

“I demand a full and open investigation”

SEP candidate Niles Niemuth extends support to family and friends of Jacoby Hennings

By our reporters
10 July 2018

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Niles Niemuth, the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for Michigan's 12th congressional district, attended the “Coby Day” memorial picnic Sunday for autoworker Jacoby Hennings. Niles extended his support to the family and friends of the 21-year-old temporary part-time (TPT) worker who died at Ford's Woodhaven Stamping Plant on October 20, 2017.

Hundreds of family, friends and co-workers turned out for the event in suburban Detroit in a strong expression of solidarity with Jacoby's parents, Shemeeka and Bernard, Jr., both longtime Chrysler workers in the Detroit area.

Officials from Ford, the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the Woodhaven police all assert that Hennings, who held a second TPT position at Fiat Chrysler, took his own life after pulling a gun during a “labor dispute” in the plant's UAW offices. The media was quick to dismiss Hennings as a disgruntled employee and the police closed their investigation in less than 24 hours. The family has never been told what happened in the hour-long meeting with UAW officials or the character of the young man's grievances.

“There are a lot of unanswered questions,” Shemeeka told the *World Socialist Web Site* last week. “My son told me he thought they were out to get him. He had stopped the production line because he thought it was unsafe. After that, he said, the company got rid of all the TPTs but three of them. Coby asked me, ‘Why would they keep me after I stopped the line?’ We want to know what happened.”

As part of his campaign for the 12th district, which

includes the Woodhaven plant, Niles is demanding a public investigation into Hennings' death.

“As the SEP's candidate for Congress, I demand a full and open investigation into Jacoby's death,” Niles explained to one of Jacoby's cousins. “While the official account is that Coby was a ‘disgruntled employee’ who committed suicide after a confrontation with UAW officials there has been no accounting of what would drive a young man to commit such a sudden, rash act. The police closed their investigation into the incident in less than a day. And to this day Ford, the UAW and the police have kept the details of the events that day, which led up to Jacoby's death, a secret. His parents and all workers have the right to know what happened.”

Niles heard repeatedly from those in attendance at Coby Day that they questioned the official narrative of Hennings' death and demanded answers.

“It's just awful,” said Valeria, Shemeeka's aunt. “To this day we don't know what actually happened.”

“He was such an awesome kid. It's just so sad what happened. All I keep asking myself is ‘What really happened?’” family friend Schnikka, a hair dresser from Detroit, stated. “After taking so much abuse at work what are you to do?”

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