Wall Of Controversy

July 1, 2003 By Elena de la Cruz

On April 22 Los Angeles' City Council approved plans for an ambitious memorial in Lincoln Park, the Wall/Las Memorias, to break the silence about HIV among LA's Latinos. But anonymous fliers have dotted the park, "alerting" that the project will attract gays and people with HIV, while opponents have threatened to sue, allegedly shouting antigay slurs during a neighborhood meeting. "Many retired folks think this is a park, not a cemetery," 72-year-old Valerio Vizcarra said. "Myself, I don't mind anything that makes the park more beautiful." Las Memorias organizers have asked the city for mediation. In the meantime, *POZ* asked area residents for their two cents.

Ana Rosa Gomez, 21
Homemaker
"It's good to explain to my kid about it, so he starts knowing about AIDS. It would not bother me at all."

Gilbert Aguilar, 17
Student
"It'll be great, especially in this park. Every time Latinos talk about AIDS they immediately start talking about gays, but anyone can get it. A lot of people come here. It will attract them, and hopefully they'll get the message."

Aurora Reyes, 24
Sales
"I don't agree with people who don't want to have to explain to their kids what the memorial is about. It's better to tell kids what is out there, the facts of life. And I don't think it promotes homosexuality—anyone can get infected."

Pedro Gómez, 21
Security Guard
"I did not know about the project but I don't see a problem with it. There's plenty of space. Whoever has HIV or AIDS has it and we don't have to humiliate them for it."

Edith Tapia, 17
Student
"A memorial for the victims of AIDS is good, but the project sounds odd for a park. People come here to relax, not to be bothered."

Al Gómez, 52
Retired
“I hope the project brings togetherness and a reason to live. Put the memorial up! This is a great park—it will just make it better.”

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