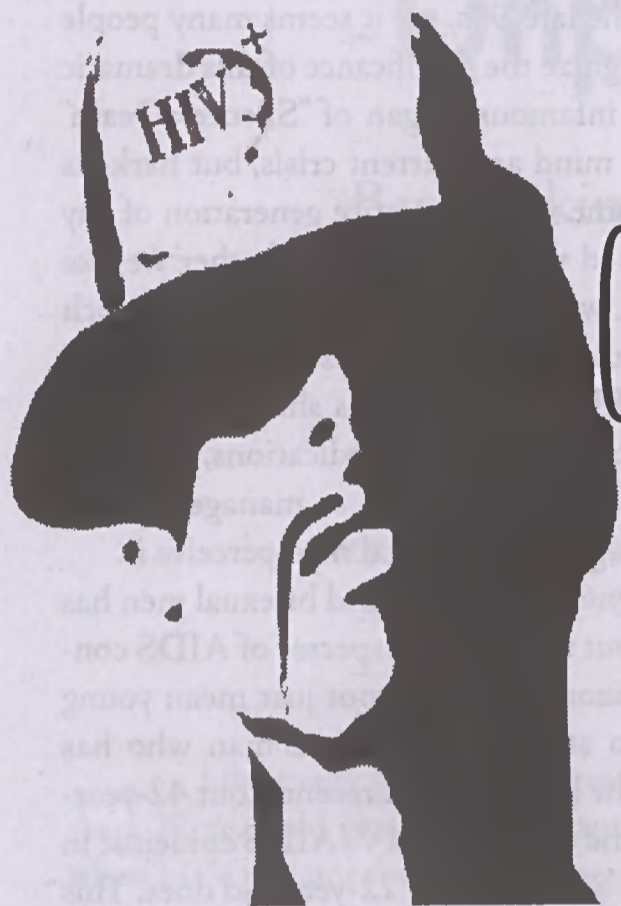


Expanding the Boundaries of Blackness:



(Re) Framing Black Men and HIV Prevention

by Justin Smith

In the summer of 2005 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released an alarming report on HIV/AIDS among men who have sex with men. The investigation revealed that, in the sample of men from five major U.S. cities included in the study, 46% of the black men were found to be HIV positive. Despite these shocking statistics, there was barely a blip about this report on the national media radar. This speaks volumes about where we are with respect to our understanding of HIV/AIDS in the third decade of the epidemic. To be sure, much progress has been made since HIV first appeared in the early 1980s. New therapies have transformed HIV from a death sentence into a manageable chronic condition; however, these advances do not give us the luxury of thinking that our work is done with respect to fighting HIV on these shores. While the Bonos of the world rally much needed attention and resources to address the ravages of HIV

in Durban, who is focusing our attention on the ravages of HIV in Durham?

My intention is not to not set up a zero-sum paradigm where focusing on the global epidemic takes away from focusing attention on the domestic epidemic; we need to be consistently vigilant in our fight on both fronts. However, I think that we must move beyond raising awareness to focusing on those who the epidemic is currently having the most devastating impact on in this country - black men who have sex with men. The lives and experiences of black men who have sex with men have been noticeably absent in our national dialogue about HIV. I want to highlight some of the issues fueling the epidemic among black men and meditate on what might be done to address them.

In my position, I work with other young people, mostly other young black men, who are living with HIV. Many are college students.