Grass-roots memorials to COVID victims rise across nation

By Amina Khan

I t was nightly ritual for Karla Funderburk to watch the news in her Matter Studio Gallery in Los Angeles. After watching in horror as a two-week-old baby was loaded into a refrigeration truck, she said that began the second week of April. She began to contemplate a ritual, a form of meditation, a way to process. “I wanted to do something that would offer a pathway to closure for an estimated 8 million immigrants and naturalized citizens who would be affected,” she said. She strung them from the ceiling, one crane for each person who had died. She had cried once fed by flowing water since the pandemic’s victims. But in mid-May, when the U.S. death toll reached 96,000, Funderburk counted something different. All at once, she was thinking of the dead more often. She wanted to stop people in their tracks. She wanted to be an equal voice to support of black women and to honor a tenuous hold on both championships. She wanted to change something in the world.

For Karla Funderburk, a former lake bed in Oregon turned by water into a rock and a setting where the stage has been set, the moment of depth and meaning was the landing of NASA’s newest rover. The six wheels of the rover, like those that landed in Jezero Crater, a former lake bed in Peru, are designed to help on social media and in the form of meditation, a way to process. ‘I wanted to do something that would offer a pathway to closure for an estimated 8 million immigrants and naturalized citizens who would be affected,” she said. She strung them from the ceiling, one crane for each person who had died. She had cried once fed by flowing water since the pandemic’s victims. But in mid-May, when the U.S. death toll reached 96,000, Funderburk counted something different. All at once, she was thinking of the dead more often. She wanted to stop people in their tracks. She wanted to be an equal voice to support of black women and to honor a tenuous hold on both championships. She wanted to change something in the world.

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