

Caught In the Middle of a Broken System

By: Anthony Hernandez

One morning as the dark of the night turned into the morning light, while I lay in bed working on my laptop, my son, Aaron, walked into my room in an abrupt way.

He had a bat in one hand and a kitchen knife in the other hand and he walked quickly toward me. "Aaron, what are you doing?" I yelled.

He began swinging the bat at my head, but I shielded myself from a destructive blow.

"I'm sorry dad I have to do this, I'm sorry dad, don't worry you're going to go to heaven, just die," my son said.

He continued with determination to follow what his mind was instructing him to do. We struggled and I focused on getting the knife out of his hand. I was in a fight for my life with my child. My son, the boy I raised with all my love, all my heart. I knew it wasn't my son that was trying to kill me. It was his illness.

I never wanted to hurt Aaron; I just wanted to keep him from hurting me so he wouldn't end up in jail. I knew I had to fight to survive so he wouldn't suffer the legal ramifications.

I was confused and scared. I couldn't stop thinking about what my son was experiencing, how out of his mind he was, that look of disconnect and determination I saw in his face.

Aaron ran outside and was stopped by the police. "Please cooperate with the police so they don't shoot you," I thought desperately.

Right then the neighborhood transformed from a quiet suburb to a chaotic crime scene. More police arrived and took Aaron into custody.

Aaron called me from jail. He didn't understand why he was there, but I was helpless. I couldn't help my baby boy.

This was our new life, caught in the middle of an old broken system.

As time went by my family's tragedy began to settle in my mind. My son was in the hands of the criminal justice system, sitting in a cell in a psychotic state and out of his mind.

The days turned into weeks, then into months. Finally, Aaron was given medication to treat his illness.

We wanted to know why it had taken so long.

But all that mattered to us was that help had finally arrived. He took the medication without resistance. I couldn't help but wonder why he wouldn't take the medication before he crossed paths with the criminal justice system. Why did it have to come to this?

Why wasn't I given the authority over my sick son, to get him the treatment he never realized he desperately needed.

Thank you.