WACO Theater Center Announces Launch of Still Here Magazine, Centering Black Women Impacted by HIV

WACO Theater Center announces Still Here Magazine & Celebratory Launch Event.

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, February 4, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- WACO (Where Art Can Occur) Theater Center today announced the launch of Still Here, an editorial volume magazine produced by WACO Theater Center with generous support from Gilead Sciences, Inc. The publication is part of WACO's ongoing Still Here project and centers the voices, experiences, and resilience of Black women who have been impacted by HIV—whether through living with HIV themselves or through family, loved ones, and community connections.

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>
> *Tina Knowles*

This publication marks the second chapter of an ongoing initiative dedicated to amplifying the voices and lived experiences of Black women impacted by HIV and AIDS.

Last fall, WACO Theater Center produced Still Here Live Experience—an immersive, in-person event that transformed a working hair salon into a dynamic space for art, performance, and dialogue, honoring its long-standing role as a site of healing, connection, and community among Black women.

The project unfolded in two parts: The Installation and The Performance. The Installation invited audiences to engage with curated exhibits staged within hair dryers and shampoo bowls, while The Performance featured powerful work by five remarkable artists: Marinda Anderson, Neverending Nina, Milan Reneau, Jude Tibeau, and Akilah A. Walker.

"Storytelling is central to the work we do at WACO," says Shay Wafer, Executive Director of WACO Theater Center. "With Still Here, we wanted to create something lasting—an archival object that honors the complexity of Black women's lives and confronts the silence and stigma that still surround HIV."
To celebrate the launch of the special edition of Still Here, WACO Theater Center will host launch event on Thursday, February 12, 6:00pm-8:00pm at The Gathering Spot in Los Angeles' historic West Adams District. The evening will feature a panel conversation, light bites, and community

gathering in honor of the publication.

The magazine is guided by Tina Knowles, Artistic Director and Founder of WACO Theater Center, whose personal connection to the issue continues to shape the project's vision.

"This work is deeply personal to me," says Knowles. "HIV has touched my family, and I know how devastating silence can be. Still Here is about truth, compassion, and honoring Black women whose stories deserve care, visibility, and respect."
Edited by journalist and cultural critic Jamilah Lemieux, Still Here arrives at a moment when public conversations around HIV have faded, even as Black women continue to be disproportionately impacted. According to the CDC, in 2023 in the U.S., Black females accounted for 50% of HIV diagnoses despite only accounting for 13% of the female population. Black women were diagnosed with HIV at 11 times the rate of white non-Hispanic women.
"There was a time when HIV and AIDS were part of our everyday cultural conversation," says Lemieux. "Now, despite advancements in treatment, too many people believe the crisis is over. Still Here exists to challenge that assumption and to remind us that Black women are still bearing an unequal burden—and their stories matter."'

Still Here features essays, personal narratives, poetry, bold visual art, photography, interviews, cultural criticism, and interactive elements. The magazine brings together writers, artists, activists, and cultural workers to examine HIV through lenses of health, pleasure, motherhood, activism, memory, and the future.
"Gilead partners with organizations that move people and improve outcomes. WACO Theater Center, is a grantee that embodies this commitment through Still Here, which honors the lived experiences of Black women and strengthens community ties. We are grateful to support this important work and to affirm the transformative power of storytelling," says Rashad Burgess, Vice-President, Corporate Responsibility, Gilead Sciences, Inc.

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About WACO Theater Center: WACO (Where Art Can Occur) Theater Center is a non-profit organization based in Los Angeles dedicated to empowering artists and audiences alike by providing a platform for stories rooted in the African diaspora. WACO's artistic and education programming is rooted in Black art and culture, incubating new creative ideas, encouraging collaboration, and fostering an environment for community dialogue around diasporic stories. Through performing and visual arts, mentorship, and education, WACO provides a home for artists and youth to share their voices and showcase their creativity to connect and inspire

others. WACO, in partnership with the City of Los Angeles, will begin co-operating and co-managing the Vision Theatre Performing Arts Center located in the historic Leimert Park Village in 2026.

For additional information on the Still Here launch, please visit https://wacotheatercenter.com/.

About Gilead Sciences: Gilead Sciences, Inc. is a biopharmaceutical company that has pursued and achieved breakthroughs in medicine for more than three decades, with the goal of creating a healthier world for all people. The company is committed to advancing innovative medicines to prevent and treat life-threatening diseases, including HIV, viral hepatitis, COVID-19, cancer and inflammation. In 2025, Gilead announced a planned $32 billion investment to further strengthen its U.S. footprint to power the next era of discovery, job creation and public health preparedness – while continuing to invest globally to ensure patients everywhere benefit from its scientific innovation. Gilead operates in more than 35 countries worldwide, with headquarters in Foster City, Calif.

For more information about Gilead, please visit the company's website at www.gilead.com, follow Gilead on X/Twitter (@Gilead Sciences) and LinkedIn (@Gilead-Sciences).

Thursday, February 12
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

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