West Hollywood's AIDS Monument Celebrates Grand Opening [SLIDESHOW]

Stories: The AIDS Monument includes oral histories, engraved quotes and 147 bronze pillars whose tips illuminate like a candlelight vigil.

November 21, 2025 By Trent Straube

An epicenter of the HIV epidemic since its earliest years, West Hollywood has unveiled a memorial to that loss, leadership and legacy titled Stories: The AIDS Monument. Over a decade in the making, the monument officially opened on Sunday, November 16, with a ceremony and reception that included an array of AIDS activists, local and national politicians, celebrities and the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles.

Stories: The AIDS Monument is located in West Hollywood ParkCourtesy of the City of West Hollywood

Visitors walk among the bronze pillars, or Traces, of Stories: The AIDS Monument in West Hollywood during its unveiling November 16.Courtesy of the City of West Hollywood/Jon Viscott

After the opening ceremonies, held at the nearby SilverScreen Theater at the Pacific Design Center, participants visited the monument during an emotional—and wet—evening unveiling.

For a collection of images from the events, click through this Instagram slideshow:

View this post on Instagram

A post shared by STORIES: The AIDS Monument (@theaidsmonument)

The AIDS Monument is a 7,000-square-foot outdoor plaza located in West Hollywood Park consisting of a field of 147 bronze pillars, called Traces. Each Trace is about 4 by 4 inches at the base and 13 feet tall; many of the tips illuminate at night, recalling candles lit during vigils for those lost to AIDS. Thirty of the Traces are engraved with words—Activism, Loss, Shame, Resilience, Love—representing themes prevalent in stories of the HIV epidemic.

Words engraved in the bronze pillars of the AIDS Monument recount themes of the HIV epidemic.Courtesy of the City of West Hollywood/Jon Viscott

West Hollywood’s AIDS Monument includes engraved quotes by Gil Cuadros, Essex Hemphill and Paul Monette.Courtesy of the City of West Hollywood

In addition, in a section of the field of Traces, are two bronze plaques engraved with quotations from poets Gil Cuadros and Essex Hemphill. Elsewhere is a quotation from author Paul Monette. And engraved in stone are the rallying cries “Silence = Death” and “Action = Life,” made famous by the activist group ACT UP, which was founded in 1987.

Indeed, a central feature of the AIDS Monument is a collection of curated oral stories narrated by celebrities and activists that document over four decades of the HIV epidemic. The mini-stories can be viewed and heard at AIDSMonument.org and on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.

The three examples below include a story about Brady Bunch actor Robert Reed, read by Will & Grace’s Eric McCormack; a story about queer Black filmmaker Marlon Riggs by director Lee Daniels; and a story about mom, actress and activist Elizabeth Glaser and her daughter Ariel, read by son and actor Jake Glaser.



View this post on Instagram

A post shared by STORIES: The AIDS Monument (@theaidsmonument)



View this post on Instagram

A post shared by STORIES: The AIDS Monument (@theaidsmonument)

View this post on Instagram

A post shared by STORIES: The AIDS Monument (@theaidsmonument)

Also included are historial stories and first-person accounts that help preserve the many narratives, flashpoints and views regarding the epidemic. For example, in the below post from 2024, which marked the 30th anniversary of POZ, the magazine’s founder, Sean Strub, tells about launching the publication with the tagline “Help, Hope and HIV.”

View this post on Instagram

A post shared by STORIES: The AIDS Monument (@theaidsmonument)

During the opening ceremonies, held at the SilverScreen Theater at the Pacific Design Center, it was announced that One Institute, which preserves LGBTQ history, is the official steward of the AIDS Monument and will work with the City of West Hollywood Government to create future events and programs tied to the monument, including tours, installations and events, such as those during Pride month and around World AIDS Day, marked each December 1.

View this post on Instagram

A post shared by One Institute (@oneinstitutela)

This year's World AIDS Day will be commemorated with an event 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the monument, followed by a reception at One Gallery, 626 N. Robertson Blvd., which is walking distance from the monument.

The monument's website includes a design tour of the site, a brief history of HIV and AIDS, conversations with AIDS memorial leaders, intergenerational stories, and insights from the memorial's designer, Daniel Tobin, an Australian artist living with HIV.

An image of Stories: The AIDS Monument, which opened in West Hollywood on November 16, 2025Courtesy of the City of West Hollywood

As visitors to Stories: AIDS Monument walk among the Traces—the monument is free and open to the public—it becomes apparent that at one end of plaza, the pillars are spaced more sporadically and farther apart, while at the opposite end, they're organized closer together in a grid, forming a more easily discerned pattern.

This layout, according to AIDSMonument.org, is a metaphor for the transition from the early days of the epidemic, during which people experienced isolation and confusion, to latter periods of organization (of communities and politics) and understanding (of transmission and treatment).

A bird’s eye view of Stories: The AIDS Monument, which opened in West Hollywood on November 16, 2025Courtesy of the City of West Hollywood

At night, the illuminated tips of pillars in West Hollywood’s AIDS Monument recall candlelight vigils to mourn those lost.Courtesy of the City of West Hollywood

“The unveiling of Stories: The AIDS Monument marks a historic moment for the community, ensuring that those we lost are held close in our memory and that the courage and sacrifices of

those who fought and continue to fight are celebrated," said Irwin M. Rappaport, chair of the board of the Foundation for the AIDS Monument, in a press statement.

"The AIDS Monument is a deep and meaningful way to honor the countless lives forever lost or touched by HIV and AIDS," added City of West Hollywood Mayor Chelsea Lee Byers. "It is the embodiment of friends, lovers, activists and visionaries who shaped West Hollywood with their courage and compassion. It stands as a powerful reminder that remembrance is not passive; instead, it calls us to action. We carry forward the legacy of care, advocacy and love that has defined our city."

AIDS activists and political leaders at the unveiling of Stories: The AIDS Monument, which opened in West Hollywood on November 16, 2025Courtesy of the City of West Hollywood/Jon Viscott

An image of Stories: The AIDS Monument, which opened in West Hollywood on November 16, 2025Courtesy of the City of West Hollywood

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/west-hollywoods-aids-monument-celebrates-grand-opening-hiv-slideshow