note expressed "his reasons for the attack and a number of additional locations in Lansing and Holt, Michigan; Ewing Township and Franklin Park, [New Jersey]; and Colorado Springs, [Colorado], which had 'hurt' (sic) him and, therefore, were deserving of attack." ABC said that agents believe those locations were mentioned in the note because of "personal grievances" with people who live there.

ABC also cited a briefing according to which the "subject claimed in his letter that he is the leader of a group who would pursue his agenda on his behalf." However, "the FBI has yet to gather information confirming any threat to the listed locations or involvement from other parties."

McRae reportedly had family ties to Ewing, a town not far from Trenton, New Jersey. Authorities there, "out of an abundance of caution," cancelled classes on Tuesday.

According to media reports, McRae had worked for seven years at a Lansing-area warehouse, but was fired some time ago. In 2019, he was arrested for illegal possession of a gun and pled guilty to a misdemeanor charge, for which he was placed on probation. His mother died about two years ago, which apparently sent him into a downward spiral of depression and reclusiveness.

Contacted by CNN, Michael McRae, the gunman's father, said his son became bitter, isolated and "evil angry." He obtained another gun but denied having it when confronted by his father. Neighbors in the working class neighborhood told reporters that they frequently heard gun shots coming from the McRae property.

More information will be forthcoming, but this latest horrific and tragic event cannot be explained simply or even

primarily on the basis of the particular circumstances or the personal characteristics of the shooter. Certain facts surrounding the MSU shooting underscore the profound, deepening and toxic social crisis that produces mass shootings in America on more than a daily basis.

Apparently two of the students forced to hunker down for fear of being shot down came from families that had previously been impacted by a mass school shooting. Less than 15 months ago, a 15-year-old student shot and killed four fellow students and wounded eight others at Oxford High School in Oxford, Michigan, located some 90 miles east of East Lansing.

Andrea Ferguson's daughter survived the Oxford shooting in 2021, but in her first semester at MSU was forced to shelter in place on campus as the mass shooting was underway Monday night. Similarly forced to cower in fear of imminent death was the brother of a student who was wounded in the Oxford High School episode.

Video from the shooting Monday night included a shot of a student wearing one of the "Oxford Strong" sweatshirts distributed to students who survived the attack on the Michigan high school.

Moreover, the MSU shooting took place less one day before the fifth anniversary of the February 14, 2018 mass shooting that took the lives of 14 students and three educators at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

The *Washington Post* on Tuesday published an analysis showing that the total number of children exposed to gun violence at school had exploded over the five years since the Parkland massacre. It reported that the number had risen from 187,000 in 2018 to 338,000 today.

A chart published on February 9, prior to the MSU shooting, by the website "Visual Capitalist" showed a staggering increase in mass shootings in the US over the past three years—the years of the COVID-19 pandemic and the government's profits-before-life "herd immunity" response, the explosion of consumer prices and the war against Russia in Ukraine—from an average of 349 between 2014 and 2019 to an average of 649 between 2020 and 2022.

The Gun Violence Archive reported that mass shootings in 2023 are occurring at a record rate, outstripping all previous years.

Over this period, as is well documented, social inequality has rapidly increased, as the corporate elite utilized the pandemic crisis to drive up prices and profits and further slash real wages for workers. Lansing exemplifies the grotesque levels of inequality and impoverishment of the working class. The median household income in Michigan's state capital is \$46,570, compared to \$70,784 nationally. The share of the city's population with a bachelor's degree or

higher is 28.7 percent, compared to the national figure of 34.98 percent. The city's poverty rate is 21.8 percent, nearly double the national rate of 11.6 percent.

The ruling class response to the MSU bloodletting—entirely predictable, hollow and pro-forma—was yet another exercise in evasion and posturing. None of the real issues can be broached because they point irrevocably to the crisis and bankruptcy of the political and economic system.

On Tuesday morning, President Joe Biden issued a statement on the anniversary of the Parkland shooting, obviously prepared in advance, that did not even bother to mention the tragedy only hours before at MSU. Biden, tone-deaf and preoccupied with preparing for a shooting war with Russia and eventual military conflict with China, touted the "progress" represented by the toothless bipartisan gun law passed last year and called on his fascistic "colleagues" in the Republican Party to enact further gun reform legislation—knowing it will not happen.

At a Tuesday morning press conference led by Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Democratic Representative Elissa Slotkin, a former CIA operative, lavished praise on the police for their rapid and massive response and suggested that a bigger police presence on campus was needed.

Last January 24, the *World Socialist Web Site* published a Perspective column ("The mass shootings in California and the social pathology of capitalism") that stated:

The response to these attacks by the ruling elite has become ritualized, with the now-standard offer of "thoughts and prayers" for the victims. We are told traumatized communities will "stand strong." The Democrats thump the table about new gun control laws and bans on assault rifles, while Republicans rule out any limits and shed tears about the country's deep mental health crisis. Amid the hand-wringing and bitter recriminations, they paper over the deep social crisis, for which both parties are responsible.

When that column appeared, the number of mass shootings in 2023 had reached 39. Today, barely three weeks later, it stands at 68.



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