

7/10/2023



columbine - tragedy and recovery

Shoels' kin won't attend graduation

By [Andrew Guy Jr.](#)
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May 20 - Senior year of high school can seem like an eternity. The hours drag by like days, the days like months. Isaiah Shoels marked the time with a calendar, crossing off each passing day with an X.

Counting.

But he never reached the end. Although he received his cap, gown and diploma, Isaiah will not be walking down the aisles Saturday with his Columbine High School classmates. His cap and gown were buried with him last month, and his diploma is in the hands of his parents, Michael and Vonda Shoels.

The Shoelses will not be attending Saturday's ceremonies. They will not be watching on television, and they will not acknowledge the commencement in any way. Instead, Saturday will be a quiet family day. They'll spend time with their two other children, Michelle and Anthony, and try to avoid thinking about graduation.

Try.

"That is all Isaiah used to talk about," Michael Shoels said Wednesday. "He had a calendar, and he had all the days marked until May 21" - the day before graduation.

The Shoelses said they buried 18-year-old Isaiah in his cap and gown because he had looked forward to graduation for years. "It's making me sick," Michael Shoels said.

"Saturday was supposed to be our day, our day of completion," said Shoels, the president of Notorious Records record company. "He used to say, 'Man, I can't wait until I get out of that crazy school.' I didn't know what he meant until this happened."

Shoels said his wife has been thinking about the graduation all week. She and the rest of the family have been strong since the shooting, but the upcoming graduation has brought a flood of emotions.

"She's so distraught," Shoels said. "The closer it gets to Saturday, the more upset she gets."

Vonda Shoels said the day just won't be the same without her son.

"We're not going to be there, because we feel that it's Isaiah's day," she said. "He was really looking forward to Saturday." The Shoelses spend their days at their Jefferson County home, packing, their nights with relatives or at hotels. They plan to move out of their house because they say their other kids don't feel safe.

They have launched a national campaign to educate people about hate crimes, appearing on various television talk shows and news programs. Isaiah Shoels reportedly was called a racial epithet before he was shot in the school library - one of 12 students killed in the rampage by Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold.

The family has retained noted Michigan lawyer Geoffrey Fieger, who defended Jack Kevorkian and successfully sued the "Jenny Jones" television show for \$25 million. They are expected to file suit against the school district and the parents of the suicidal teen killers.

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