

An 'unimaginably sad day'

UVA reeling after shooter kills three students, injures two others



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By Kristin O'Donoghue

Three students were killed, two injured, and a community was left traumatized on November 13, following a shooting at the University of Virginia.

The first message from the UVA Alert system notified the community of shots fired at Culbreth garage. It was followed seven minutes later by a report of a shooting on Culbreth Road. The third message urged students to "RUN. HIDE. FIGHT."

Students were advised to shelter in place as an active search persisted from 10:39pm on the 13th to 10:35 the following morning. The alert system sent a total of 57 messages during this period. Group chats were flooded with notes of love and support, and urged students to check in with friends and family. Students organized Zoom calls so they could be with one another, rather than alone and afraid.

Five-hundred students spent the night in UVA buildings, including libraries and recreational facilities. Isabella Sheridan, a third-year and director of a performing arts program for first-years, sat with underclassmen as they sheltered in place at the Student Activities Building.

Crime scene tape was strung at the Culbreth Road Garage, near the spot where three UVA students were killed and two others injured on November 13.



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Christopher Darnell Jones Jr. was taken into custody in Henrico, and arrested on three counts of second-degree murder and three counts of using a handgun in the commission of a felony.

"It was a really long night. People were really tense and pretty much everyone was terrified when we heard the car was going down Jefferson Park Avenue because we were right over there," Sheridan said.

First-year students remained locked down in dorms. Resident advisors told students to lock their doors and close their blinds. From the first-year Balz-Dobie dormitory, Esme Merrill reported that "the situation in the dorm is a really dark one. I just am so uncertain about what my next hour is going to look like, let alone what my college experience is going to be after the tragedy."

The messages from the UVA Alert system persisted, repeating that the suspect was at large and armed. He was described as a Black man wearing a burgundy jacket or hoodie, blue jeans, and red shoes. At around midnight, the local police scanner reported that, based on social media posts, the suspect seemed to be in GrandMarc, a residential apartment near Grounds.

Emma Troischt, a third-year, lives on the fifth floor of GrandMarc. When she heard the news, she barricaded her door and locked herself in the bathroom of her studio unit. "Occasionally, I could hear

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Remembering those who were lost



SUPPLIED PHOTOS

D'Sean Perry was a junior reserve linebacker from Florida who appeared in six of the UVA football team's 10 games. "D'Sean was an amazing soul that made his family and community proud," said Earl Sims, the head football coach at Gulliver Preparatory School. Charles Snowden, UVA football alum and Tampa Bay Buccaneers outside linebacker, posted a tribute to Perry on Instagram: "D'Sean is the human embodiment of resilience and perseverance and I couldn't be more proud of him. I really did try to pass down everything I'd learned because I knew he could be much better than I ever could." Perry's parents have decided not to speak publicly about the incident, "as their grief is only beginning, and out of respect for

the University of Virginia community [which] has been terrorized by another mass shooting in the United States."

Lavel Davis Jr., a junior from South Carolina, was a starting wide receiver and the third-leading pass receiver on the team this season; he caught two touchdowns. Davis was also a member of the Groundskeepers, a group of Virginia football players that pushes for social change. "He never bothered a soul," Kim Richardson, Davis' aunt, said. "He just wanted everyone happy." Jack Hamilton, one of Davis' UVA professors, shared in a Twitter post: "One thing that struck me about Vel was how much his classmates liked him and vice versa. ... In my experience, star athletes tend to hang out

with other athletes, but Vel seemed to go out of his way to make friends with non-athletes."

Devin Chandler transferred to Virginia from the University of Wisconsin, and had yet to play in a UVA football game. "He was so full of life. He was a great kid," Alvis Whitted, a coach at Wisconsin, said. Hamilton, who also taught Chandler, called him "an unbelievably nice person, always a huge smile, really gregarious and funny. One of those people who's just impossible not to like." Wisconsin's Defensive Coordinator Jim Leonhard said Chandler "had a lasting impact on his teammates, even after he left UW, which is a testament to the type of person he was."

