

Grenfell Silent Marchers speak

“I have woken up to the fact that class war still exists, it’s alive and kicking”

Our reporters
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World Socialist Web Site reporters spoke to some of those attending the Silent March on the occasion of the anniversary of the Grenfell Tower fire on June 14.

Linda works at a Tesco’s supermarket in London. She said, “Nothing much has progressed in a year for the families. People are still living in hotels and B&Bs. How can you sit there and say to yourself I just want to go somewhere and say, ‘This is mine’? If you are living in hotels and B&Bs you can’t do that. You haven’t got a proper life back.

“It’s bad how it has been dragged out so long. They’ve got no release. They are still having to fight, but they are still grieving. It’s hard for them. We need something sorted as soon as possible.

“Look at Hillsborough [the Sheffield football stadium where 96 Liverpool fans were killed in 1989 as a result of a crush caused by the decisions of the police and authorities]. How many years is that? That could have been avoided.

“It’s health and safety issues. The firefighters could only go above so many floors [at Grenfell]. It was in 1974 that it was built. You would think, over the years, they would have said you can have some kind of safety system—outside stairs, sprinklers or something. How much would that have cost? Maybe they would have had a better chance to get out if they had that.”

Patty lives in London and was originally from East Germany. She said, “I’ve lived a fairly sheltered life in the UK. But I grew up in East Germany and there was always talk about socialism and class war, but it always felt stilted and unreal. This is the first time I have woken up to the fact that class war still exists, it’s alive and kicking. People used to say that class war is not real any more, but it is.

“I am gob-smacked. I came here to show solidarity, but

I’m completely speechless about how crooked this government is, how cold and psychopathic. They were saving a few pennies over the lives of people. They need to be brought to justice and not through the regular routes, because it’s the establishment that makes the rules. That’s why, so far, they haven’t been punished for it, so the whole system needs overthrowing, I think.”

Asked her opinion on the public inquiry into the fire, Patty remarked, “If it’s led by the people in charge, the government in charge, then it will be a coverup. I agree this is a social murder. It shows there is one rule for us and one for them. If any other person or entity had done anything like that, it would be so obvious they were guilty and something would be done about them. Because it’s the government and because it’s the council, it’s acceptable corporate manslaughter. Just because it’s at such a high level it’s being ignored. It’s just not right.

“I’ve seen great community spirit today, which is incredible. A phrase we always used to spout in our childhood was ‘workers of the world unite,’ but that is exactly what we need today.”

Josh, a documentary filmmaker, said, “I am here to support Grenfell and support the community, the people who have been so grossly neglected by the council, by the people in charge. These are people who refuse to admit they are wrong.

“Due to underfunding and neglect, Grenfell didn’t get the fireproofing it needed and this horrible accident happened, costing so many wonderful innocent people’s lives.

“To see the community that a large part of my family has grown up in come together is an incredibly beautiful thing.”

Frank Henry is a resident of Paddington in west London who knew two of the victims of the Grenfell fire, Denis

Murphy and Raymond “Moses” Bernard. He said, “Nothing has been done for the Grenfell people. If I was to commit a crime, you would want to see me locked up in jail.

“People can’t get justice. Things have been held down [by the authorities] for a year now, and now there’s the [public] inquiry into the fire. How long can they hold it down for? I just want to say that the people at the top who did this need to be in prison.”

Keeran works as an accountant in London. He said, “I saw the flames as I was working around Paddington last year; it was very heart-breaking. I did come here to offer some help afterwards.

“I am an immigrant, having lived in the UK since the age of four. I’m from a middle-class background, so I was fortunate not to experience what these poor people have experienced. For me ever since the day I saw these flames, I wanted to do what I could to help.

“I don’t think people should forget, not only the injustices that the government did to the victims, but against everyone else. Coming here to me is a gesture to refresh the memory of what happened that day.”

Asked about the government’s inhumane treatment of the survivors, with many still not permanently rehoused after a year, he said, “I think it is a complete violation of their human rights. There was a recent fire in Kensington [The Oriental Hotel], and people were relocated and the media covered it very well. But in the case of Grenfell, the victims were made to be forgotten. Over half the victims have not yet been rehoused. Had it happened to a higher class of victims, it would have been seen straightaway as a crime. But it just seems that no one [in authority] cares. I hope from the bottom of my heart they will get justice. With the current government, it will be very difficult.”

“I think that capitalism has many, many bad things, but we can change it, like yourselves going around speaking to people. I don’t think that capitalism and truth can ever coexist.”



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