

Hiding in Hip Hop

Written by Westside ID4352
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There has long been speculation about who's gay, bi-sexual, or on the down low in the entertainment industry. It is this very speculation and guessing game that fuels gossip columns, blind items and entertainment industry blogs.

Prior to *Confessions of a Video Vixen* by Karrine Steffans and *It's No Secret* by Carmen Bryan, the large majority of celebrity-driven memoirs were published outside of the African American community. Yet, both books told compelling, jaw-dropping page-turners of sex, drugs and hip hop. The stories were not entirely shocking regarding the celebrities mentioned in those pages and served to further heighten their notoriety within the industry and amongst select fans.

However, former MTV and Hollywood insider Terrance Dean writes a compelling account of his tumultuous life involved with celebrities and a taboo secret they would prefer never, ever be revealed in his new book *HIDING IN HIP HOP: On the Down Low in the Entertainment Industry - from Music to Hollywood* (Atria; May 2008; ISBN: 1-4165-5339-8).

HIDING IN HIP HOP is as much revealing about the "velvet rope" worlds Dean traveled in as it is about his own tragic-turned-triumphant life. Raised by his Grandma Pearl, his mother was a drug-addicted prostitute who would eventually succumb to the AIDS virus, also as would his younger brothers Jevonte and George. Sexually molested at age thirteen by a male neighbor babysitter, Dean began to question his own sexuality at an early age.

At a towering six feet by his teen years, physically fit and attractive, he naturally grabbed the attention of young women and explored sexual relationships with them. Still by his senior year in high school, Dean's attraction to men began to overwhelm him. College introduced him to a whole new, more liberated world and he began to fully explore his attraction to men.

By the time Dean moved to Los Angeles to pursue a career in entertainment, he was well-rooted in his lifestyle and Hollywood became a perfect "hiding place." There was a whole community of people who were on the "down low", in front of and behind the camera. Like Dean, they could not afford their sexual preference being revealed for fear of losing the careers and the respect for which they'd worked long and hard.

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Unlike *It's No Secret* and *Confessions of a Video Vixen*, the identities of those who are discussed in *HIDING IN HIP HOP* are protected. "I have no desire to ruin anyone's dreams or careers. That's not why I'm writing this book," says Dean. "What I'm truly hoping for is the start of a real conversation about why, in this very contemporary day and age, we as black people are still made to feel that we cannot be comfortable in our skin?"

"This is a particularly valid question because there is a sizable community of gay and lesbian White business leaders and celebrities in Hollywood and they are not ostracized from the industry. In fact, they are considered major dealmakers and power players. Also, why is bi-sexuality and homosexuality still a "dirty little secret" in the black community?" he questions.

There are many revealing stories and first-hand anecdotes offered by Dean about his travails throughout Hollywood and hip hop. Readers will be introduced to a wide range of personalities, including by not limited to (not their real names):

- Jazz, "a nice looking brother, had women swooning when his character as a hard-working, married man graced the television screen. His hit show marked a milestone because of its accurate portrayal of African-American family life. The world doesn't want to know that their favorite actor likes sleeping with other men."
- Lucas, "a megastar. No matter what film project he was attached to it was bound to be a box office smash," and Kareem, "a leading sitcom actor, is married to an actress." The film crew took bets on "how often Lucas's "boyfriend" Kareem would show up and how long he would stay. It was like clockwork; Kareem arrived each day at the same time and went straight to the trailer for hours on end. Our circle was talking about the down low circle Lucas and Kareem were in. But it was a hard nut to crack; they were superstars."
- Gus, a singer, attractive with "clear skin, dark eyes, bushy eyebrows, and short, wavy hair did not give way for a thug image. He was just too pretty." "One morning, I turned on my television and I wasn't prepared for what I saw on BET- my boy, Gus, parade in his video with a host of celebrity cameos mean mugging for the camera- I just wondered how he would keep his secret of sleeping with men a secret."

But most important is the primary message that there are a substantial number of celebrities

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and successful business leaders in entertainment, who are African American, hiding behind their sexuality when they should not have to. With HIDING IN HIP HOP, Dean hopes to open up the debate to start the healing and forge a path to acceptance rather than living in shame.

For Dean, he accepted his life and role as a gay black man and has been all the better ever since. He bravely left the comfortable and prestigious confines of MTV to build his organization, Men's Empowerment. After losing to AIDS a longtime friend, Dirk, Dean's mother, his brothers Jevonte and George, along with Kenny Greene, lead singer of once popular R&B group Intro, Dean decided to stand up and make a bold, necessary statement.

HIDING IN HIP HOP is his stunning, courageous story. Readers from all corners will be intrigued about HIDING IN HIP HOP. They may initially be fascinated by the "straight, no chaser" blind item stories within the book, but ultimately readers will gain a renewed appreciation for understanding why acceptance is key if we are to ever truly embrace change and promote healing.

HIDING IN HIP HOP is available at Amazon.com and at bookstores every. To visit further with Terrance Dean as he reveals his eloquent voice, go to www.TerranceDean.blogspot.com

"There needs to be an open dialogue within the Black community, particularly within the Hip-Hop community. I am here. Let it begin with me," expresses Dean.