"I cannot find the words to express the devastation and heartache that our team is feeling today after the tragic events last night that resulted in the deaths of Lavel, D'Sean and Devin, and the others who were injured," said UVA football coach Tony Elliott. "These were incredible young men with huge aspirations and extremely bright futures. Our hearts ache for their families, their classmates, and their friends. These precious young men were called away too soon. We are all fortunate to have them be a part of our lives. They touched us, inspired us, and worked incredibly hard as representatives of our program, university, and community. Rest in peace, young men."

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footsteps outside in the hallway. It was terrifying not knowing if it was the police keeping us safe or him," she said.

At 1:20am, UVA Alerts officially named the suspect as Christopher Darnell Jones Jr.

"This is a message any leader hopes never to have to send, and I am devastated that this violence has visited the University of Virginia," UVA President Jim Ryan wrote in an email that went out at 4:27am. During a press conference later in the morning, Ryan fought back tears as he spoke of the "unimaginably sad day for our community."

The three students whose lives were stolen are Devin Chandler of Huntersville, North Carolina; Lavel Davis of Dorchester, South Carolina; and D'Sean Perry of Miami, Florida. Two of the slain victims were found inside the charter bus they had taken back from Washington, D.C., where they had been on a field trip to see a play.

Two other students are hospitalized, one in critical condition and the other in good condition.

Jones was arrested on three counts of second-degree murder and three counts of using a handgun in the

commission of a felony, and was taken into custody in Henrico, about 80 miles southeast of Charlottesville.

At the press conference, UVA police chief Tim Longo reported that Jones had come to the attention of the university's threat assessment team in the fall of 2022. He had made a comment about possessing a gun to a third party, but the comment was not made in conjunction with any threats. Jones was also connected to a hazing situation, though Longo had limited information about that investigation.

A Richmond Times-Dispatch article noted that Jones' parents divorced when he was 5 years old, and Jones described his father's departure as "one of the most traumatic things that ever happened to me."

Following the divorce, Jones got into fights with other students and suffered disciplinary action as a result. He had a successful high school career, and Petersburg chose him as the top male student-athlete for an annual scholarship program. Little is known about Jones' history on the UVA football team and his relationships with the players.

"The search for the suspect may be over, but the work of understanding this terrible crime

and what motivated him to commit it is just beginning," Ryan said in an email.

Gun violence on college campuses

The shooting at UVA was at least the fifth since February on or near campuses in Virginia, according to reporting from The New York Times. According to the Gun Violence Archive, there have been more than 38,000 gun violence deaths since 2013.

College-aged students have been habituated to fear shootings on their campuses—places meant to be havens of learning and growth. A generation has been shaped by the tragedies at Sandy Hook Elementary, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, and Virginia Tech. Many of the students who endured those shootings emerged as soldiers in a war that they never sought to fight.

Jackson Mittleman, a senior at Georgetown University, launched a gun violence prevention group when he was just 11 years old, after experiencing "the worst day of [my] life," at Sandy Hook Elementary School.



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In 2018, he spoke at the March for Our Lives Rally, organized in response to what happened at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. “The Sandy Hook shooting should have been the last shooting in our nation but there have been more and more every day,” he said.

Today, many shootings later, Mittleman has advice for UVA students: “First of all, keep an eye on yourself,” he says. “Make sure that you feel comfortable putting yourself in a position where you have to engage with this sensitive and difficult situation of gun violence, especially given that you’ve experienced it so recently.”

Mittleman believes the way to avoid the normalization of such a tragedy is to talk about it. “You have to continue to highlight the impact that this has had on your life. You are now one of thousands of communities, schools, and groups that have experienced gun violence.”

Mittleman shared that there are many communities and groups that students can join if they feel compelled to take a stand. “Keep being loud,” he says.

