



Brother to Brother

Affirmation

In the Life at the Worst of Times

(An Excerpt)

Scavengers.
Eking out the semblance
Of an existence on shredded emotions
strewn about the streets and parks
Of New York, Atlanta, Los Angeles,
San Francisco, Chicago, D.C.

Carrion eaters all.
Mulling over and feeding on
Feelings that have been dead
Long enough to putrefy in the eyes,
Reek in the genitals
Of even the youngest of sissies
Who have come to call the Life "home."

~ Author unknown

SAM CBA Presentations

UJIMA Skills-Building Institute
Atlanta, Ga.Feb. 14-17, 2002

Community Planning Leadership Summit
(CPLS)
Chicago, Ill.March 6-9, 2002

Technology Transfer Training
Jackson, Miss.April 7-12, 2002

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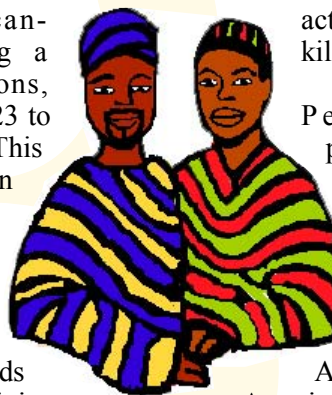
In AIDS fight, homophobia hinders blacks continued

SOUTHERN AFRICAN-AMERICAN MEN'S CBA PROJECT

The Deadly Secret *By Gracie Bonds Staples*

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At the end of the second decade of the AIDS epidemic, African-Americans are experiencing a steady rise in infections, especially among men ages 23 to 29 who have sex with men. This tragic increase is puzzling in light of the slow down in rates among white gay men, yet not so puzzling when seen in the light of a tradition of homophobia and negative attitudes towards African-American men in religious communities. Recent research makes



clear that unacknowledged homosexual activity may be a secret that kills.

According to Dr. John Peterson, psychology professor at Georgia State University, who is conducting a study of gay and bisexual men ages 15 to 25, it's pretty well known that half of the cases of AIDS among African-American men have been among men who have sex with men.

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In AIDS fight, homophobia hinders blacks *By Cynthia Tucker*

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They said all the right things, but that won't be enough. They asked for more federal dollars, but that won't be enough, either.

If a group of African-American politicians, activists and celebrities who met recently in Atlanta are serious about fighting AIDS, they will have to do more speeches and solicit funds from Washington. They will have to declare war on the prejudice, fear and ignorance that allow the disease to spread.

Two decades after scientists came across this deadly new virus, black America finds itself under assault. African-Americans, only 12 percent of the nation's population, account for half of all new HIV cases. A recent study by the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention found rates of infection among young black men rivaling rates in South Africa, where AIDS threatens national stability.

At a two-day meeting of the Millennium organized earlier this month by the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, black members of Congress, health care professionals and well-known activists, including Coretta Scott King, called on the Bush administration to provide millions more a year to fight HIV in black America.

The proposal makes sense, as far as it goes. Massive amounts of money are needed for AIDS treatment as well as education. Because of high rates of poverty, black Americas have had less access to the expensive medicines that



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"Apollo on 4th Avenue"

Innovative HIV prevention program presented

HIV prevention strategies require innovative approaches to maximize the community mobilization process. AAMSM, transgenders, drag performers, and youth brought the iApollo Theateri to life in Louisville, Ky. on Nov. 17 at the Spaulding Auditorium Theater. More than 60 spectators, cheering or booing for their favorite performer, were either introduced to or reacquainted with a renewed HIV awareness. The message of prevention and acceptance was a ribbon which pulled through the entire two and a half hour evening. The event was in celebration of the first year anniversary of the Health Initiatives for Men – 100 Concerned Men & H.E.R. project. H.I. M. – 100 Concerned Men is made up of AAMSM. The Health Emergency Response component is the transgender or drag element of the organization.

Last November, the group's initial event was a mini-conference featuring workshops on HIV prevention and a keynote address by best-selling author E. Lynn Harris at the historic Java House Cafe.

This year, the stakes were higher and involved a broad range of community members. Auditions were held and only the best performers were selected. Each of them participated in an HIV prevention workshop as a part of the planning phase. The singers, character impersonators, models, vocal groups, and performers in a special category called iBest New Facei were all fabulous. A four-piece band of

highly skilled musicians accompanied live vocalists.

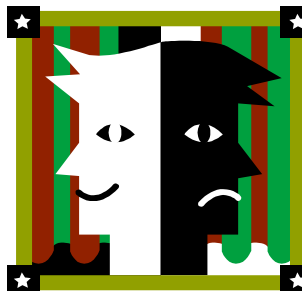
The iBest New Facei category consisted of 10 AAMSM ranging from 17 to 23 years old. They performed dance routines, presented pre-recorded HIV prevention commercials on a large screen at the back of the stage and modeled self-selected attire.

The winners in each of the categories were as follows: Vocalist, Jeff Hall; Vocal Group, PurKut; Character Performance, Kelly Matthews as Gladys Knight; Model, James Hamilton; Best New Face, Keith Dickerson. The Best of Show was awarded to the husband and wife singing duo, iPurKut.i

The event was successful due to the tremendous community involvement in the process of formulating the show. The idea for the show materialized as a direct result of a community mobilization training conducted in

Louisville by Keith Bush and Anthony Fox, regional capacity-building assistance specialists for the Southern African-American Men's Capacity-Building Assistance Project at the Mississippi Urban Research Center at Jackson State University.

