You Said It

Lethal Weapon?

January 1, 2010

Last November, POZ.com reported on a Michigan assault case involving a scuffle between an HIV-positive man and his HIV-negative neighbor. Among his charges was possession or use of a harmful device. The harmful device in question? HIV. That charge—a felony punishable by up to 25 years in prison—stemmed from a series of anti-terrorism laws created in response to the September 11 terrorist attacks.

This is not the first time HIV has been considered a "harmful device" or a "deadly weapon," and it likely won't be the last. In our online newsletter, we asked for your thoughts on how the wording in these criminalization cases makes you feel. Here's what you said.

"All this does is further the stigma that follows all of us when we are labeled HIV positive. This is ignorance's finest hour at our expense."

—**Steve Schurmann**, Houston

"Those who don't know their HIV status are the real 'deadly weapons.' I know enough to protect my partner."

—**Karen Bates**, Columbia, SC

"It is very offensive to me to know that people still believe that we carry a deadly weapon. I am so grateful for the people in my life and their knowledge about my illness. When will the stigma go away?"

—**Meleta Ramirez**, Indianapolis

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