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AIDS/HIV as Portrayed in Films - II

Lead: As the AIDS pandemic began to spread and claim more lives, the movie industry responded with films that took the level of sophistication to a new height.

Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts

Content: During the 1980s, in response to society's apparent lack of concern for those suffering from AIDS, activist movies emerged which challenged people indifference and their government's inertia,

such as *Target City Hall* (1989) and *Stop the Church* (1990) which criticized the church's pettiness and sometimes hostility to the victims of the disease. *Rockville is Burning* (1989) addressed the widespread homophobia which impeded attempts to halt spread of the disease. Sympathy stories such *Buddies* (1985) and *An Early Frost* (1985) examined the grieving of the families of AIDS victims as well as creating sympathetic characters in an 'infected as victim' trope.

By the 1990s well-developed characters such as the lawyer played by Tom Hanks' in the award-winning film *Philadelphia* (1993) created powerful sympathy for those struggling hopelessly against a disease which had only one tragic outcome.

The coming of drugs that impeded the growth of the disease in those infected also changed the approach of the entertainment industry which began to expand the variety

of story lines. *Angels in America* (2003) and *Life Support* (2007) explored the way in which AIDS affected people after they got it. Biographical films such as *Behind the Candelabra* (2013) and *Dallas Buyers' Club* (2014) focused in retrospect on how individuals dealt with the coming of the pandemic before there was a chance for survival.

While the coming of this plague has produced extraordinary challenges to affected communities, film-makers helped focus attention on the need for policy change, cultural acceptance for victims and for gay men in general and medical support for those struggling with the disease.

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Resources

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