

The Last One: Unfolding The AIDS Memorial Quilt

In the eighties and nineties, as AIDS ravaged the United States gay community, the AIDS Memorial Quilt was born out of a public battle for treatment and understanding. The Last One is a feature-length documentary tracing its history and the role it continues to play today. Through the intensely personal stories of founders, volunteers, and panel-makers, The Last One examines how stigma exacerbated and still fuels a disease that currently infects 34 million men, women and children around the globe – including 50,000 new infections a year in the US alone.

Following the Quilt's founder, Cleve Jones, and dedicated volunteer Gert McMullen, we trace the Quilt's beginnings and explosive growth. In 2012, the Quilt goes on the road for a ten-city "Call My Name" tour and we join a core group of volunteers. Their stories illuminate the epidemic's impact on the African American community, particularly women and youth, along with issues of access, education, and stigma.

Our story culminates at the 2012 Smithsonian Folklife Festival, where the Quilt returns to the National Mall for the first time in fifteen years, and celebrities and activists pay tribute to a Quilt panel which reads simply, "The Last One." AIDS still threatens nearly every sector of society, but it is finally realistic to imagine a day when the NAMES Project can sew "The Last One" panel into the Quilt, representing the last new infection, the last AIDS case, the last AIDS death.