



**POSITIVE WOMEN'S NETWORK**  
USA

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**U.S. Positive Women's Network devastated by murder of HIV-positive woman  
*Demands immediate and bold action to end violence against HIV+ women***

**Oakland, CA September 13, 2012** – The U.S. Positive Women's Network (PWN), a national membership body of women living with HIV, is devastated to hear the tragic news that a young woman living with HIV in Dallas, Texas, was murdered for disclosing her HIV status to a partner. PWN calls for immediate action to reduce stigma and to eliminate violence against women living with HIV.

On Thursday, September 6<sup>th</sup>, 28-year old Cicely Bolden was brutally stabbed to death after disclosing her HIV status to a sexual partner. Bolden's body was found by her two young children later that day when they came home from school.

"This situation is heartbreaking on so many levels. It points to the lack of information people have about how HIV is transmitted, the stigma that people living with HIV face daily, and a lack of support for people to safely and voluntarily disclose their HIV status. Ms. Bolden courageously shared her status with her new boyfriend, and was killed as a result," says Michelle Anderson, Lead Peer Educator at the Afiya Center for HIV Prevention and Sexual and Reproductive Justice in Dallas, TX, an openly HIV-positive woman and member of U.S. Positive Women's Network. "Under these circumstances, how can a woman feel safe to disclose her HIV status in any context and know that it won't be used against her?"

Studies show that violence against U.S. women living with HIV is pervasive, and may correlate with emotional abuse, financial control, poor health outcomes, and women being lost to medical care. New data released earlier this year revealed that violence leads to death for women living with HIV, and that HIV-positive women suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at a rate more than five times than that of the general population.

"People living with HIV have the right to choose if, when, and how they want to disclose their HIV status *if* they choose to disclose. Unfortunately, healthcare providers and public health workers sometimes coerce women living with HIV to disclose – even in situations that are unsafe to them. People need support to disclose safely, including mental health services available to themselves, partners, and family members," says Barb Cardell, coordinator of the Colorado Positive Women's Network.

On behalf of women living with HIV who daily face disproportionate rates of stigma, violence and abuse, the U.S. Positive Women's Network (PWN) demands bold action is taken, including:

- The President of the United States should make a statement for World AIDS Day 2012 that aims to reduce HIV-related stigma and discrimination.
- A national general education campaign to combat stigma against people with HIV and address myths and misinformation about HIV transmission and prognosis of HIV disease when care and treatment is available.
- A plan and timeline from President Obama's Federal Interagency Working Group on the Intersection of HIV/AIDS, Violence Against Women and Girls, and Gender-related Health Disparities to eliminate violence and its devastating impact on women living with HIV, including integrated service delivery.
- Services for women living with and at risk for HIV that include counseling and support for safe and voluntary disclosure, screening for intimate partner violence and abuse, mental health services, psychosocial support, and strong linkages to safe housing options.
- Leadership by the Office of National AIDS Policy to institute a multi-sectoral response to proactively reduce HIV-related stigma in our communities. This must include visible leadership by faith communities, the entertainment community, the private sector, and the President of the United States.
- An end to abstinence-only sex education programs that censor life-saving information and perpetuate stigma and bias.
- Violence against people who are HIV-positive because of their HIV status should be classified as "hate crimes" and prosecuted as civil rights violations.

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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 women living with HIV and our allies that exists to strengthen the strategic power of all women living with HIV in the United States. In addition to a national presence, we support regional chapters to build leadership at a local and state level. Our chapters include Philadelphia, PA, Ohio, statewide chapter, Oakland/Bay Area, CA, Colorado statewide chapter, South Carolina statewide chapter, Detroit, and San Diego, CA. We believe in self-determination, solidarity and sisterhood. Everyday we inspire, inform and mobilize women living with HIV to advocate for changes that improve our lives and uphold our rights. Get on our e-mail/ mailing list by contacting Sonia Rastogi, [sbrastogi@womenhiv.org](mailto:sbrastogi@womenhiv.org), (510) 986-0340 ext. 317 or follow us on facebook at [tinyurl.com/uspwnfacebook](http://tinyurl.com/uspwnfacebook) and twitter #uspwn.

The Afiya Center is a woman-centered organization where we seek to create an atmosphere where women's experiences are the center of our thinking; addressing the unique needs of women and increasing awareness and advocacy around policy that impact women's lives.  
[www.theafiyacenter.org](http://www.theafiyacenter.org)