Samantha Fuentes is an artist, songwriter, and survivor of the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Fuentes became an advocate for gun violence prevention after suffering multiple injuries by a fellow student who killed 17 and injured 17 with an AR-15.

Fuentes believes the most productive immediate action for the UVA community to pursue is “togetherness. ... Everyone is grief and trauma-stricken. At these times people want to self-isolate, but the act of being together is very important.”

In the days following the shooting, Parkland students organized a town hall and invited community members and local political leadership to

get together to address what they had just endured. “Find the time and space to be with one another and think about what healing looks like and what resources are needed,” Fuentes advises.

Colin Goddard—a survivor who was shot four times in the Virginia Tech massacre of 2007—echoes Fuentes’ and Mittleman’s calls for unity. “It’s more important that students talk, not necessarily to experts, but it’s the talking that is what’s important,” Goddard says.

Students wrote the football jersey numbers of the three slain students on a banner they hung at the University of Virginia.

According to Goddard, faculty members don’t need to be psychological advisors, but they should allow students to talk freely when back in their classrooms. Once discharged from the hospital, Goddard recovered in the community at Virginia Tech. “It was super helpful to be there instead of being away,” he says. “Be in the community now.”

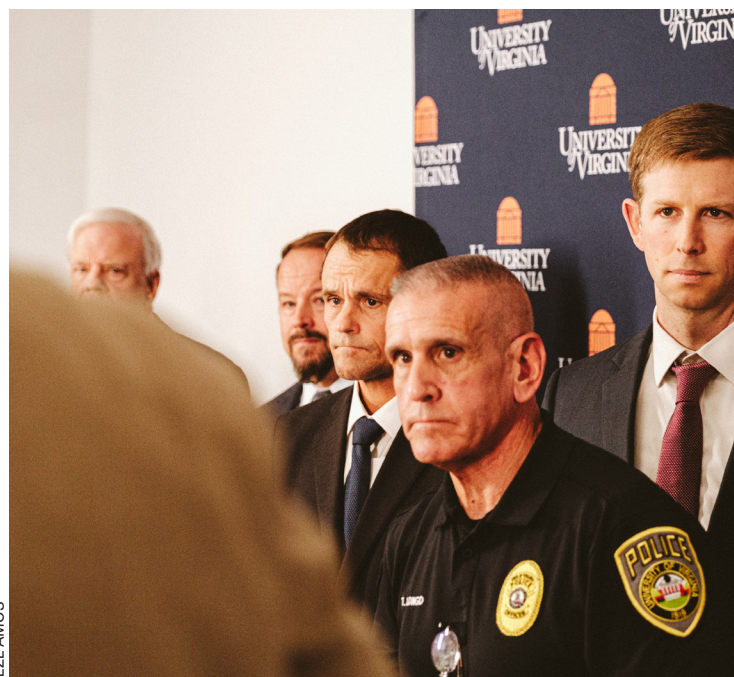
After recovering from his wounds and getting his degree, Goddard volunteered for the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, and eventually exposed the shortcomings of gun legislation in the film *Living for 32*.

“People have to be active participants in honoring the lives and legacies of those who were impacted,” he says. “People have to work in any way that they can to make sure that some good comes from it in some way.”

Goddard has persisted in his advocacy, and is reminded of the pain he and others experienced at Virginia Tech 15 years ago. “Right now, it’s important for the UVA community to come together, and to invite those from outside the university to join them, too. Virginia Tech greatly benefited from the community with the University of Virginia following the tragedy they suffered.”

On the same day as tragedy struck the University of Virginia, a memorial was opened to commemorate the 20 children and six adults lost in the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary almost 10 years ago.

One day later, on the evening of November 14, students gathered on the university’s South Lawn. They held candles up in remembrance of the classmates they lost just hours ago. In the coming days, they will mourn and remember together. ☹



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During a November 14 press conference, UVA Chief of Police Tim Longo (pictured here with UVA President Jim Ryan, third from left) updated the community on the search for the man who allegedly killed three UVA students and injured two others.