

What's the worst that could happen? The death of Christopher Alder

Janet Alder tells of her brother's unlawful killing in custody and the subsequent police surveillance of her family

We were originally given 11 minutes of video evidence of Christopher dying on a custody suite floor, with his trousers and boxer shorts down to his knees, with five police officers stood about, speaking about charging him with more severe charges to account for him being in the condition that he was in. Speaking about him being unconscious, it's going nowhere, all signs of them being well aware that Christopher was dying, and they basically left him to die on the floor. After that I really thought that, seeing that video evidence, I really thought that the CPS (Crown Prosecution Service) was going to do the right thing, but of course the police officers walked free. They were resigned on full pay and the family was left with no justice.

108 hours of evidence

It wasn't until I got the rest of the CCTV evidence of 108 hours that I actually heard the police officers speaking about CS gassing Christopher, making references to banana boats, speaking about the Ku Klux Klan, and saying that they should've put him in a cell and pretended he was asleep. Now that's something that I have held on to all this time within the fight, I'm not willing to accept the excuses that they give time and time again when somebody dies at the hands of the police. Christopher was CS gassed and he was beaten to death.

After an unlawful killing verdict you would expect the CPS to do the right thing, but they didn't. They

covered all the evidence up. But within that time the police attempted to frame his friend, Jason Paul, who, you know, was in an altercation with him. They put him in a bail hostel for a month and they were going to charge him with Christopher's murder. If it hadn't have been for me walking in to the police station that day, that guy would've been doing murder now.

When I'd come out of the police station, I was absolutely distraught, because I just had a plain clothes police officer draw his chair up to me and tell me he didn't deal with outside organisations. I'd never ever in my life dealt with anything like this, I were just trying my best. You know, with, my family had been brought up in care and I were just trying my best to do with what I knew and bring my two children up. And when I heard about Christopher's death I was absolutely distraught. I didn't know what to do, where to go. So, you know, I'd read up about Amnesty International, but I didn't realise that they'd dealt with multiple deaths. I just needed somebody to support me in what I was saying. And he wheeled his chair up to me, he said, 'We don't deal with organisations, we deal with the family!'

So my legs were shaking and everything and I thought I need to

get out of here. So when I did go out, I was walking up the street, tried to compose myself a little bit and I walked into a bookshop. I just happened to look up do you know at the door, and there I saw a plain clothes police officer. The reason I know he was a police officer is because he had navy blue overalls and a navy blue Berghaus jacket on, but he had a notebook in his hand, with a badge on, and I just made everybody aware in the bookshop, you know, in a panic, I just said, 'The police are following me!' I said, 'My brother's died in police custody!' And everybody went to the door, and then he became the hunted one!

'He's gone now'

He then stood outside Boots, and then they said right, he's gone now. So I turned to the left and I thought well the best thing for you to do is get a solicitor. So it was a row of solicitors and I went into the first one that I could and I'd all the, all these newspaper clippings for the first seven days where they were saying oh we've got a man who's died in police custody, there'd been an incident at a night club and we've got a man in connection with the death, and it kept saying at the bottom of every newspaper, we've got a guy in connection with the death.

Well I walked into the solicitors and I showed her these, I think she

were just the receptionist, I showed her the newspaper, she said, 'They've done it haven't they.' I said, 'Yeah they've done it.' I said, 'But it's like the Gestapo out there,' I said,

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'because I've seen another police officer stood outside and I'd seen him walk through the back earlier on when I was sat waiting.' So they let me out the back door. I jumped into a taxi, I was still panicking and I said to the taxi driver, 'The police are following me.' He said, 'Get out!', so he must have thought I was in trouble.

So I jumped into another one. But I got to the top of my brother's road,

got out the taxi, just walking along the road and there was a patrol car facing me. And every time something like that happens I'm like a rat me, and I can stand to attack without even knowing it, and I just bent down in my bag and I just wrote the registration down and the guy's lapel number, and then, but this was something I've tried to raise with the so called PCA [Police Complaints Authority] at the time, you know, and now the IPCC [Independent Police Complaints Commission], that the police were following me and I was told there was no evidence. I was made out as if I were crazy or something, or making these things up, fabricating it for some unknown reason.

Collapse of the trial

So after the trial had collapsed, I made a decision to follow this to the end, and we took the case to the European Court of Human Rights, and it was only there that the government admitted that they'd failed to do a thorough investigation into Christopher's death, that his death was inhumane and degrading and it was thorough racism. So now I just tell everybody the truth, and the truth is my brother was murdered. And everybody within the system has done everything in their power to terrorise my family and try and cover this up.

In 2000, we thought we gave Christopher a really good sending off. Other families came that had suffered same injustices as myself, and the Army came played the Last Post [Christopher Alder was a former British Army paratrooper who had served in the Falklands War and was decorated for his service with the Army in Northern Ireland.]. His friends came. And we thought that we tried to give him the respect that the system failed to give him. Only to find out in 2011 that we'd buried

a 77-year-old woman. That's the extent the police have gone to terrorise my family. They'd swapped his body with a 77-year-old woman, they'd sent to the hotel a bunch of red roses, anonymously, and there wasn't a police officer in sight that day when that funeral procession went through Hull.

But it took them 11 years to tell us. They weren't even going to tell us the truth! The lady had died in December 1999. Christopher's last post-mortem was in the January. So that's eleven months between each other. They should've been nowhere near each other. They were the only two black people in the whole mortuary and they were in deep freeze.

Now if it hadn't have been for a relative insisting, even though it was 11 years later, to see her loved on and put a scarf on her, because of the Benin culture, they would've buried Christopher in her place. Christopher was in six body bags.

The body bags had the lady's name on. When they exhumed the lady, the body bag that she was in had her name on. Which means the day of the funeral the mortuary staff and the funeral directors were well aware that they were burying Grace Kamara instead of Christopher Alder.

Second whitewash

Now we've had an investigation of the second whitewash, where they're saying there's no paperwork, there's no evidence to say anybody's any wrong doing. But I know that's a lie, another lie. The police were using Christopher for training purposes. A police officer had approached the investigation and said that they'd seen Christopher's body after the

funeral, for training purposes. That's why he was in six body bags.

I honestly thought after the European Court case that it was then time to try and move my life on a bit, and try and get myself back into some kind of balance with my children and everything else that had been put to the back of my life, but then I found out I was under surveillance. When this came out with the Lawrences, Theresa May [the Home Secretary] had made a request for all the police stations to have a look, see if there was any evidence on the Lawrences being spied on, and it came out that I'd been spied on. 23 police officers were involved in surveillance on me. Now, I knew it was from 1998, they're trying to say it was two days at the inquest.

But all I ever did at the inquest was, for eight weeks, go to the court, go and get a sandwich, go back to the court. So, unless they were following me to the sandwich shop, see what kind of chicken sandwich I were getting, I don't know, but 23 police officers were involved in this, and I'm still waiting now for this investigation. But I'm really glad that I've been asked to be part of this [conference today], because they wanted to swallow, they wanted to swallow the surveillance on me and my family, and at least now, do you know what I mean, I'm here, I can be part of this

23 police officers were involved in surveillance on me

big review that you're having, yeah, and, you know, we all know it goes right to the top, but thank you for listening to me today. Thank you. ■

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This is an edited transcript of a speech made by Janet Alder at a joint CCJS and Monitoring Group conference on police spying and racism in February 2015. To find out more about the conference and watch videos of the presentations including Janet Alder's, go to: www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/news/police-corruption-racism-and-spying-conference-film