TuSalud

Nearly 3,000 AIDS Memorial Quilt Panels Displayed in San Francisco [SLIDESHOW]

The massive display marked the AIDS Memorial Quilt's 35th anniversary and a return to its birthplace. Alas, rain cut the event short.

June 13, 2022 By Jilleen Barrett

Nearly 3,000 hand-sewn panels of the AIDS Memorial Quilt blanketed the Robin Williams Meadow in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park on June 11 and 12. The community event marked the 35th anniversary of the AIDS Quilt, which was first stitched in San Francisco. It also represented the largest display of the Quilt in over a decade.

Unfortunately, rain on the second day forced volunteers to pack up the panels early, and the closing ceremony was canceled. Still, the display and its related online events offered "a beautiful celebration of life and a recognition of the power of the Quilt today as a teaching tool for health and social justice," said John Cunningham, CEO of the National AIDS Memorial, the custodian of the Quilt, in a press release.



Panels of the AIDS Memorial Quilt displayed in San FranciscoLiz Highleyman

“The Quilt is an important reminder,” he added, “that the HIV/AIDS crisis is still not over and there is much work to be done, particularly in communities of color, where HIV is on the rise in many parts of the country.”

That sentiment was underscored by Duane Cramer, the director of community engagement for the Quilt. Cramer, a Black photographer, whose father died of AIDS-related illness, tested HIV positive himself several years later. “When I hear people say that AIDS is over or that it’s not a problem today, it really angers me,” he told The Associated Press in a video about the display (watch it below or on YouTube).

“I know that in my community and in many communities where people of color live, they don’t have access to health care, they don’t have access to PrEP,” Cramer said, referring to pre-exposure prophylaxis, the daily pills and long-acting injections that prevent HIV.

Presented by pharma giant Gilead Sciences, the 35th anniversary Quilt display included 350 blocks from the Quilt, laid out on the ground by volunteers. Each block of the Quilt measures 12 feet by 12 feet and is made up of eight 3-foot-by 6-foot panels. Roughly the size of a grave, each panel represents someone lost to the epidemic.

The weekend event included panels from the earliest and bleakest days of the epidemic and more than 100 new panels that have never been seen before. You can read a list of the names displayed this weekend here.

Massive as it was, the display represented only 6% of the 50,000 panels that constitute the AIDS Memorial Quilt. Amazingly, an interactive display on AIDSMemorial.org allows you to explore, view and search all the panels in the collection.

To learn more about the Quilt, click #AIDS Memorial Quilt, where you’ll find headlines such as “AIDS Memorial Quilt—All 50,000 Panels—Is Moving to a New Home,” “Waking in Havana: A Memoir About AIDS in Cuba” and “See Leftover Fabric From the AIDS Memorial Quilt Made Into Coronavirus Masks.”

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