

Untold Stories on the National Mall

Ashon T. Crawley's Homegoing honored Black queer church musicians lost to AIDS.

November 13, 2023 By [Trent Straube](#)

Visitors to the National Mall in Washington, DC, had a rare opportunity in September to check out a series of temporary installations, including Ashon T. Crawley's Homegoing, an audiovisual AIDS memorial that centered spirituality and the Black queer church musicians lost to the HIV epidemic.

Crawley, an African-American artist, writer and professor based in Richmond, Virginia, is one of six artists who contributed works of art for Beyond Granite: Pulling Together, a pilot exhibition that sought to answer the question: What stories remain untold on the National Mall?

The National Mall is famous for its permanent larger-than-life monuments, memorials and museums—often made of granite—spread across nearly 700 acres of parks near the U.S. Capitol. Beyond Granite marked the first time that curated, temporary works were displayed on the Mall, according to The Washington Post.

The works were on view in September. You can learn more about the project on [BeyondGranite.org](#). The site describes Homegoing as follows:

"Ashon T. Crawley's Homegoing mourns and celebrates those gone too soon because of the AIDS crisis, past and present, by channeling Black queer music as a spiritual practice. The artist achieves this, as he notes, 'by staging an audiovisual memorial to queer musicians, choir directors and songs from Black church contexts. [These people were] often closeted, the fullness of their stories still untold.' Crawley's composition consists of three movements—Procession, Sanctuary and Benediction—performed in an open-air shrine. With sightlines to the Washington Monument and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Homegoing is situated in accordance with the National Mall's legacy of important sites of mourning and resistance, including the first display of the AIDS Memorial Quilt in 1987 and the ACT UP protests of the late 1980s and early 1990s."

The other artists who exhibited their work on the Mall were Derrick Adams, Tiffany Chung, vanessa

german, Paul Ramírez Jonasa and Wendy Red Star. Their works explored immigration, desegregation, Native American treaties that have been ignored or abrogated and more.

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