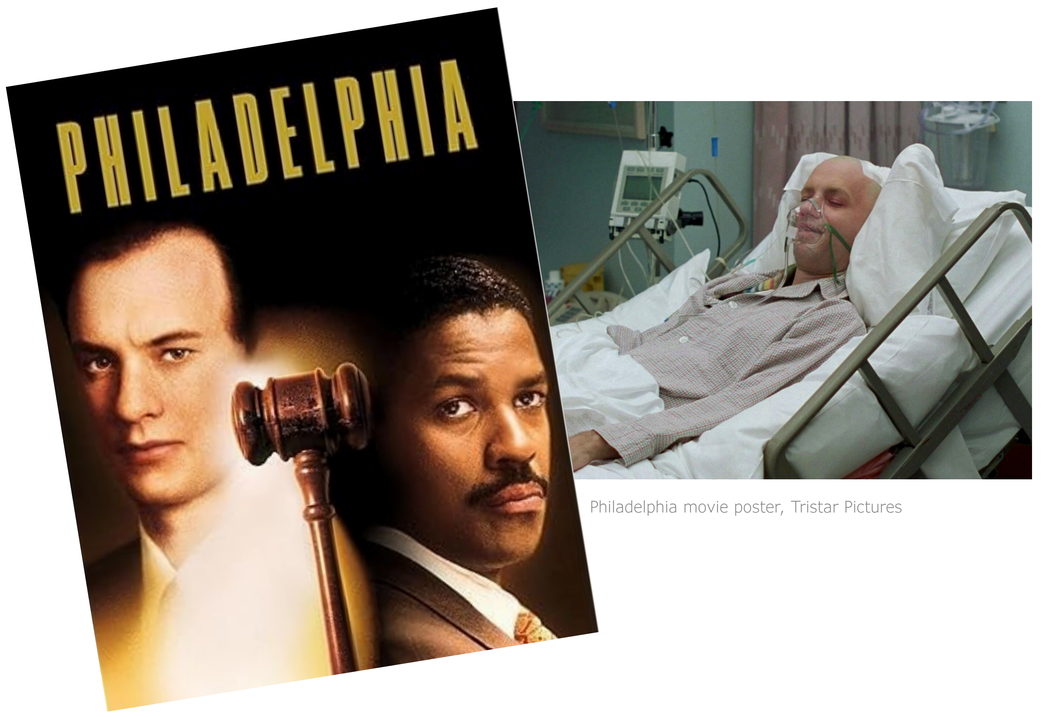
AIDS in America

Film & TV Depictions

Philadelphia (1993)

Andrew Beckett (Tom Hanks) is a corporate lawyer who loses his job over his diagnosis after struggling to hide his growing symptoms. With the help of Joe Miller (Denzel Washington), a personal injury lawyer whom Beckett had opposed in court previously, wins a lengthy legal battle with his former firm just before his death. Received numerous accolades including Best Actor for Tom Hanks. It was Hollywood's first big budget attempt at addressing the AIDS crisis, and was inspired by the real cases of attorneys Geoffrey Bowers and Clarence Cain.



Philadelphia movie poster, Tristar Pictures



The Cast of Mr. Belvedere, ABC Studios 1985

"Wesley's Friend" Mr. Belvedere (1986)

Surprisingly, one of the first depictions of HIV in American television was in Season 2 of the family centered sitcom Mr. Belvedere. In a well-meaning but ultimately cringe inducing plot, Wesley, the youngest member of the Owens family, gets a larger role in a school President's day pageant when one of his friends, Danny, contracts HIV through a blood transfusion. Much like his inspiration Ryan White, Danny is removed from school by fearful parents. Wesley helps his friend shed the stigma and publicly accepts his friend. The episode, while groundbreaking, suffers from a sometimes inappropriate attempts at humor about the crisis.

Real World San Francisco (1994)

The third season of MTV's Real World was set in San Francisco and featured its first openly gay and HIV positive cast member Pedro Zamora. Pedro quickly became a fan favorite and an icon for his activism during filming of the show. Hours after the season finale of his season of the Real World, Pedro passed away. He was 22 years old.



The Cast of The Real World San Francisco MTV 1994

> "In his short life, Pedro educated and enlightened our Nation. He taught all of us that AIDS is a disease with a human face and one that affects every American, indeed every citizen, of the world. And he taught people living with AIDS how to fight for their rights and live with dignity."
>
> President Bill Clinton on Pedro Zamora's death, November 1994





Additional films on DVD dealing with AIDS available to check out at the UW Libraries include: An Early Frost (1985), Parting Glances (1986), Long Time Companion (1990), And the Band Played On (1993), The Cure (1995), Angels in America (2004), Yesterday (2006), Dallas Buyers Club (2014), and The Normal Heart (2014 based on the 1985 play). To see some streaming documentaries and news features on AIDS, search the AVON: Academic Video Online database.