Unfortunately, the cultural perception of gay and bisexual males as less masculine may lead to their assertions of masculinity through engagement in unprotected sexual behaviors (Halkitis, Green, & Wilton, 2004; Harper, 2007). Scientific evidence shows that gay men’s doubts about their masculinity as well as endorsement of masculine characteristics are associated with frequent risky sexual behaviors, which increase exposure to HIV (Connell, 1995; Diaz, 1998).
AIDS, as discursive epidemic, must be thought of in terms of an effort to limit damage to fields of knowledge, including biomedical knowledge and the ‘emotionally loaded’ knowledge of the self as securely bounded, through the formation of AIDS as an object of knowledge (Quam 1990: 39). This is because epidemics disrupt conceptual and physical boundaries – as disease spreads through the population, it crosses social divisions, and it does so by penetrating the sacred inner spaces of the body. In effect, epidemics render all people at risk, as disease vectors do not differentiate their hosts according to race or ethnicity. Since doctors first began tracking the epidemic, AIDS has disproportionately devastated African Americans, who contract HIV at higher rates and die faster than any other racial or ethnic group. Reading Vilarosa’s article, one gets the sense that Black gay men have been largely passive throughout the AIDS epidemic, too closeted and marginal to take action against the disease. The truth is, however, that a small but determined number of Black gay AIDS activists have been sounding the alarm about AIDS in Black America—including among Black gay men in the South—for decades.