

Will Watson

Executive Summary: Tonya Public Affairs Internship Summer 2009

Falling Whistles

Falling Whistles: a campaign for peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Peace in Congo is a high aim—an aim that often seems unattainable when one looks at the history of war and strife in that mineral-rich country. And yet, that is precisely the goal of Falling Whistles. As an intern for Falling Whistles this past summer, that goal became my goal, and the guiding principle that defined my days and my nights. Though the internship was one of the most demanding and intense periods of my life, it was also one of the most valuable in that it confirmed and reinforced my desires to work in the non-profit field for the rest of my life.

Just as the internship application warned, the summer was indeed “the most down and out, upside down, never sleep or shower, work till you drop, exhausting summer of your life.” All 8 Falling Whistles interns worked a minimum of 45 hours a week, with some weeks exceeding 60 hours. And yet, community was found amongst the interns as we passionately pursued peace in Congo through our various tasks and responsibilities.

From the moment I set foot in the Falling Whistles office, I was a part of the Advocacy and Coalition Building team for the organization along with 3 other interns. We researched the history of the conflict in Congo, researched solutions to the conflict put forth by the experts, developed methods for building the Falling Whistles coalition, pursued relationships with other non-profit organizations in Eastern Congo, and wrote educational materials that Falling Whistles will use to inform people about the conflict and how Falling Whistles is addressing it. The team also worked to develop protocols for future interns (my intern class was the first ever at Falling Whistles) and brainstormed many ideas and methods for raising awareness in the US and advocating for an end to the war in Congo. Finally, my team organized and carried out a series of different events for Falling Whistles in Los Angeles over the course of the summer.

Though I was directly involved in all of the above activities, I was specifically tasked with researching the history of the conflict and the complexities of the current war. I scoured books, novels, articles, reports by the UN and other non-profits, and internet blog posts about the war. My task was then to take the complex information and turn it into simplified, engaging, and empowering materials for the growing Falling Whistles coalition. I wrote reports for internal office use and training for future interns, and then created a number of educational reports that were then passed onto the design team to create a body of engaging and empowering resources that Falling Whistles can use to educate those people who want to do something more and really delve into this conflict.

My other duties included grant research for the organization, brainstorming fundraising methods and ideas, and conceptual development with the design team.

Therefore, my summer at Falling Whistles was a life-changing experience, one in which I was able to put action to my words and my passions for peace and freedom for all people of the world. I would recommend this internship to anyone interested in human rights or the non-profit world. Personally, this internship confirmed in my mind the necessity for my continued involvement in pursuing peace and freedom as a career and as a lifestyle.