

## Rear View: February 2022

Monthly spotlight on an item from the HIV/AIDS Graphic Communication Archive

**14. Big Up @Pride '96.** Postcard: A6, silver & black. 1996.

### February Guest Curator

**Marc Thompson** is an activist, health promotion specialist and podcaster. He has been living with HIV since 1986 and has been at the forefront of HIV activism and prevention in the UK for over 30 years. His work has focused on Black and queer communities, sexual health, and HIV with a particular interest in the intersection of race, sexuality, and HIV.

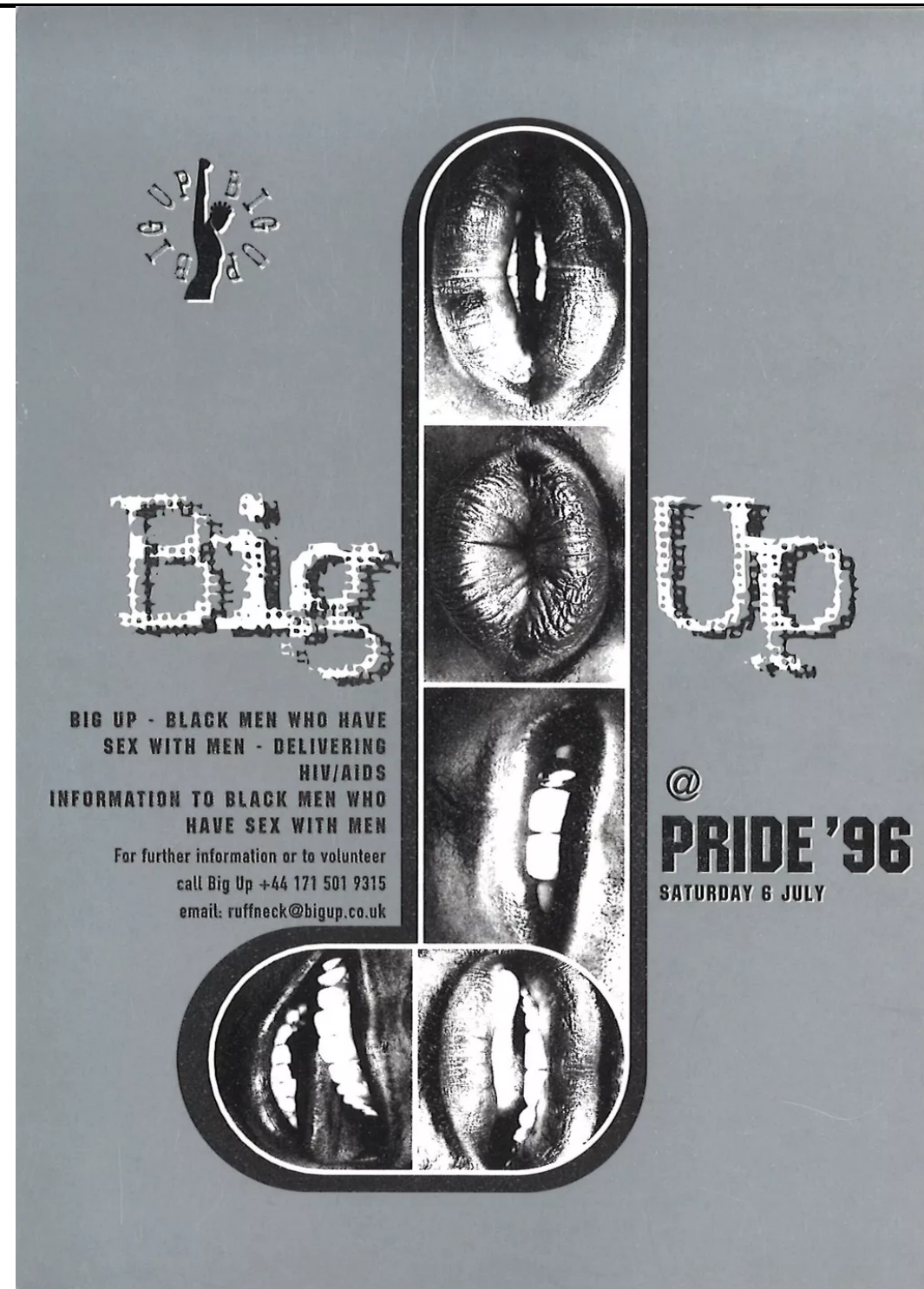
Marc is the co-director of [The Love Tank](#) CIC, a community interest community that promotes health and wellbeing of under-served communities through education, capacity building and research.

Marc is the co-founder of [Prepster.info](#), a community-based intervention that aims to educate and agitate for PrEP access globally. He currently co-curates the digital archive '[Black and Gay, Back in the Day](#)' documenting Black LGBT life in Britain since the 1970s and hosts the podcast series [We Were Always Here](#). Telling the story of the UK HIV epidemic through unheard voices.

