

Subject: Re: Ceasefire article questions

Date: Thursday, May 15, 2008 1:33 PM

From: a-kotlowitz@northwestern.edu

Reply-To: a-kotlowitz@northwestern.edu

To: <tracysiska@gmail.com>

Conversation: Ceasefire article questions

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Original message text
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On Mon, 12 May 2008 3:29:10 pm +0000 Tracy Siska wrote:

Hello Alex,

My name is Tracy Siska and I am the President of the Chicago Justice Project. I am also author of the Chicago Justice blog. I will be addressing a blog entry about Ceasefire and your article. I am planning on posting no later than Monday May 19th. I thought I would be respectful and let you comment on some of the questions my blog is going to address before I post it. I read your article on Ceasefire that was in the NYT magazine. I have a couple of questions about the content of the article.

🍏 I am curious about why the contents of the audit performed on the finances of Ceasefire did not play a larger role? The audit clearly lays out what seems to be less than ethical practices regarding grants from the State of Illinois to organizations in various communities that ran through Ceasefire. Ceasefire took a percentage off the top of each grant for administrative costs, I think the audit detailed that the average was about 17%. This percentage was not detailed in any of the paper work that Ceasefire used to apply and receive the grant. This practice is highly irregular and definitely leans towards dishonest. All nonprofits that tried this practice with a private foundation would have their grant cancelled or would not have it renewed.

The audit was, indeed, mentioned.

🍏 I noticed that you relied heavily on talking to a few of the interrupters and others that Ceasefire have working in the community. I have no doubt that many of them are doing some great work; however, Ceasefire's role in centralizing nonviolence funding at UIC has been very controversial in many communities. Many of the organizations that Ceasefire is currently partnering with received this funding directly from state for nonviolence work prior to Ceasefire being created. In many communities the fact that these minority run agencies have to work under the regulations established by a white academic to get the same money they received before Ceasefire was established reeks of racism. Did you talk to any of the agencies Ceasefire partners

with and did you uncover any of these feelings?

When the audit originally became public Slutkin was on Chicago Tonight with Susan Hartnett from NWU and Lance Williams from the Center for Inner City Studies and Northeastern Illinois University in the Woodlawn community. At that time Williams revealed that he had completed a study that contradicted the results of Skogan and Hartnett on the successfulness of Ceasefire. Did you seek out critics of the program for your article?

CJP is an organization that is dedicated to increasing the public's access to criminal justice related information. You can find out more about the organization at www.chicagojustice.org. You can also review past blog entries at <http://www.chicagojustice.org/blog/>. Thanks for your time and I look forward to reviewing your answers. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you might have.

I did speak with critics of CeaseFire ^ and, at least locally, they seemed mostly concerned that there was no hard date to suggest whether or not CeaseFire had been effective. Since then, the Dept of Justice released its study. The study, which was released earlier this month, shows some rather positive results. Frankly, I only decided to write about CeaseFire after I got an early read on this study. Moreover, the early results in Baltimore are encouraging, as well. I was also impressed that original skeptics ^ like George Kelling and Daniel Webster ^ were convinced that there was something to what CeaseFire was doing.

On your other point, I'm not quite sure what's inherently wrong with having a central body directing violence prevention efforts. As I point out in the piece, what CeaseFire is doing is quite unusual. It diverges from past efforts, both in Chicago and elsewhere. Sometimes it takes an outsider to see things clearly, and Slutkin who had been out of this country for a decade came here as an outsider, and looked at violence through a lens different than the rest of us. You can certainly take issue with his approach, but you suggest that since he's white and controls funding that it smacks of racism. (I had heard such allegations secondhand, but I must confess I was perplexed.) I'm not sure how or where racism figures into this picture. Slutkin's intentions are honorable. He is who he is. The flip side of this equation is that for far too long whites have completely neglected what goes on in much of this city. For far too long, whites have turned their heads from that which discomforts them. Slutkin has not only taken notice, he's put all his energies into trying to curb the troubling persistence of violence in communities which most of

Chicago would just as well ignore.

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