

## **Stigma as an Obstacle to AIDS Action: The Case of the African American Community**

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This article was reminiscent of the article about drag performers, in that men that were obviously homosexual were utilized for the stage to get the congregation "pumped" up for the lord; yet they were condemned for their lifestyle during the sermon. African American men are conditioned to be strong, oversexed/ladies man/player (Mandingo), and being homosexual doesn't fit in that mold. African Americans tend to have strong religious ties to their church and are taught that homosexuality isn't in God's plan. Men that are gay tend to lead double closeted lives, straight at church and in their waking life and gay (if they are honest with themselves) other times of their lives. Self-hatred is a huge problem in the African American community especially involving one's sexual orientation, because you have God whom you don't want to disappoint, society telling you how you should conduct yourself, and you have the real you that is hidden beneath a series of daily masks. The article discussed how AIDS is stigmatized in the African American community and much of the stigmatization stems from homophobia. I was floored when I read the transcript of the young men detailing how they would accept someone that contracted AIDS through IDU, but not a man that contracted the disease through homosexual activity. AIDS is AIDS, no matter how you contracted it once you have it you HAVE it. The fact that they would distinguish between sex and drug use isn't exactly surprising. Homosexuality isn't exactly welcomed with open arms in the African American community.