### Chosen by Marc Thompson:

"I was the first project coordinator at Big Up, the UK's first organisation set up to provide HIV prevention programmes and support to Black men who have sex with men. The organisation was set up by Patrick Scott, a Black gay man living with HIV. Patrick had volunteered for organisations working with gay men and Black communities and became frustrated that the specific needs of Black gay men affected by HIV were not being met. He founded Big Up with the express goal of producing culturally specific information that spoke to Black gay men. He was also keen to ensure those of us infected with HIV had support that met our needs.

In our first year we built a team of over 25 volunteers, ran a helpline, distributed condom packs in Black gay spaces other organisation weren't targeting, set up the country's first support group for Black men living with HIV and of course produced posters, booklets and printed information resources. Inspired by the radical, unapologetic work of GMFA, the work of Big Up was sexy, fun explicit when necessary, informative and most importantly designed, created, written by the Black gay men it was aiming to reach. We aimed to put our lives and experiences at the front of centre of everything we did.

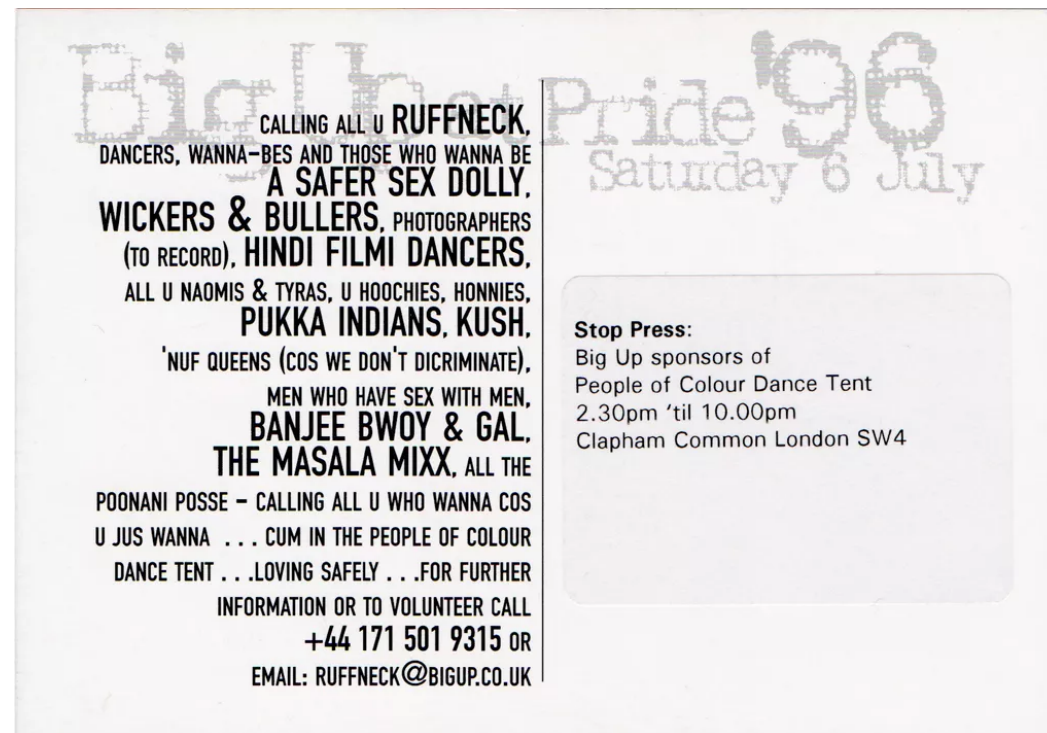


I've chosen this image from what I call Big Up's 'Imperial Phase'. The organisation was into its 2nd year and was well established. Pride events in the 1980s and 1990s ended with a celebration in a south London park. From 1992 there had been provision of a People of Colour tent. However it was always the most poorly resourced area, with the most basic tent and equipment.

Big Up worked with the Pride organisation to take over the space and we created a SUPER PEOPLE OF COLOUR AREA. We negotiated the best tent, lighting, and video screens to project HIV prevention messages onto. And of course a roster of DJs and performers from Londons best Black gay spaces. Our aim was not only to have a spectacular party, but to provide HIV information in a highly visual way to a mass audience. In addition to the main tent, we set up a health check area to provide HIV information and sent 30 volunteers out into the park to distribute 1,000s of condom packs.

I love this image and design because it looks like nothing produced at the time. The imagery, of Black mens lips, is sexy and flirtatious. And the use of the shape of a penis is provocative and tells you exactly who we are. On the day, we reproduced the image on t-shirts, condom packs and bags. I'm so proud of the work we did at Big Up in the 90s. I see a direct line to what we created almost 30 years ago to my work on Me, Him, Us and PrEP for Black queer men.

Work that is culturally sensitive is still much needed for marginalised communities.”



Postcard reverse.