



**POSITIVE WOMEN'S NETWORK**  
USA

U.S. Positive Women's Network,  
a project of WORLD  
449 15<sup>th</sup> Street  
Suite 303  
Oakland, CA 94612  
510-986-0340 **phone**  
510-986-0341 **fax**  
[www.pwn-usa.org](http://www.pwn-usa.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: Barb Marcotte, (773) 972-3896, [barbaramarcotte213@gmail.com](mailto:barbaramarcotte213@gmail.com)**

## **Detroit Dental Employee Banned From Touching Doorknobs Because He's HIV Positive**

**December 22, 2011, Detroit, MI** – After disclosing his HIV-positive status to his manager at Great Expressions Dental, James White was banned from touching doorknobs, was followed around by coworkers with bottles of Lysol, and subjected to sudden and abrupt schedule changes. After complying with the schedule changes, he was written up for "unexcused absences," As reported in a POZ magazine article by Todd Heywood, [http://www.poz.com/articles/detroit\\_hiv\\_lysol\\_401\\_21587.shtml](http://www.poz.com/articles/detroit_hiv_lysol_401_21587.shtml))

After seven months of enduring this unjustified discrimination, White fell ill and was hospitalized for a week. White reports that Great Expressions Dental called to terminate his employment the day before he was scheduled to return back to work following his prolonged illness.

White's lawyer, Nicole Thompson, has received the "right to sue" letter from the EEOC, which establishes that White has valid claims of discrimination against his former employer, and is currently in the process of filing a lawsuit demanding compensatory and punitive damages of \$140,000 and \$45,000, respectively, and requiring the company to post notice of the agreement as well as providing training on HIV/AIDS and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Direct findings from the EEOC state: "The Commission's investigation substantiates the Charging party's allegations that the Respondent organization subjected him to discriminatory discipline, that the Respondent organization denied Charging Party reasonable accommodation, and that the legitimate non-discriminatory reason offered for the Charging Party's discharge was untruthful (i.e. pretextual)."

This extreme case of HIV discrimination and gross violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act is unacceptable. Centers for Disease Control state that HIV/AIDS is not transmitted by casual contact; it is not transmitted by touching doorknobs or sharing counter space. We should expect and demand that all medical providers have this basic knowledge. "No employer should harass and discriminate against their employees based on their HIV-positive status or any other type of disability. The law has consistently upheld HIV-positive people's right to work in medical settings and held employers responsible for taking universal precautions to prevent any type situation that could present a danger to the health of their employees and patients. There is no excuse for this type of treatment," says Brook Kelly, PWN's HIV Human Rights Attorney.

These acts were not ordered out of concern for public safety, but rather were sheer acts of fear, ignorance and discrimination against a person living with HIV. The situation that Mr. White endured is unacceptable. We demand a public apology and acknowledgment of this discrimination. Great Expressions Dental in Detroit must acknowledge discriminatory tactics and hindrance of employment equal opportunity and ADA violations. **To show your support, sign the petition at <http://www.change.org/petitions/great-expressions-dental-centers-must-receive-hiv-education>.**

###  
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. 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.