Discussions are underway to expand the program with a second year iApollo on 4th Avenuei event. The community loves to showcase its talent. This first iApollo on 4th Avenuei was a perfect vehicle to teach an extensive range of community members about HIV prevention in a totally engaging way.



In AIDS fight, homophobia hinders blacks continued...

have extended the lives of many AIDS patients.

But this plague is not like cancer or diabetes or Parkinson's. It cannot be fought with the traditional methods alone -- federal funds for research and treatment, celebrity pitches for still more research dollars and an eventual scientific breakthrough. The breakthrough will come, God willing, one day soon. But Americans could be beyond help by then. Because AIDS is

sexually transmitted and its earliest victims in this country were gay men, it carries a stigma that defies logic. It travels with not only the fear that surrounds any deadly disease but also a host of prejudices, hatreds and false assumptions that go to the heart of America's sexual hypocrisies and hysterias -- and homophobia.

And, heaven knows, black America has its share of those. While white gay activists have spent the last two decades

The Deadly Secret continued...

Peterson's research published in the 1998 *AIDS Education and Prevention* journal shows that African-American bisexual and gay men believe they face greater homophobia than whites and they respond to it differently than whites.

While white men who have sex with men are more likely to leave families and communities, particularly in rural areas and small towns, and move to gay communities in major cities like San Francisco, Atlanta, or New York, this is not true of black men. There is no such thing as a gay community for African-American men. The African-American community provides them with support to deal with racism they experience in the general population and in the white mainstream gay community, Peterson said.

For many years, according to Perness C. Seele, founder of Balm in Gilead, a New York AIDS advocacy organization, religious leaders in the black community used the Bible to justify their treatment of gays and lesbians. That's the throat-hold on the issue, she said.

The grip of intolerance is beginning to change in cities across the country. One of the things that allows us to respond effectively to the issue of homophobia is, we have a clear biblical mandate to love one another, she said the

organizing networks to provide education, counseling and information about treatment, black America has done little to get the word out about safe sex. Indeed, a virulent homophobia emanating from black pulpits and a widespread embarrassment about black homosexuality have stymied outreach.

There is little that President Bush or the National Institutes of Health can do about that. The battle against black homophobia has to be fought by black preachers, athletes, actors, and

Rev. Edwin C. Sanders II, pastor of Metropolitan Interdenominational Church in Atlanta. At a meeting of national African-American leaders who met in Atlanta recently, the agreed upon crucial culprit in the spread of HIV/AIDS was homophobia. We need to get our heads out of the sand, Rev. Charles E. Wells Sr., pastor of Flipper Temple AME Church, said. This epidemic affects just about every family in our congregation.

The double lives of African-American men afraid to confront their sexuality also tragically affect African-American women. According to the CDC, for African-American women, who make up 19 percent of all new HIV infections and 64 percent of new HIV infections among women of all races, the leading cause of exposure to HIV has been heterosexual activity. The most likely scenario in many cases in women is that their partner contracted the virus after having sex with another man, said Dr. Helen Gayle, director of the CDC's National Center for HIV, STD and TB. It gives a clear picture that this is an important issue and one we must grapple with if we're going to reach young men of color who are having sex with other men, she added.

celebrity-activists. Some have joined the fight: Coretta Scott King remains outspoken about the prejudices that block AIDS (although her older son, Martin Luther King III, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, says little about AIDS.) Jesse Jackson, too, has joined the effort, urging black preachers to set a public example by getting tested for HIV. But those efforts are too quiet, too small. This movement must grow. The lives of black men and women depend on it.



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Focus

The Southern African-American Men's Capacity-Building Assistance Project seeks to motivate, mobilize, increase participation and involvement of African-American men who have sex with other men (MSM) in the delivery of HIV prevention services and the community planning process. This project also seeks to foster collaborations and linkages of HIV prevention programs targeting African-American (MSM) with these stakeholders and community leaders.

The Southern African-American Men's Capacity-Building Assistance Project's geographical area of coverage is as follows: AL, AR, FL, KY, LA, MS, OK, TN, TX.

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Skills-Building Course Calendar

Community Mobilization.....**Nov. 1 - 2**
Mobile, Alabama

Community Planning.....**Nov. 29 - 30**
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Community Mobilization.....**Feb. 25 - 26**
Jackson, Mississippi

Community Planning.....**Feb. 28 - March 1**
San Antonio, Texas

Community Mobilization.....**April 1 - 2**
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Community Mobilization.....**April 18 - 19**
Jacksonville, Florida

Community Planning.....**May 9 - 10**
Lexington, Kentucky

Community Mobilization.....**May 20 - 21**
Huntsville, Alabama

Community Planning TOT.....**June 3 - 4**
Orlando, Florida

Community Planning TOT.....**June 13 - 14**
New Orleans, Louisiana

Community Planning TOT.....**June 27 - 28**
Dallas, Texas

Community Planning.....**July 18 - 19**
Miami, Florida

Community Planning TOT.....**July 29 - 30**
Memphis, Tennessee

For information about these courses, please call the Southern African-American Men's Capacity-Building Assistance Project, toll-free, at 1-866-JSU-MURC (578-6872).

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