

We are Robert and Arlene Holmes and our son is James Holmes. We have spent every moment for more than two years thinking about those who were injured, and the families and friends of the deceased who were killed in the theater shooting in Aurora, Colorado. We are always praying for everyone in Aurora. We wish that July 20, 2012 never happened.

Our son pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity to the charges associated with these shootings.

Defense attorneys for our son first stated in open court in May 2013 that James was diagnosed in Colorado with a serious mental illness. Prior to July 20, 2012, he never harmed anyone and he had no criminal history. We understand that if our son is found not guilty by reason of insanity, he could go to an institution that provides treatment for the mentally ill for the remainder of his life. This result would prevent any future harm to him and others.

We realize treatment in an institution would be best for our son. We love our son, we have always loved him and we do not want him to be executed. We also decry the need for a trial. A lengthy trial requires everyone to relive those horrible moments in time, causing additional trauma. In the criminal justice system, the prosecution and defense can agree to a sentence of life in prison, without parole, in exchange for a guilty plea. If that happened, our son would be in prison the rest of his life, but no one would have to relive those horrible events at a trial the media has permission to televise.

We do not know how many victims of the theater shooting would like to see our son killed. But we are aware of people's sentiments. We have read postings on the Internet that have likened him to a monster. He is not a monster. He is a human being gripped by a severe mental illness.

We believe that the death penalty is morally wrong, especially when the condemned is mentally ill.

We are not alone in our sentiments. The Murder Victims' Families for Human Rights (MVFHR), an international organization of family members of murder victims and family members of the executed, and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) formed the "Prevention, Not Execution Project" aimed at ending the death penalty for people with severe mental illness.

Our family has not given interviews to the media because we do not want coverage of ourselves. We mourn the deaths and the serious injuries and emotional trauma of the others who were in the theater. The focus should be on the injured and their healing.