



**BARBARA FERRER, Ph.D., M.P.H., M.Ed.**  
Director

**MUNTU DAVIS, M.D., M.P.H.**  
County Health Officer

**MEGAN McCLAIRE, M.S.P.H.**  
Chief Deputy Director

**RITA SINGHAL, M.D., M.P.H.**  
Director, Disease Control Bureau

**MARIO J. PÉREZ, M.P.H.**  
Director, Division of HIV and STD Programs  
600 South Commonwealth Avenue, 10th Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90005  
TEL (213) 351-8001 • FAX (213) 387-0912

[www.publichealth.lacounty.gov](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov)



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**Remarks from The Wall Las Memorias World AIDS Day Event  
By Mario J. Pérez, MPH, Director of the Division of HIV and STD Programs**

On behalf of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Division of HIV and STD Programs, I join you in remembering the more than 38,315 Los Angeles County residents (sons and daughters, mamas y papas, brothers and sisters, esposos, wives, friends, maestros, colleagues, abuelos y abuelas) who have succumbed to HIV – many of their names are on The Walls behind us. I join you as we stand in support of the more than 57,000 Los Angeles County residents living with HIV, more than 5,000 of whom are unaware of their infection (but whom we are eager to diagnose and link to care as soon as possible.)

This night in Lincoln Park, for so many years and for so many people, is deeply personal – it offers a space for reflection and recommitment, and tonight it offers a space to re-dedicate a wonderful symbol of remembrance, hope and resilience.

In the midst of one global epidemic, COVID-19, we re-double our efforts to end another, an HIV epidemic that has for forty years shone a bright light on the role that injustice, stigma, fear and shame play in exacerbating health inequities, not just here in Los Angeles, but all over the world. To Richard and to our family at The Wall Las Memorias, thank you again for your vision, persistence and undying commitment to foster community engagement and action. We remain indebted.

A few years ago, we released the Los Angeles County HIV/AIDS Strategy for 2020 and Beyond with a theme, Once and For All, De Una Vez y Para Todos. Our bold goal setting, our collective road map guided by four pillars of the Ending the HIV Epidemic Initiative (Test, Treat, Prevent and Respond), our focused interventions and our expanded community engagement and mobilization efforts are showing promise, but our progress is tempered.

More than ever, our progress against HIV is predicated on our ability as a community, *de una vez y para todos*, to also overcome the ravages of undiagnosed and untreated mental illness, meth and opiate use disorder, homelessness and racism. As the complexity of our charge increases, so must the breadth and depth of our community and public-private partnerships. To channel Martin Luther King, Jr., we still need the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals. There is still no time for apathy and complacency. This is still a time for vigorous and positive action.

So tonight, as we remember, rededicate, and resolve to forge ahead on the road to Ending the HIV Epidemic, I invite you to lean on each other, our leaders, and the vast complement of partners committed to improving the human condition, to do more.

¿Porqué? ¡Porque si se puede!