

Vandals Deface The Wall Las Memorias AIDS Monument in Los Angeles

TWLM's Richard Zaldivar says the nonprofit is committed to restoring the AIDS monument and providing Los Angeles with HIV services.

January 31, 2025 By Laura Schmidt

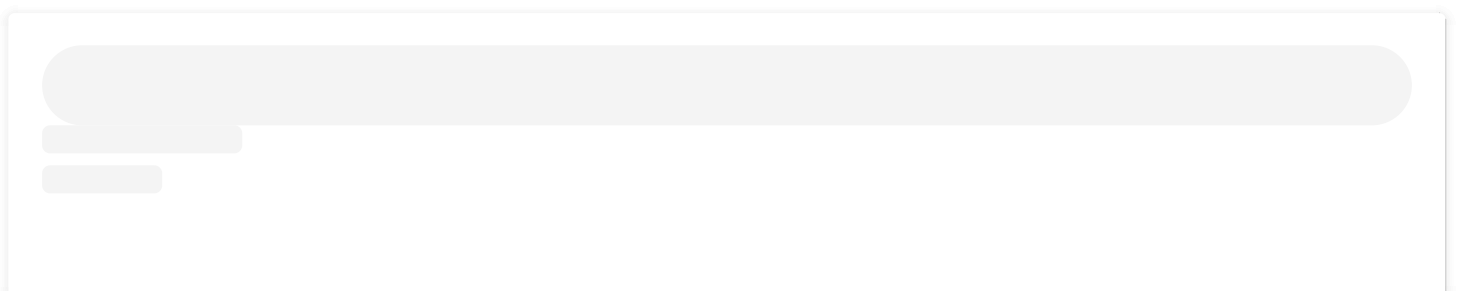
Vandals defaced The Wall Las Memorias (TWLM) AIDS Monument in Los Angeles's Lincoln Park earlier this month, just weeks after its 20th anniversary, according to a [news release](#).

"It is a sacred place to so many people who've lost their friends, lovers, partners, sons, daughters to [AIDS](#)," TWLM executive director Richard Zaldivar told POZ. "It felt like the space was violated."

TWLM is committed to repairing the damage, Zaldivar stressed, while continuing to provide [HIV](#) services amid the chaos and destruction wrought by the Los Angeles wildfires and the changes in HIV and AIDS funding called for by the Trump administration.

TWLM, the nonprofit responsible for the monument, is a community health and wellness organization dedicated to supporting [Latinos](#), [LGBTQ](#) people and other underserved populations throughout Los Angeles.

In 2004, after much community input, the organization unveiled The Wall Las Memorias AIDS Monument, which consists of a park and eight wall panels. Six panels depict life with AIDS among Latinos, while two others are etched with the names of community members lost to AIDS. Today, it features [over 1,600 names](#).





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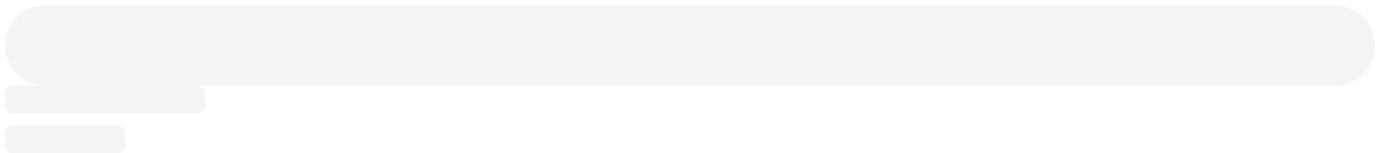
A post shared by The Wall Las Memorias (@the_wall_las_memorias)

On January 13, a visitor noticed that one of the monument wall panels had been destroyed. A police report was filed; further details regarding the vandalism are unknown.

The act of vandalism shocked and concerned the community, according to Zaldivar, who reassures that the monument will be restored as soon as materials arrive in the coming weeks.

TWLM has worked for more than 30 years to reduce stigma surrounding HIV and AIDS and provide a safe space for members of the community to support one another and share resources.

"I'm very grateful that we've had so many years of acceptance and respect from community," Zaldivar said.





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“The monument means so much to me personally for a number of reasons,” he added. “It is the representation of hard work for so many years.”



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The organization offers [various specialized services](#), including [HIV testing](#) and [prevention](#), pre-exposure prophylaxis ([PrEP](#)) access, [substance use](#) prevention and [mental health](#) services. TWLM programs and services are free to all.

TWLM is seeking to expand to offer mental health treatment services to clients. Additionally, the nonprofit is hosting a conference on opiates and methamphetamine in March, the first of its kind on such issues, says Zaldivar.

“I talk to my younger staff and say, ‘We can’t get sidetracked with the fires and what happens in Washington [DC] today. We have to move forward because people are still suffering in these areas, and if we don’t take care of them now, we don’t address these issues, and they’ll get worse.’ So that’s what we’re doing,” Zaldivar said.

Last summer, [the agency expanded its reach and opened a new health and HIV center](#) in downtown Los Angeles. TWLM also launched “¡Ya Basta!” (“Stop!” or “Enough!” in Spanish), a grassroots effort to address HIV/AIDS-related stigma, social justice, promote democratic norms and fight homophobia, transphobia and racism via education, leadership development and community action.

“I believe that when you do a good thing for others, that some people may not understand or see your vision, but they eventually will come to a place of respect,” Zaldivar said. “And I think that’s what I think we’ve done in the 21 years since the monument has been standing.”