

Michigan prosecutor finds no wrongdoing in the police killing of unarmed teen

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On Tuesday, prosecutors announced that Eaton County Sheriff's Sgt. Jonathan Frost was justified in tasing and shooting to death 17-year old Deven Guilford at a traffic stop February 28. Guilford was tasered and then shot seven times by the officer, including in the head, when he refused to show the officer his photo ID and driver's license after being pulled over for violating an ordinance in Eaton County making it illegal for a motorist to flash high beams when they are within 500 feet of oncoming traffic.

When Guilford refused to provide the officer with photo identification, stating that he had flashed the officer as a means of signaling that the latter's headlights were too bright, Frost became increasingly aggressive, drawing his taser and demanding that the youth step out of the car to be detained. On a video taken from Frost's body camera, the officer admits that the vehicle he was driving had exceptionally bright headlights and that throughout the night other drivers had similar complaints.

Before cutting off, the video shows the officer tasing Guilford in the back as he lies down next to his vehicle. After the video cuts off, Frost alleges that the 17-year-old victim then shook off the effect of the taser and attacked him, forcing him to draw his firearm and fire seven times into the youth, killing him instantly. This incident was not caught on video, as the officer's body camera tore from his vest as he tasered the youth and there was no camera mounted to his vehicle dashboard, as required of police.

While it is clear that the confrontation was driven by Frost, who became outraged by Guilford's refusal to accede to his demands, County Prosecutor Doug Lloyd sought to blame the victim, declaring that "while, in retrospect, both Deven and Sgt. Frost could have made different choices, ultimately this tragedy would not

have occurred if Deven Guilford had not physically attacked Sgt. Frost."

To substantiate his finding, the prosecutor made reference to toxicology reports showing that Guilford had traces of THC, the chemical component found in marijuana, in his system at the time of his death. "No one wins in these particular situations, but it's the prosecutor's responsibility to look at the facts, make a determination from the facts — was there a crime or was there not a crime?" Lloyd stated. The police department has announced plans to investigate the event to see if Frost adhered to proper police procedure during the confrontation.

There is no evidence to support the officer's claims that the youth attacked him. The video evidence suggests that the officer, who harassed and tasered the youth for perceived noncompliance with his commands, is responsible for what occurred afterward.

The Guilford family has announced plans to file a federal lawsuit against the police department, with attorney Hugh Davis decrying Frost's "unreasonable" use of force in removing the teen from his car, rather than waiting for backup before proceeding.

In a written statement, the family said, "There was no reason or necessity for the officer to physically remove our son from the car without considering other options to avoid an unnecessary violent escalation. It must be also noted that Deven was not in possession (of) any weapon and emphatically told the officer that he was not armed... We also have serious concerns about whether the officer used unreasonable force against Deven under the circumstances."



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