World AIDS Day 2025

The HIV community marked the day with traditional remembrances and more.

February 16, 2026 By Joe Mejía

For the first time since 1988, the U.S. government did not observe World AIDS Day last year. Noted each December 1, the day is intended to honor the millions of people lost to the disease, acknowledge progress made in the fight against HIV and AIDS and raise awareness among the general public that the epidemic persists. Last November, under the direction of President Trump, the State Department instructed employees and grantees to "refrain from publicly promoting World AIDS Day through any communication channels, media engagements, speeches or other public-facing messaging," according to an email obtained by the New York Times.

Longtime HIV activist Peter Staley, a cofounder of PrEP4All, which seeks to expand access to pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV prevention, called the move "petty and hostile," adding, "It just felt very reminiscent of the Reagan administration," referring to the former president's catastrophic neglect of AIDS in the 1980s during the peak era of the epidemic.

Undeterred, the HIV community marked the day with messages of protest against the newly announced Trump policy, along with more traditional remembrances, like candlelight vigils, the unveiling of new AIDS memorials and more, all of which was documented and shared via posts on social media, like those collected here.



For its first World AIDS Day ceremony, the recently unveiled STORIES: The AIDS Monument in West Hollywood hosted an event where community members gathered to remember, mourn, renew their activism and hear moving stories from the community.@theaidsmonument and @oneinstitutela/instagram



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