

Video: Families of the dead mark one year of the UK's National Covid Memorial Wall

Our reporters
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Five hundred people attended the one-year anniversary of the National Covid Memorial Wall in central London Tuesday.

Bereaved family members came in remembrance of their loved ones and to demand the wall, with over 180,000 painted hearts representing the lives lost to COVID, be made a permanent monument.

Representatives of the Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice UK campaign group presented a petition containing more than 100,000 signatures to Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government in Downing Street.

On Tuesday another 303 deaths were announced in Britain, taking the official total to 164,974. But the number of deaths of those who died with COVID listed as a cause on their death certificate is now over 188,000. Another 45,305 COVID cases were announced in Britain, taking the total number of officially recorded infections to just short of 21 million.

This video comprises footage and photos taken by WSWs reporters during the day's events. It includes the march from the memorial wall, via Parliament, to Downing Street, and the candlelit procession later in the evening.

WSWS reporters spoke to family members who attended the day's events. Donna Brodrick is from Worthing and Nikki Louis is from East Grinstead, both in West Sussex. Donna's husband, Simon Richard Brodrick, died of COVID on February 7, 2021. Nikki lost her mother, Christine Martin, on April 17, 2021.

Donna said, "Myself, my late husband and daughter had COVID in December 2020. My daughter had it, then my husband and I had it. My husband was someone who got a lot worse. After calling 111 they decided he should go to hospital. My daughter, from Brighton, took him into Worthing Hospital and he was looked after from January 5, 2021. He was ventilated two weeks later and sadly passed away on February 7. It has been an awful time,

really."

Nikki said, "My mum did have some underlying conditions. She was only 69. We kept her at home for a lot of the pandemic, nice and safe. We knew that if she caught it, it would be bad. Unfortunately, she had become unwell, she was taken into hospital and spent two and half weeks there. Whilst she was there, she caught COVID.

"She was discharged and was going to recover quite nicely from the previous condition that she had. But four days after being discharged she started coughing. We took the test. It was positive. She was readmitted into intensive care. She spent five weeks there. It was horrendous. The images in my head of seeing her struggle and gasping and not being able to breathe, it haunts me. I can't say enough about how devastating this is for me and my family and all these families."

Donna said, "Today has been lovely. It helps us all because everybody is in the same situation. Some months ago it was proposed we come up to London, the wall is very important to us."

Nikki said, "It is when you meet people you have never met before that you really get what has happened here, and really understand where you are coming from."

Donna and Nikki are both care workers. Donna said, "We have kept really safe, especially the first year, 2020. We wear full PPE. I work in a company in Worthing, in the community, so I visit many people. We were being tested and are still being tested daily. We thought we had escaped this. This wasn't to be. We caught it about a year later. It's awful. We are still wearing PPE and lateral flowing daily before we go out. So we are still protecting the community and nursing patients."

Asked her thoughts on the government's role, Donna said, "I think it is very poor and very upsetting for all these many families and for ourselves. We couldn't go and see our loved ones. I've got family, sons and daughters and grandchildren that couldn't visit my

husband, Simon. We could only visit on the very last day, just before they turned the machines off. That is just an awful thing to happen. We couldn't go and visit the whole month he was in there. We were Facetiming. We Facetimed when he was unconscious, and we were not allowed to go anywhere near him. That was the worst, and I don't think people understand until it happens.

"The government and all the parties make me very angry. We are acting as nursing and care staff, we have been responsible but the government have not been. Not at all."

Nikki said, "Not being able to be with mum when she needed us most. She probably sat there thinking, where are they? Why aren't they here? Not really understanding and so unwell. The image of the Queen sat in that church on her own when she lost Prince Philip, that image haunts me because at that very time that was on our screens, my mum was taking her last breaths, and we weren't there. To know that they [government officials] were out partying is just horrendous."

Donna added, "I think they thought they wouldn't get found out. But these things come to light. They should have acted responsibly and they haven't. If that was us, and we acted like that we would be disciplined and then we would probably be sacked. We wouldn't be allowed to continue because we have a duty of care in our profession."

Nikki said, "You can't set rules and then break them just because you are in power."

Donna said that today, "The numbers are rising, especially in our hometown and so are the deaths." Asked her thoughts on the government's policy of "learning to live with the virus," Donna responded, "It is ignoring it and letting it take its course. I can't see why. Why can't we continue? For the sake of more lives being lost, we should continue."



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