



*Bridging research, resources and relationships
to help women with HIV and AIDS live positively.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Well Project Public Statement on the New York Post Article

Oakland, CA, May 20, 2011: On Wednesday, May 18, 2011, the [*New York Post*](#) [published an article](#) that speculated on the HIV status of the young West African woman who has brought sexual assault charges against a very powerful and wealthy man, the now-resigned IMF managing director, Dominique Strauss Kahn. The Well Project, Inc. is deeply disturbed and outraged by this instance of irresponsible, sensationalistic journalism, which has the potential to increase the already significant effect of stigma, racism and sexism on the lives of women.

The health status of this woman is completely irrelevant to the case, and distracts from the serious crime inflicted on this woman. The *Post* article is based on unfounded information and violates her rights to medical confidentiality and privacy, while placing her and her family at an increased security risk. As a human being and citizen of the world, she deserves justice, privacy and safety for herself and her family throughout the legal process.

This kind of “reporting” further marginalizes and discourages women, particularly women of color, immigrant women and low-income women, from bringing assault charges forward. This June will mark the 30th anniversary of the first case of HIV; and yet, institutional stigma and discrimination continue to fuel the epidemic and create barriers to testing and treatment access. This kind of sensationalistic journalism that focuses on a woman’s unfounded HIV status further aggravates stigma and discrimination and needs to stop!

“As a survivor of sexual assault, I understand the fear and difficulty in reporting this kind of crime to authorities. Strauss-Kahn’s position of power and wealth creates an additional level of complexity and challenge. We applaud the courage and strength that this woman had to have to report the incident and testify before a grand jury and we are deeply disappointed by the way the *Post* has chosen to report the news. As a society, we need to uphold the rights and safety of those who have been sexually assaulted and stand against this kind of inaccurate reporting that creates an environment of fear and danger.” (*Shalini Eddens, Executive Director of The Well Project, Inc.*)

Factual reporting and journalism benefits everyone and has the potential to be a powerful communication and advocacy tool. We demand that the *New York Post* publicly apologize and commit to accurate and factual reporting that will serve to advocate for this woman and anyone who has been sexually assaulted.

If you are against this article and false reporting, please send an email to the *NY York Post* editor at letters@nypost.com. Please copy The Well Project at info@wellproject.org and one of our sister organizations, The US Positive Women's Network at pwn@womenhiv.org.

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The Well Project's mission is to change the course of this HIV/AIDS pandemic with a unique and comprehensive focus on women through our web portals, A Girl Like Me blog, social media outlets and Women's Research Initiative on HIV/AIDS.

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