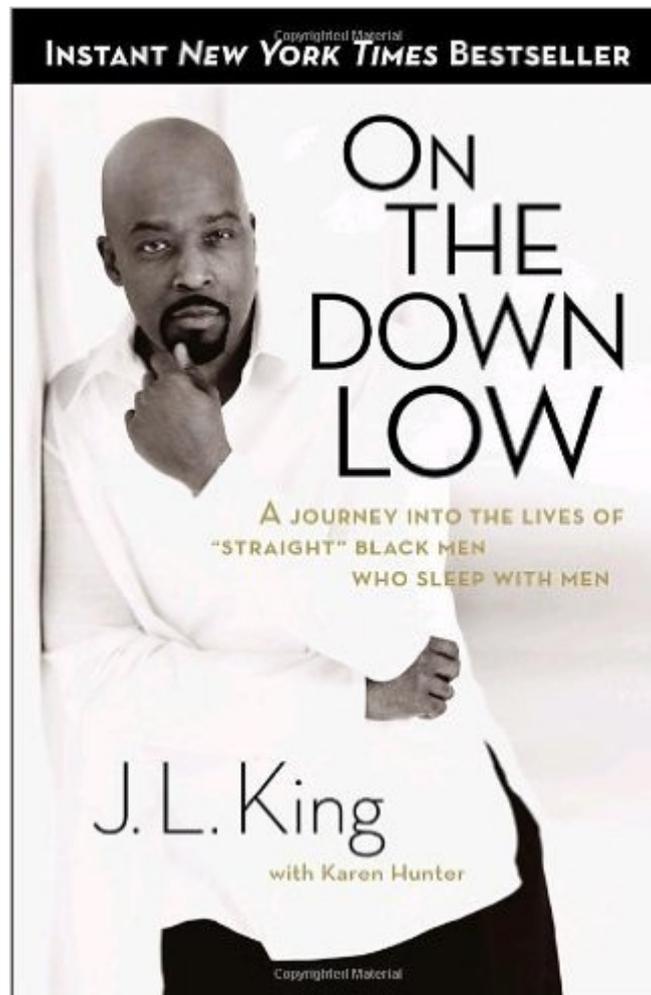


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# On The Down Low: A Journey Into The Lives Of 'Straight' Black Men Who Sleep With Men



## Synopsis

A bold exposé of the controversial secret that has potentially dire consequences in many African American communities. Delivering the first frank and thorough investigation of life on the down low (the DL), J. L. King exposes a closeted culture of sex between black men who lead "straight" lives. King explores his own past as a DL man, and the path that led him to let go of the lies and bring forth a message that can promote emotional healing and open discussions about relationships, sex, sexuality, and health in the black community. Providing a long-overdue wake-up call, J. L. King bravely puts the spotlight on a topic that has until now remained dangerously taboo. Drawn from hundreds of interviews, statistics, and the author's firsthand knowledge of DL behavior, *On the Down Low* reveals the warning signs African American women need to know. King also discusses the potential health consequences of having unprotected sex, as African American women represent an alarming 64 percent of new HIV infections. Volatile yet vital, *On the Down Low* is sure to be one of the most talked-about books of the year. A survey by the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta found that nearly a quarter of black HIV-positive men who had sex with men consider themselves heterosexual. "Essence

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

J.L. King tossed a lit firecracker into the audience on Oprah's TV show when he talked frankly and honestly about black men living on the down low: supposedly straight men who sleep with other men but refuse to acknowledge they are gay or bisexual. The audience's visceral reaction told how

King had hit a nerve. In this book, King talks straight-up about the pressures on black men to "be a man" and the deep-rooted homophobia in the black community that not only encourages, but practically forces men to keep any homosexual desires or activity deep undercover. King is up front about his own experience living on the down low and urges women to be careful in choosing their partners. Well and good, but looking at King's own example, how are women able to tell who's living on the down low and who isn't? The danger to the wives and girlfriends of these men, as King explains, is that the men are so deep in denial they refuse to practice safe sex with other men, because that would mean admitting they have sex with other men, and the denial goes so deep that the men constantly lie to themselves about their own sexual activity. The soaring HIV rate among black women who were infected by black men living on the down low is terrifying proof of how this problem has impacted on the African-American community. I've personally known two women who died of AIDS after being infected by men living on the down low whom they thought they could trust -- one by her live-in partner; the other by her husband.

Last August the New York Times did an expose' on the subculture of black men who carry on a bisexual life or as they call it, being on the down low. This is a term used that infers that something is done in secret. Only these secrets are being revealed because of the alarming rates of black women who are being infected with the HIV virus, most often by black men who sleep with both men and women. J.L. King in his recent release, *On the Down Low: A Journey into the Lives of "Straight" Gay Men* has elaborated on this lifestyle in his quest to bring it to light. King received death threats for coming out about this topic. His appearance on the Oprah Show fueled national dialogue which resulted in the premature release of the book which at this time is on the New York Times bestseller list. OTDL explores the life of men who do not consider themselves homosexual or bi-sexual. Their attraction according to King is strictly sexual and no real feelings are involved. The majority of these men prefer and want to be in a loving relationship with a woman and a great majority are married with children. Their desire is to be with a man who is in every sense a man and would not be with an effeminate male. In exploring the reasons for these desires, King cites among others is the need to be dominated, to be held and the high esteem in which the penis is held. This issue is not new in any community. Down low behavior has existed since the beginning of time and has always been a part of the black community. However, King addresses how the attitude in the black community and the black church about homosexuality contributes to down low behavior. There is also a chapter on how women can detect down low behavior and how important it is to use protection. This was the Marcus Book store club selection for May.

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