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Five children orphaned after parents die of COVID-19 in California’s Inland Empire

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17 September 2021

Five young children from Yucaipa, California, were orphaned in late August when their parents, Davy and Daniel Macias, died from COVID-19 after going on a family vacation that left the whole family infected. Davy Macias, a 37-year-old labor and delivery nurse, was seven months pregnant with their fifth child, a girl, who has yet to be named.

Although the children recovered quickly from their COVID-19 infections, Davy’s condition continued to deteriorate, and she was eventually admitted to the hospital soon after. Not even a week later, Daniel, 39 years old, was also admitted. On August 18, Davy—already intubated—gave birth to her daughter by emergency Caesarean section. She died eight days later, and Daniel passed away the week after.

Davy would never get to see or hold her newborn. Daniel would only be able to glimpse his daughter before succumbing to COVID-19 and never even knew that his wife had died, despite only being a few rooms away from her. They died before being able to name their daughter.

Terry Seri, Daniel Macias’s sister-in-law, recounts how tight-knit the young family was, saying about Davy and Daniel, “Their hobby was their kids.” The children, the eldest only seven years old, have gone to live with their grandparents, with Terry noting that they “spend a lot of time at night looking for mom and dad.”

Davy, who worked for Kaiser Permanente’s Fontana Medical Center, was not vaccinated due to her concerns of how it might affect her pregnancy. Daniel was a math and AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) school teacher at Jehue Middle School. It is not known whether he was vaccinated.

Their tragedy is representative of thousands of frontline workers who have died as a result of contracting COVID-19. What’s more, the number of pregnant women who have died from COVID-19 has increased in recent months with the spread of the Delta variant. Only on August 11 did the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) strongly recommend that pregnant women get the vaccine. Numerous families have attested that their deceased pregnant loved ones had intended to receive the vaccine after giving birth.

On August 20, Alabama mother Haley Richardson, a 32-year-old nurse from Pensacola, Florida, died from COVID-19 two days after her unborn baby had also passed away from the virus. Like Davy, she was concerned that the vaccine might harm her pregnancy and opted not to get it.

Just this week, Hawaii recorded its first maternal death due to COVID-19 on September 14. Due to privacy laws, the mother’s vaccination status has not been revealed. Dr. Stacy Tsai of the Hawaii State Maternal Mortality Review Committee stated, “We are seeing women getting COVID during pregnancy and becoming so sick that we are having to deliver preterm or premature in order to help them breathe ... better.”

Mississippi is currently experiencing the highest levels of maternal deaths and stillbirths due to COVID-19 in the country. To date, there have been 15 maternal deaths and 72 stillbirths, according to the Mississippi health department. This is twice the number of stillbirths the state would typically see in that time period, reported Dr. Thomas Dobbs, the state’s health officer.

Dr. Brenna Hughes, chief of Duke University Medical Center’s Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine,

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said, “Since we’re seeing more pregnant people get ill, it’s not surprising to me that … we are seeing a higher rate of fetal losses and stillbirth.”

Dr. Timothy Villegas, an obstetrics and gynecology specialist from Columbus, Georgia, has been studying the correlation between COVID-19 and stillbirths recently, stating that there are “Unique changes in the placenta that suggest COVID-19 itself, or the inflammatory changes ... are causing severe inflammation and cell death in the placental tissue, which then prevents the nutrients and the oxygen and the transfer of things between the mother and the baby from happening.”

At Texas Children’s Pavilion for Women, doctors have seen twice as many pregnant patients with COVID-19, compared to a little over 15 last August. Dr. Manisha Gandhi, the hospital’s chief of maternal-fetal medicine, told the *Texas Tribune*, “We’re just seeing a lot more of them progress [to serious illness] very quickly.” She added, “This variant is much more aggressive, [and] pregnant women are getting sicker much faster.”

The CDC has reported more than 118,260 cases of COVID-19 in pregnant women, with an increase in severity in recent weeks among those who are unvaccinated. Furthermore, only 25 percent of pregnant women ages 18–49 years old are vaccinated, compared to 61 percent of all women in the US. So far, 18,000 have been hospitalized, and 490 have been admitted to the ICU. Those with the most severe cases are placed on ventilators or ECMO (extracorporeal membrane oxygenation) machines to support their heart and lungs. According to a report by NBC News, 131 pregnant women have succumbed to COVID-19, and more than 200 have lost their pregnancies.

News stories of the tragic deaths of Davy and Daniel Macias claim that the couple contracted the virus while on vacation and visiting a water park. However, there is no definitive information as to the exact place they contracted the virus, itself the product of the lack of a robust contact tracing program.

The reality is that both of them were working on the front lines of the pandemic in the hospitals and overcrowded schools. Regardless, this tragedy has destroyed their family and traumatized their children, and they are all the victims of the unsafe policies adopted by states and governments across the country that have reopened full-fledged to prioritize profits and the economy, despite the immediate danger it presents to workers and their families. Between 30–40 percent of the population in most states remain unvaccinated. This does not include some 40 million children across the country for whom a vaccine has not yet been approved.

Even with vaccinations and mask mandates, the half-hearted mitigation efforts are mathematically incapable of containing the pandemic. California’s Governor Gavin Newsom, President Joe Biden and the entire Democratic Party have peddled the lie that they “follow the science” and have been successful in containing the pandemic.

In reality, Biden has overseen a surge that will surpass the worst of the winter 2020–21 surge due to the full reopening of the economy, the encouragement of tourism, and most criminally the full reopening of schools and universities this fall. These homicidal policies have inflamed what was already a dire situation which is needlessly infecting millions of workers and their families and killing hundreds of thousands more.

The international working class must fight for the eradication of COVID-19. Such a fight, in its very nature based on the precedence of human life over private profit, must assume revolutionary demands bound up with the fight for socialism and against the herd immunity policies which have led to this and other entirely avoidable tragedies.

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