

## Way Out of Control

The highly publicized Peter Jennings ABC TV special on AIDS in Black America (aired August 24th) was quite aptly entitled "Out of Control". Because that is what it was. A fool. With the exception of some cogent remarks by Phill Wilson and David Malebranche, most of the commentary about Black gay/same gender loving men was obviously edited to depict us as the harbingers of disease for Black innocents--women and children. The focus on Black gay men being conflated into yet another down low diatribe--out of control. Peter Jennings shaming gay brothas about infecting their wives--portrayed as if they were helpless victims destroyed by their no count triflin sexually depraved husbands--out of control. One of the few dignified moments came when brother Michael Banner called Jennings out on his self righteous indictment. Oh and did you catch the sequenced dl baiting of sanctimonious Black women who blame the plague on men who have sex with men? Notice how their sweeping statements went unchecked, and way out of control. I gagged at the paternalistic nerve of the reporter who asked Jesse Jackson, whom the white media has apparently crowned as King of Black America, how this could have happened on "your watch." I guess they forgot to mention how President Ronald Reagan, the "great communicator" avoided mentioning AIDS for years while gays and people of color were ticking off like mayflies during his watch. White men like Jennings and his cohorts who have controlled the media for the span of the epidemic and are just now getting around to having a Primetime special about the subject, they exemplify the height of white supremacist arrogance--out of control and off the chain. Let us not forget Passa Megapimp TD Jakes excusing the silence, judgement, and misinformation promulgated by black pastors by claiming that AIDS was not in the Bible. Coon, thou art loosed--Jakes is a laughably tragic clown--a dangerous minstrel in the conservatives' court. Throughout this self congratulatory show, there was little acknowledgement of the symbiotic connections between homophobia, misogyny, class oppression and AIDS. No critique of prevention dollars for gay men being held hostage to puritanical ideologies. No examination of young Black gay and bisexual mens lives, those who are much more profoundly affected than Black women or any other population in the U.S. No queries about flat funding for Ryan White dollars in the face of increasing needs and shrinking resources. This mess was hella out of control. And so are we. Black People. Have reached a new low in our willingness, our readiness to be bought off to tell lies or bossed to say nothing? I need a community of people who are capable of doing whatever, whenever as Essex Hemphill challenged. At this point, I do not think I have the luxury of particular preferences about the sexual orientation, race or ethnicity of those who are willing to make real the vision for our salvation.

*"Your crown has been bought and paid for. All you must do is put it on your head." James Baldwin*