

CBS Mornings

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7:20:58 a.m. [TEASE]

11 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Ahead; Slain Student's Parents Speak]

VLADIMIR DUTHIERS: Coming up, Matt has an exclusive interview with the parents of Sheridan Gorman. she was the student from Loyola who was killed by an undocumented immigrant. What her parents say they want done in the wake of her tragic death.

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7:32:40 a.m.

5 minutes and 4 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Exclusive; Slain Student's Parents Say Murder Was Preventable]

MATT GUTMAN: Now to a CBS News exclusive about a story that made national headlines. The parents of Loyola University Chicago freshman killed last month are now speaking out for the first time. 18-year-old Sheridan Gorman was gunned down while on an early morning walk with her friends, just a few blocks from her dorm. Authorities say the suspect who was lurking behind a lighthouse on a Lake Michigan pier was living in the country illegally. Gorman's parents, who are understandably so raw from the tragedy, described the level of heartbreak they did not know existed. They say when your child goes off to college, you worry about drugs, alcohol, maybe even tuition, but not this.

JESSICA GORMAN: She was really an amazing person. I actually, I grieve not only for all of the people that she touched in this life, but the people she won't touch.

GUTMAN: Sheridan Gorman was an 18-year-old freshman at Loyola University Chicago. She was filled with promise and pep. She was her parents' joy.

JESSICA GORMAN: No one should have to deal with the police coming to your door at 6:00 a.m., falling to your knees when you hear the news that no parent should ever hear.

THOMAS GORMAN: There's nothing that prepares you for going to the medical examiner's office and filling out the paperwork. Your hand is trembling and then you have to go identify your daughter's body. And they ask if you're ready and nothing makes you ready for that.

GUTMAN: On March 19, Gorman and her friends went to catch a glimpse of the Northern Lights on Lake Michigan at around 1:30 a.m. They were just about a block and a half from campus, but as Gorman reached the end of this pier, she encountered a mass gunman.

JESSICA GORMAN: He, like, moved towards her threateningly. She turned around and she

warned her friends that there was a man with a gun and you need to run and they ran. She ran, she made it, like —

THOMAS GORMAN: 40 feet.

JESSICA GORMAN: — she made it like 40 feet and he shot her in the back, came out her neck.

THOMAS GORMAN: And —

GUTMAN: But she saved her friends.

THOMAS GORMAN: — what?

JESSICA GORMAN: I don't know.

THOMAS GORMAN: That's we heard.

JESSICA GORMAN: Presumably, we heard that. They say it was a senseless tragedy. It wasn't. It was a murder. It was a preventable murder.

GUTMAN: Police arrested 26-year-old Jose Medina, a Venezuelan who authorities say entered the country illegally. His lawyer says her client lost a portion of his brain and skull after he was robbed and shot in the head in Columbia in 2018.

JESSICA GORMAN: We had to live —

GUTMAN: The lawyer said he had the mental capacity of a child.

THOMAS GORMAN: But it's — it's very —

JESSICA GORMAN: He had the mental capacity and the wherewithal to buy a gun —

THOMAS GORMAN: Yeah.

JESSICA GORMAN: — to have a mask on and to be waiting. The mask was on and he had a gun pointed at my daughter when she passed out.

THOMAS GORMAN: The child — a child does not do that.

JESSICA GORMAN: A man does not —

THOMAS GORMAN: Shoot a retreating child in the back.

GUTMAN: The Department of Homeland Security says Medina was first apprehended by U.S. Border Patrol in May of 2023 and released into the country under the Biden administration. And

just over a month later, they say he was caught shoplifting in Chicago, arrested and released again. An arrest warrant was issued after he didn't show up for court. [TO GORMANS] Tell me about the policies that you think made this happen.

JESSICA GORMAN: Honestly, we're really still trying to explore that.

THOMAS GORMAN: Clearly, there needs to be some cooperation between state, local government and — and federal officials. When someone commits a crime and they've been here illegally, there needs to be cooperation. He was, you know, he was arrested for, yes, a nonviolent crime. But he also was here illegally. He — in our mind, he should have been handed over to the feds at that point.

GUTMAN: The Trump administration has used Gorman's death to push for a tougher stance on immigration. And while Gorman's parents say they don't want their daughter's death to be about politics, they do want accountability.

JESSICA GORMAN: I don't know what the longevity of this effort takes, but I will never rest. And yes, they've awakened a bear, they've awakened a big grizzly, mama bear. I've gotta fight for my child. I have to fight for yours. I have to turn this devastating darkness into light somehow.

GUTMAN: And having met them and spent some time with them, I am sure they will turn it into light somehow. Now, Medina has not yet entered a plea and is set to be arraigned next week. He faces several charges, including first-degree murder and illegal possession of a firearm. He could face 20 years to life in prison, if convicted. But what Sheridan parents want more than anything is that no other family should ever have to experience this, guys.

GAYLE KING: I — I love that they're speaking, number one, my heart breaks for them.

GUTMAN: I know.

KING: But I love that they are calling it out. Don't call this a sense — senseless tragedy —

NATE BURLESON: Right.

KING: — that it was a murder that could have been prevented. And the way that they talk about the detail — you know, we hear about it in the movies. And we read about it identifying the body, filling out the paperwork.

GUTMAN: Yeah.

KING: But to know that you have to go through that, Matt, it's just tough.

BURLESON: Yeah. When you have to bury your kid, that is one thing no parent wants to do.

KING: No.

BURLESON: But the word that keeps jumping out to me, it's like you said, Gayle, that word preventable.

KING: Yes, yes.

BURLESON: That is the word that just breaks my heart.

GUTMAN: And nothing accounts for it.

KING: Yeah.

GUTMAN: And nothing will ever make that family better.

BURLESON: Ooof.

GUTMAN: They just hope to be able to prevent other people from ever experiencing that again.

KING: I'm in awe of them in the way that they're speaking.

BURLESON: And their strength.

KING: That will make a difference.