



Oprah Pays Tribute to Brother Lost to AIDS

She spoke at the 2024 GLAAD Media Awards.

May 13, 2024 By [Trent Straube](#)

Thanks to Oprah Winfrey, HIV and AIDS took center stage March 14 at the 35th annual GLAAD Media Awards honoring LGBTQ representation in the media. A longtime queer ally, Winfrey received the Vanguard Award. During her acceptance speech, she became emotional while talking about her older brother, who was gay and died 35 years ago of an AIDS-related illness.

Winfrey also shared how she used The Oprah Winfrey Show, which aired from 1986 to 2011, to teach audiences the medical facts about HIV and to highlight stories of folks living with the virus, including advocate Hydeia Broadbent, who first appeared on Winfrey's talk show in 1996 at age 11 (and on the cover of POZ in 1997 and 2017) and who died in February ([go here](#) for a tribute to Broadbent).

Upon receiving the Vanguard Award, Winfrey said:

"Many people don't know this, but 35 years ago, my brother, Jeffrey Lee, passed away when he was just 29 years old from AIDS. Growing up at the time we did, in the community we did, we didn't have the language to understand or speak about sexuality and gender in the way we do now. And at the time, I didn't know how deeply my brother internalized the shame that he felt about being gay. I wish he could have lived to witness these liberated times and to be here with me tonight....

"What I know for sure is that when we can see one another, when we are open to supporting the truth of a fellow human, it makes for a full, rich, vibrant life for us all. And that's what I wish my brother Jeffrey could have experienced: a world that could see him for who he was and appreciate him for what he brought to this world. I am proud to receive this honor. Thank you, GLAAD."

