



POSITIVE WOMEN'S NETWORK
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SURVEY SHOWS HIV-POSITIVE WOMEN SUFFER FROM HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

For Immediate Release

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Oakland, CA, March 8, 2011 – Although much progress has been made, HIV-positive women routinely suffer from human rights violations, says a survey released by the U.S. Positive Women's Network (PWN). The PWN released its survey results in time for National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, a nationally commemorated day that recognizes the impact of the HIV epidemic on women and girls, encourages women to get tested, know their status and protect themselves, and honors the 300,000 women estimated to be living with HIV in the U.S. alone.

The PWN, a national membership body of HIV-positive women, surveyed over one-hundred HIV-positive women in the U.S., and uncovered a number of trends. Among them, laws that make it a crime not to disclose one's HIV status to partners, even when using a condom, increase stigma against people living with HIV, may inhibit people from getting tested in the first place, and keep people from maintaining regular medical care if they are HIV-positive.

"I keep [my HIV status] a secret. As a teacher I could lose my job. Not disclosing could get me jail time. Therefore, I no longer date. It's difficult being a leper of the 21st century," said one survey respondent.

Other survey results demonstrated that many medical providers do not provide adequate information about and support for HIV-positive women's reproductive health, options and decisions. One survey respondent wrote, "I was told by several doctors to abort the pregnancy. I was almost in my 2nd trimester before I knew I was pregnant. I ran out of many a doctor's offices in tears after being told I was "selfish" or "if that were my wife, I'd make her have an abortion."

This trend is unacceptable considering that HIV-positive women can live long and healthy lives, and mother-to-child transmission is nearly completely preventable with appropriate care, support and treatment, say advocates. The burdens placed on HIV-positive women's reproductive rights are part of a larger trend.

"HIV-positive women's reproductive rights are regularly trampled. Women living with HIV have the same right as all women to decide when and whether or not to have a child, and access to the information and services needed to make a voluntary and informed decision. Informed medical providers who treat women living with HIV as whole people are key to fulfilling this right," says Brook Kelly, PWN's HIV Human Rights Attorney.

PWN calls for upholding the rights and dignity of women living with HIV, including the recognition of HIV-positive women as sexual beings entitled to high-quality health care and jobs. “We need to cure more than the disease. Women and girls experience layers of inequalities, injustices, and human rights violations including poverty, homelessness, incarceration, and violence that increase their risk of acquiring HIV. When diagnosed with HIV, these same injustices keep women in a cycle of oppression, which devastates already marginalized communities,” says Sonia Rastogi, an HIV-positive woman and PWN’s Communications Coordinator.

Nationally, [PWN](#) launched a new website today. Visit www.pwn-usa.org for comprehensive information including the complete results of the PWN’s human rights survey.

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Who we are: The U.S. Positive Women’s Network (PWN) is a project of WORLD (Women Organized to Respond to Life-threatening Disease) in Oakland, CA. We are a national membership body of HIV-positive women working to ensure that U.S. policies are gender-sensitive and grounded in human rights. For more information please visit: www.pwn-usa.org or join the PWN mailing list by emailing pwn@womenhiv.org.

