

After mass shooting at Michigan State University: Student protests, vigils, calls for an end to gun violence

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Two days after a lone gunman fatally shot three students and critically wounded five others on the campus of Michigan State University (MSU) in East Lansing, Michigan, shock, horror and grief are turning to anger and a sense that endless mass shootings in America are symptoms of a diseased society.

Hundreds of MSU students and supporters held a protest Wednesday on the steps of the Michigan State Capitol in Lansing to mourn the senseless deaths of classmates Alexandria Verner, 20; Brian Fraser, 20; and Arielle Anderson, 19. The three were struck down when a mentally ill unemployed resident of Lansing, Anthony McCrea, 43, fired shots in an academic building and the nearby Student Union. Some three hours after his rampage began, at 8:18 p.m., he was found near his father's home on Lansing's north end, dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, according to the MSU police.

Five other students were wounded and remain in critical condition at Lansing's Sparrow Hospital. The MSU police are not releasing the names of the injured students.

At the Capitol, students recounted their horrific experiences after being told to shelter in place while the shooter roamed the campus. A common refrain, amid the escalating wave of mass shootings around the country, was "Enough is enough," coupled with demands that the government do something to protect human life.

A separate vigil was held on campus at "The Rock," a traditional gathering point, while other vigils, prayer meetings and memorials for the slain students were held across the state.

The scale of the social crisis underlying the phenomenon of mass shootings in the US and the indifference of the political establishment to human life were underscored by the fact that the shooting at MSU took place on the eve of the fifth anniversary of the mass

shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. There, on February 14, 2018, a gunman murdered 17 people and wounded 17 others.

A number of MSU students who were forced to hunker down or flee for their lives on Monday night were survivors of mass shootings at their previous schools.

Newtown, Connecticut native Jackie Matthews was in the sixth grade on December 14, 2012, when a gunman attacked her school, Sandy Hook Elementary, killing six educators and 20 young children. Matthews, an MSU senior, went on TikTok at 1 a.m. on Tuesday and wrote:

The fact that this is the second mass shooting that I have now lived through is incomprehensible. We can no longer allow this to happen. We can no longer be complacent...

The fact that the odds of me being in both of those places for two mass shootings is, unfortunately, not as unlikely as it seems... I think that's why I felt the need to make the video to bring awareness to the fact that enough is enough. It just needs to end.

Emma Riddle wrote on Twitter:

14 months ago I had to evacuate from Oxford High School [in Oakland County, Michigan] when a fifteen-year-old opened fire and killed four of my classmates and injured seven more. Tonight, I am sitting under my desk at Michigan State University, once again texting everyone, "I love you." When will this end?

Riddle's father, Matthew, told NBC News on Tuesday he had told his daughter after the Oxford shooting that "lightning doesn't strike twice... This has happened to you and it can't happen again." He added, "Frankly, that's not true."

Dagmar Gross, a Toronto resident, tweeted that she had two nephews attending MSU. One, who lived in a dorm near the Monday night shooting attack, was in the classroom next door to the shooter at Oxford High during the November 30, 2021 shooting.

"I am scared. And raging so badly at what has happened to the... USA," she tweeted shortly before 9:30 p.m. Monday.

Andrea Ferguson told WDIV-TV that her daughter lived through the Oxford shooting and started attending MSU this semester. "It was like reliving Oxford all over again," said Ferguson, adding that her daughter was "unbelievably terrified."

"It's really, really surreal to have to worry about this, and to know exactly what to do," she said.

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

Mass shootings in the US have soared from an average of 349 per year between 2014 and 2019 to an average of 649 per year between 2020 and 2022. More than 5,200 people have died from gun violence in the US over the past year.

The US gun death rate is 10 times the rate in Italy and France and 96 times higher than in the UK. This is bound up with the fact the US is the most economically unequal of all the major capitalist countries.

In just the first two weeks of this month, there have been 17 mass shootings in the US, defined by the Gun Violence Archive as shootings that kill or wound four or more people, excluding the shooter.

According to Wikipedia, they have occurred in major cities such as New York, Washington D.C., New Orleans and Los Angeles, as well as rural areas. They have taken place on both coasts, in the Midwest, the South and the Southwest, at private residences and public venues, in public transport and private vehicles, in neighborhoods, restaurants and businesses; victims and perpetrators alike have been white, African American, Asian American and Hispanic.

As the WSWs has explained, the COVID-19 pandemic was a trigger event, exacerbating all the malignant

contradictions and crises of American capitalism, including the explosive growth of social inequality, militarism and war-mongering directed against Russia and China, the growth of far-right and fascist forces, the assault on jobs, wages and all the social conditions of the working class. It is no accident that gun violence has increased dramatically over the past three years.

As always, the response of both big business parties to the latest mass shooting tragedy is pro forma, ritualized and insincere. Biden and the Democrats once again offer their prayers and pledge to enact tougher gun control legislation, knowing it will not pass. Their chief concern is to channel growing anger and social opposition among youth and workers behind the Democratic Party, in order to dissipate and crush it.

The Republicans talk about the mental health crisis, while demanding further cuts in health care programs, and demand the lifting of whatever toothless restrictions on guns currently exist.

Both parties evade and seek to cover over the massive social crisis of capitalism that underlies the wave of mass shootings.

All of this testifies to the systemic and class-rooted source of the phenomenon of mass shootings in America, and the need to address these basic issues in order to put an end to gun violence. The defense of education and life itself for young people is inextricably bound up with the fight to put an end to war and its source—capitalism. And the social force that can accomplish this is the working class.

It is to the workers, whose struggles are rapidly expanding in the US and around the world, that youth and students need to turn to prevent world war and needless death and suffering, through the fight for socialism. This is the fight being waged by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE).



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