

South Whitehall police officer charged in shooting: Reactions from his lawyer, advocates for victim's family

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FULL TEXT

Aug. 08—A South Whitehall Township police officer has been charged with voluntary manslaughter in the July 28 shooting death of Joseph Santos on Hamilton Boulevard.

Lehigh County District Attorney Martin identified the officer as Jonathan Roselle, 33, who has been with South Whitehall Township since December and only on patrol by himself for five months. Martin said Roselle knew immediately that he would come under scrutiny for his actions, telling his superiors afterward, "I [screwed] up."

After Martin announced charges in the case, Gavin Holihan, one of Roselle's attorneys, issued a statement: Officer Jonathan Roselle has been charged with voluntary manslaughter for the July 28, 2018 death of Joseph Santos. While the loss of a life is always unfortunate, it is not always unjustified. Police officers face challenges every shift that may require split second decisions. Those decisions are then calmly reviewed, with 20/20 hindsight, by the criminal justice system, those in political office, the media and the public.

Officer Roselle believes now, as he did on July 28, that his actions were justified and appropriate based on the facts and circumstances evident at the time. He respects the system of justice he has sworn to uphold and he eagerly awaits the opportunity to be heard at trial. He believes that when all of the evidence is presented publicly, any fair citizen will reach the same conclusion he reached: that the deadly force used on July 28 was justified and appropriate.

Make the Road PA, which advocates for Latino communities, joined Santos family members for their own news conference after Martin spoke. Here is the statement their director, Adanjesús Marín, released afterward:

"We welcome the DA's announcement that the officer that murdered Joey Santos will be indicted. This is just one step on the road to justice. While the indictment is important we know that many police are indicted but not found guilty and as a community we demand that all necessary resources be provided to ensure a conviction.

"While we push for a swift conviction of the officer we also remember the countless Black and Brown sisters and brothers across the country who never see their killer cops held accountable.

"We continue to call for justice for all Black and Brown victims of police murder. We know that this case is not the exception but rather another of so many indicators that the entire system is stacked against People of Color and poor people.

"We live in a country where those in power encourage and support state murder, and profiteering through the corrupt prison industrial complex. We know that Joey's case is not an isolated incident but a systematic problem in which the color of our skins and the accents we hold are considered deadly weapons.

"We also recognize the indictment of this officer does not address the overarching problem of police who resort to deadly force as their first option. Together with the community we will present demands for changes in police depts throughout the valley to ensure that this never happens again."

DETAILS

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