

Two killed, four wounded in Washington school shooting

By Christine Schofelt
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On Friday, 14-year-old high school freshman Jaylen Fryberg killed a classmate and critically wounded several others before killing himself in the US state of Washington. It was the eighth school shooting this school semester, and the 39th so far this year.

Fryberg grew up in the small Marysville, Washington community where the shooting took place. He lived on the Tulalip Indian Reservation, where his family is reportedly well known.

Several of the victims were his relatives or long-time friends. Before shooting himself, Fryberg killed one girl who has been identified by Reuters as Zoe Galasso. Among those who were critically injured are two of Fryberg's cousins, one of whom Fryberg is said to have fought with over a girl.

While more information will no doubt emerge in the coming days, Jaylen Fryberg apparently does not fit the stereotypical description of a high school shooter. He had recently been elected Homecoming Prince at Marysville-Pilchuck High. According to family and friends, he was socially active and generally "happy." He was also involved with tribal life, and many photos he posted to his social media accounts show him smiling, wearing traditional dress.

Interspersed in Fryberg's Twitter account posts are tweets indicating growing distress over the past few months, most of which is typical of the angst most teens go through, with a few posts being made much of in the aftermath of Friday's events. It is clear that the young man was upset, and felt betrayed after the breakup with his girlfriend.

As with previous school shootings, shock about such an occurrence "happening here" has been widely expressed, and the shooting has been called "senseless." Relatives and friends of the victims and Fryberg have all noted the "close-knit" nature of the

community, and especially the relationship between those involved. Tribal guidance counselor Matt Remele told Reuters that they were "really happy, smiling kids." He said, "They were a polite group. A lot of the kids from the freshman class were close-knit. Loving."

In what has also become common, immediate calls for increased security measures have been raised—the installation of metal detectors at the doors, armed guards, and arming teachers have all been put forth. Other sections of the political establishment have once again called for gun control measures.

As with other such shootings—including the mass killing at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012—there is no serious effort in the media or in the political establishment to probe why it is that such tragedies occur with such regularity in the United States.

Among the series of similar incidents so far this year, several have occurred on the West Coast. In May, a 22-year old killed 7 and injured 13 outside of the main campus of the University of California, Berkeley.

In June, one student was killed and three injured in a mass shooting in Seattle, Washington. Only five days later, a 15-year old student at a high school in Troutdale, Oregon killed a fellow student, injured a teacher and then committed suicide.

These incidents follow a number of even deadlier killings in recent years—including the Sandy Hook shooting that left 28 dead, including 20 children, in December 2012, and the Aurora, Colorado mass shooting in June of the same year, in which a 24-year old man killed 12 people and injured 70 others.

Aside from the specific personal and psychological motivations behind each of these events, a deeper understanding of such tragedies must begin with the social and political climate in the United States, a

country of immense tensions that find no progressive political outlet.

Located in northern Snohomish County, Marysville and the adjacent Tulalip Indian Reservation have been dubbed an “Economically Distressed Area.” Poverty rates are more than four times the Snohomish County average, and median household income is only 60 percent of the county average. Drug abuse, particularly among young people, has increased throughout the region in recent years—a general reflection of the social crisis.

During the fourteen years that Jaylen Fryberg was alive, society in the US has seen an unbroken engagement in wars of aggression overseas, the rising glorification of the military at home and the erosion of basic civil liberties. For almost half of his life, since the financial crash of 2008, the chasm of inequality has expanded at an unprecedented pace. Police killings and violence occur on a daily basis.

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