

Gay

(Continued from Page 1) in the shadows. They have reaped little from expanding gay rights or television comedian Ellen DeGeneris' coming out on national TV.

With the exception of Michael Boatman who plays Carter, an outspoken gay

activist on ABC's Spin City - black gay men have a minute TV presence.

And though award-winning author E. Lynn Harris is making waves in literary circles, the battle is far from over.

"Their is a culture within

"Silence perpetuates the spread of the disease."

— Ron Lawrence, executive director Community Counseling Center

a culture (for black gay men)," said Ron Lawrence, executive director of the Community Counseling Center. He said a black gay man from Mississippi would tend to be more introverted, given the social climate of

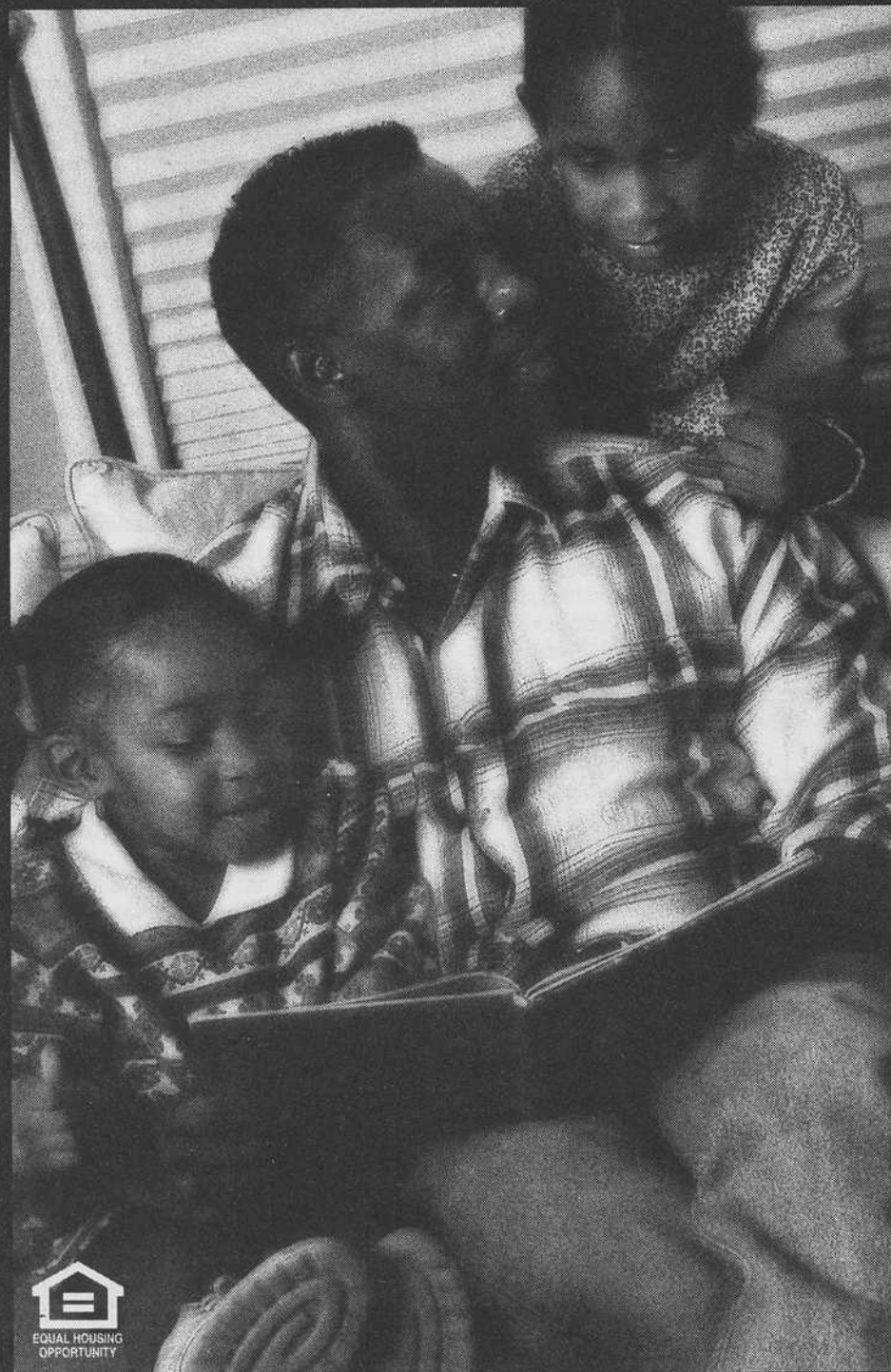
the South. Whereas, a black gay man from Los Angeles might be more cosmopolitan and open, he said.

Lawrence, who is white, treats many black gay men. He said the HIV/AIDS epidemic has opened eyes once closed to the disease.

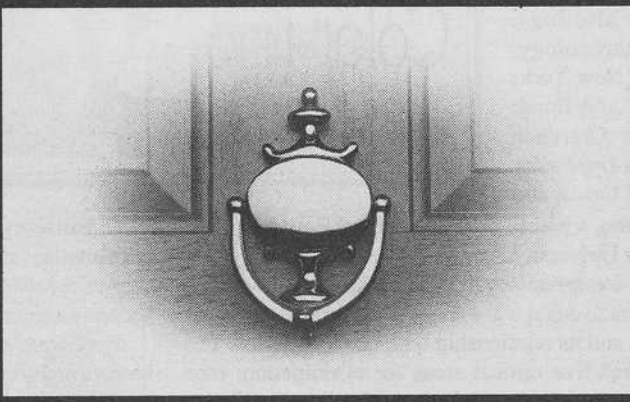
Since AIDS and HIV rates are skyrocketing in the black community, Plotkin urges blacks to begin dialogue.

"Silence perpetuates the spread of the disease," he said. "It (silence) created the same (AIDS) crises 15 years ago in the gay community."

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