

AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES

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press information

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Bishop T.D. Jakes biography

Bishop Thomas Dexter Jakes' family tree, like that of many African Americans, leads back to the Deep South. His mother, Odith, was from Alabama, and his father, Ernest Sr., was from Mississippi, and each family had lived in its respective state since the end of the Civil War.

Jakes was born on June 9, 1957 in the segregated community of South Charleston, West Virginia, the youngest of his parents' three children. He credits mother and father, who were industrious and ambitious in the face of limited opportunities, with instilling in him the integrity, discipline and self-reliance necessary for success.

Ernest Jakes, Sr., an entrepreneur and a hero to his son, died after a protracted illness when Jakes was 16. As he says in *AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES*, "I started studying the Word of God looking for answers to life." Jakes enrolled as a psychology major at West Virginia State College, but instead of completing his degree, he answered his spiritual call to the ministry and began to travel around the area as an itinerant preacher. In 1979, he founded the Greater Emmanuel Temple of Faith in West Virginia where he served as pastor to a congregation of 10.

Jakes' national reputation exploded with the phenomenal success of his book *Woman, Thou Art Loosed*, which he self-published in 1993 with his own money. In the same year, he also began his weekly television broadcast on Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN).



Today, Jakes is the CEO and pastor of The Potter's House, a nondenominational, multicultural mega-church he created in 1996, which to date counts more than 30,000 members. In 2004, The Potter's House inaugurated its "MegaFest," which combines Jakes' "ManPower" conference with the original "Woman, Thou Art Loosed" and additional components for young people. In addition, The Potter's House has invested more than \$500,000 into evangelical and practical outreach efforts to prison inmates around the world, and recently presented to UNICEF the largest donation for tsunami relief by any faith-based organization. Bishop Jakes is involved in continuing efforts to provide rural African tribes with clean, safe water resources.

In September 2001, Bishop Jakes appeared on the cover of Time magazine, which called him "America's Best Preacher." In February 2005, Time again honored him as one of America's "25 Most Influential Evangelicals."

Bishop Jakes and his wife Serita live in the Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan area with their five children.



Co-Produced By
Thirteen/WNET New York
and Kunhardt Productions

Major funding for *AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES* is provided by  and the following  brands: Pringles®, Folgers®, Bounty®, Charmin®, Tide®, Downy®, Pampers®, Crest®