



HIV Isn't Bioterrorism

Case dismissed: Daniel Allen, an HIV-positive man from Michigan who became the first person in the state to be charged with HIV-related bioterrorism, has been set free after reaching the end of his 11-month probation. The case against Allen stems from a 2009 scuffle in which he allegedly bit his neighbor on the lip and was subsequently charged with a felony for assault. HIV was labeled an agent of bioterrorism, and Allen was accused of administering harm with a biologically dangerous weapon. The judge dismissed the bioterrorism charge, and after Allen completed his probation, his felony charge for assault was reduced to a misdemeanor. While he can now see the light of day, we're still in the dark about how HIV could have been classified as "bioterrorism" to begin with. The need to educate the legal system about the medical facts of HIV/AIDS continues...

Hershey's Bittersweet

Lately, Hershey's chocolate is leaving a sour taste in our mouths. The AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania recently filed a suit against The Milton Hershey School after it rejected the application of a 13-year-old student who has HIV. The school is a free private boarding school for low-income students that's funded by a trust established by Milton S. Hershey, founder of the Hershey Chocolate Company. While the boy met the school's eligibility requirements, he was denied admission because his "documented needs are beyond the scope" of school programs. According to a statement on the school's website, there was a concern that the HIV-positive youth would engage in sexual relations with another student that would result in the transmission of HIV. Instead of choosing to educate themselves and their students, the school's leadership has chosen to shut its minds—and the school's doors. What a terrible waste of a teaching moment.

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Kimberly McCullough (left) plays HIV-positive Robin Scorpio.

General Hospital Says Goodbye to HIV-Positive Character

Oh the tangled webs they weave: the tortured soul, the police commissioner's niece, the forbidden love. The sparks! The passion! The...HIV! The HIV? Yes, the HIV. In the mid-'90s, *General Hospital*, a daytime soap on ABC, became one of the first TV series to feature an HIV-positive character, when a principal character, Robin Scorpio (played by Kimberly McCullough), learned she was positive. Using Robin's life as a foil, the show covered antiretrovirals, safe sex and prevention of mother-to-child transmission. But, at press time, nefarious forces (in the form of a murderous stalker) kept Robin from properly taking her meds, ultimately causing her drug regimen to fail. While we know many good things must end, we're sad to see the exit of such a generally accurate and positive example of a person living with HIV. We applaud the show's writers and producers for shining the spotlight on a topic that rarely gets placed on center stage. Bravo!

