

Hundreds Remember Slain Pro-Life Activist

☒ Hundreds gathered in a small Michigan town Sunday to remember a well-known pro-life activist who was gunned down in front of a high school Friday.

James Pouillon, 63, was shot dead across the street from Owosso High School, where he regularly protested abortion despite his dependence on an oxygen tank. On the day he was killed, he was holding a sign showing the picture of a chubby-cheeked baby and the word "LIFE" one side and an image of an aborted baby and the word "ABORTION" on the other, the Associated Press (AP) reported.

(Photo of Pouillon, seated, courtesy of Missionaries to the Preborn.)

"Jim Pouillon is a true martyr, killed for the cause of life," said Monica Migliorino Miller, director of Citizens for a Pro-Life Society. Miller was one of several hundred mourners who brought candles, flowers and posters of aborted babies to a vigil at the site of the shooting Sunday afternoon, the *Flint Journal* reported.

In a statement released Sunday, President Obama called Pouillon's death "deplorable."

"Whichever side of a public debate you're on, violence is never the right answer," he said.

Police said Pouillon was one of three people Harlan James Drake, 33, a truck driver from Owosso, planned to kill on Friday, though for different reasons. After shooting Pouillon, Drake fatally shot gravel company owner Mike Fuoss, 61, in his office, authorities said. He was arrested before he could kill a third target.

"The defendant had ill will toward these three individuals-not for the same reason necessarily, but had a grudge," said Shiawassee County Prosecutor Randy Colbry, according to the AP.

Pouillon was a pro-life fixture in Owosso, a town of 15,000 near Flint, Mich., and that likely contributed to his death. Shiawassee County prosecutors said Drake did not like the signs Pouillon frequently held while protesting outside area schools and city hall.

Drake, who attempted suicide over the weekend, is charged with two counts of first-degree murder and is being held without bond, the *Flint Journal* reported.

Pro-life leaders nationwide mourned Pouillon's death, describing him as a dedicated activist who deplored violence.

"Jim was completely nonviolent and never condoned using violence," said Cal Zastrow, co-founder of Personhood USA, who described Pouillon as a close friend whom he had prayed with earlier that week. "May his life and tragic death encourage all of us to work for an end to all of the violence, particularly violence against the pre-born babies that Jim gave his life to defend."

Alveda King, pastoral associate of Priests for Life, likened Pouillon's death to that of 20th century civil rights activists and said his murder will energize efforts to oppose abortion.

"In the '50s and '60s, people lost their lives to secure the civil rights of those victimized by discrimination," said King, niece of Martin Luther King Jr. "Now, James Pouillon has lost his life in the civil rights cause of the 21st century, the struggle to protect the right to life of every single person, born and unborn. Mr. Pouillon has not died in vain; the struggle will only be renewed because of his courage and sacrifice."

A private funeral was held Monday. A public memorial is to be held Wednesday.