

Family demands answers in killing of Joe Nagle by an Allegan County, Michigan sheriff

Michael Anders
4 July 2022

The family and friends of 22-year-old Joseph Nagle of Comstock Park, Michigan held a vigil on Thursday evening at the location where he was shot and killed by an Allegan County Sheriff's deputy on June 16. The group created a memorial to Nagle on 26th Street near 136th Avenue and wore shirts that read "#justice4joey."

It has now been two weeks since the killing of Nagle, who police say was shot during a traffic stop that involved a physical altercation with the Sheriff's deputy shortly after 10:00 p.m. in a rural part of Allegan County. The young man was a FedEx driver and, according to an ex-girlfriend, a student at Grand Rapids Community College.

In the lead-up to the vigil, Joseph's mother Kelly Nagle told Channel 3 that her son's body still has not been released. She also questioned why the deputy used lethal force instead of a taser, since Nagle was unarmed, as the Michigan State Police (MSP) have confirmed.

Ms. Nagle made a statement at the vigil: "I want to know why. I don't want any other family to go through this again, ever," she said.

She added, "My son's life mattered. God has a plan. It took somebody like Joey. We gotta get change, there's something wrong here, there's something ... horribly, horribly wrong here."

Kelly Nagle continued: "Some kind of change, something has to come out of this. And ... if they needed my star athlete, my golden boy to do it, we needed it. This had to happen."

The case is currently being investigated by the Michigan State Police's Fifth District Special Investigations Section (SIS). So far, there has been little transparency in the SIS investigation into the killing.

A week after the shooting, on June 23, SIS detectives released a meager four-paragraph summary of the investigation so far. According to the report, shared in a tweet, the deputy pulled Nagle over originally "for suspicion of impaired driving."

The report goes on: "Indicators of impairment were observed during the performance of sobriety tests. When Nagle was advised he was under arrest, he immediately began fighting the deputy. During this altercation, the deputy fired a single gunshot that hit Nagle in the chest area."

The Michigan State Police also announced that the deputy's name will not be made public "in order to protect the integrity of this investigation." The report does not explain in what way the release of the deputy's name would compromise the investigation.

The SIS report concludes: "Detectives continue seeking information and evidence to ultimately turn over a professional and thorough report to the Allegan County prosecutor's office. We ask again for the public's patience and understanding as these types of investigations take time to complete."

The question naturally arises regarding the potential conflict of interest in the Michigan State Police investigation being reviewed by the county prosecutor's office.

This will not be the first time such a conflict has come to public attention in Michigan. The same question arose in the investigation into the killing of Patrick Lyoya by a police officer in Grand Rapids on April 4, as well as the nonfatal shooting of DeAnthony VanAtten in East Lansing on April 25.

In the Lyoya shooting, the county prosecutor refused to recuse himself, although more than two months later a charge of second degree murder was brought against the officer, Christopher Schurr. In Ingham County,

where VanAtten was shot, the policy is for reviews of police shootings to be submitted to the office of the Michigan Attorney General. So far, the Allegan County Prosecutor's office has not commented on the case and a decision on charges has not been made.

In both the Lyoya and VanAtten shootings, video evidence has been released to the public which reveals the reckless and violent behavior of the police. In the killing of Joseph Nagle, since the Allegan County Sheriff's Office says no bodycams or dashcams are used by the department, it is likely the public will never know what really happened on the night of June 16.

The SIS report has confirmed that no cameras were present. The day after the shooting, Allegan County Sheriff Frank Baker explained to WOODTV that his office has only just begun outfitting deputies with cameras.

Baker went on to say that only 25 to 30 percent of his patrolling deputies had received the cameras at the time Nagle was killed. He further explained the delay in comments to News Channel 3. He said the camera vendor would only be able to train deputies in their use by August of this year.

In addition, the area where Nagle was shot and killed is a rural part of the Grand Rapids area. Fox 17 interviewed a couple who live nearby and were awakened that night by their dogs reacting to the gunshot. The husband told reporters that neither he nor his wife actually saw the incident itself.

Given the lack of video evidence and eyewitness testimony, the Michigan State Police told News Channel 3 that its investigation will consist of interviews and any physical evidence that may exist. Presumably, this means that most of its information will come from the same deputy who killed Nagle.

Joe Nagle was a well known high school wrestler from the area. He was on the wrestling team at Comstock Park High School, and in 2018, during his senior year, he qualified for the state wrestling tournament.

However, Nagle's ex-girlfriend Courtney Riva told WOODTV, "Joey wasn't a fighter. He only wrestled on wrestling mats and that was it."

ABC's "13 On Your Side" program spoke with another of Nagle's friends shortly after the shooting. He said, "Joey worked very hard, man. He worked very hard, and he was always trying to make people laugh.

He always told me he loved me whenever we got off the phone, and ... Yeah, that dude, he lived to work. He worked hard."



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact