Family holds funeral for Joseph Nagle five weeks after he was killed by Michigan county sheriff

Michael Anders
1 August 2022

On Saturday, July 23, friends and family held a funeral for Joseph Nagle on what would have been his twenty-third birthday. Nagle was killed by a sheriff's deputy on a rural road in Allegan County, Michigan, on June 16 during an alleged fight that followed a traffic stop.

The funeral, at which the family also posthumously celebrated Nagle's birthday, was followed the next day by a vigil outside the Allegan County Sheriff's Office. There were approximately 40 people present.

Nagle's uncle, Jamie Nagle, spoke with MLive and said, "We were just able to lay him to rest five weeks after the shooting, but we still don't have any answers. They won't say anything. We want proof. We want facts. We want to know what happened. We want to know why my nephew isn't here anymore."

The Michigan State Police (MSP), which is conducting an investigation of the shooting, claims that the deputy pulled over Nagle on suspicion of impaired driving. After the deputy performed field sobriety tests, he allegedly told Nagle that he was under arrest. The MSP has also further reported that Nagle "immediately began fighting the deputy."

Jamie Nagle said the report that the young man began fighting would have been completely out of character for him. "In 22 years, I've never seen that boy mad or seen him angry. And he was a big boy, and he never used that in any way that was wrong. That's what is mind-boggling. He was way too young. He had too much future ahead of him. It should never have come to this."

Regarding the traffic stop and the deputy who killed his nephew, Jamie Nagle concluded, "But if he didn't do it right, well, then he should be held accountable." The deputy killed the 22 year old with one shot to the chest.

Nagle was a standout wrestler at Comstock Park High School and graduated in 2018. He had no criminal record and was a FedEx driver and student at Grand Rapids Community College.

It will likely never be known precisely what led to Nagle's murder. The MSP has admitted that there is no video footage in this case, as the Allegan County Sheriff's Office has delayed the rollout of dashcams and bodycams. By all appearances, the information in the MSP investigation is coming from the deputy who killed Nagle. The officer has yet to be named.

As Nagle's family demands answers, the police in the area are coming under increasing scrutiny, especially following the execution-style shooting of Congolese refugee Patrick Lyoya on April 4 by a Grand Rapids police officer.

The officer, Christopher Schurr, was charged with murder in the death of Patrick Lyoya on April 4. Schurr shot a facedown Lyoya in the back of the head after a traffic stop turned into a physical altercation.

In neighboring Kent County, the Grand Rapids Police Department has been formally charged with racial discrimination. The charges are being pursued by the Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR). These charges, which are not criminal in nature, come from two cases: the arrest of Honestie Hodges in 2017 and the arrest of Melissa Mason during a traffic stop in 2020. Both victims are black.

In December 2017, horrific video footage was released of Grand Rapids officers handcuffing 11-year-old Honestie Hodges at gunpoint in front of her mother and aunt. Police were searching for a middle-aged white woman in connection with an attempted murder investigation. Tragically, Honestie Hodges died of COVID-19 on November 22, 2020 at the age of 14, so the charge is being brought by her mother, Whitney.

According to the MDCR's press release, the second

© World Socialist Web Site

case occurred on January 20, 2020. Grand Rapids police pulled over Melissa Mason while she was traveling with her three kids because her license plate was expired. In front of her children, the police handcuffed her, placed her under arrest and put them in a police cruiser for 20 minutes.

In both cases, according to the MDCR, the GRPD was given the opportunity to come up with similar cases involving people of different races to show that they acted in the same way. In both cases, GRPD failed to do so.

In speaking with the press, MDCR Executive Director John Johnson invoked the killing of Lyoya. “The community concern about bias and discriminatory actions on the part of the Grand Rapids Police Department did not begin with the killing of Patrick Lyoya this past April. The Department of Civil Rights recognized in 2019 that the alleged instances of bias and discrimination had reached a level of specific concern, prompting this department to hold two heavily-attended public listening sessions in Grand Rapids.”

Johnson also specifically addressed the case of Hodges. “Honestie at the time was an 11-year-old juvenile who did not fit the description of the suspect, was compliant, visibly afraid and in tears. The Grand Rapids Police Department provided no evidence that they treated individuals of another race the same in similar circumstances.”

A spokesperson for the city of Grand Rapids gave a perfunctory statement regarding the charges to the *Detroit Free Press* in which he said the city has been cooperating with the Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) since at least May 2019 when the investigations began.

While racist and far-right elements are welcomed and promoted within police departments across the US, the shooting of Nagle, a young white worker, exposes the reality that lethal force is used by law enforcement against workers of every race and ethnicity.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site