

Lakewood Church Shooting Investigation Enters New Phase

The shooting at Lakewood Church last year remains an unsettling and tragic event.

The Feb. 11, 2024, incident, in which 36-year-old Genesse Ivonne Moreno opened fire inside the megachurch before being shot and killed by off-duty officers, is now entering its next chapter. As reported by The Christian Post, "The case will be reviewed by a grand jury," a customary process for any officer-involved shooting that results in a fatality.

The circumstances surrounding the attack are as tragic as they are complex. Moreno, who was described as struggling with mental illness, brought her then 7-year-old son, Samuel Moreno-Carranza, into the church before opening fire. The child was shot in the head during the incident, believed to be an accident in the chaos. A 57-year-old bystander also was shot in the leg.

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In the aftermath of the shooting, a troubling portrait of Moreno's life emerged. She had been entangled in a contentious custody battle over Samuel with her ex-partner, Enrique Carranza. Court documents revealed that Moreno was diagnosed with schizophrenia and allegedly did not consistently take her prescribed medication. Despite these concerns, she was granted custody of the child in a Montgomery County court ruling, even after her former mother-in-law, Walli Carranza, had petitioned to be his conservator.

The custody battle over Samuel had a history of legal

complexity, moving from Harris County to Montgomery County. Enrique Carranza had initially been granted custody in Harris County, but Moreno was later awarded custody in Montgomery County. During the proceedings, Walli Carranza expressed concerns about Moreno's mental stability and had a history of not adhering to her medication regimen. Additionally, Moreno's erratic behavior extended to fabricating information, as Enrique Carranza testified that he was not informed of his son's birth until a month later, at which point Moreno had told the hospital he was deceased.

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The question many are left asking is whether this tragedy could have been prevented.

According to Lakewood Church spokesperson Don Iloff, the church had no record of Moreno's mother being an active member after 2022, nor any record of emails requesting help during the custody battle.

"If we had reached out and [Moreno] had accepted counseling, then we definitely would have been more than happy to provide that," Iloff told The Associated Press.

With the grand jury now reviewing the case, the focus shifts to whether the off-duty officers involved in the shooting acted appropriately. Houston Police Department and Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission agents were working security at the church when they engaged the shooter. Given the chaotic circumstances, their actions will now be scrutinized through the legal process, though many would argue they acted in defense of the congregation.

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