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Rebellious Profile: **Rachel Durchslag**

By Senior Writer **Jessica Vealitzek**

Rachel Durchslag founded the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE) in 2006 to change the way the city responds to sexual exploitation through education, advocating for victims and decreasing demand. Six years later CAASE is transforming Chicago's response to prostitution, sex trafficking and sexual assault. To learn more, go to <http://www.caase.org>.



Q. Why do you do what you do?

A. I saw a film about human trafficking, and I was haunted. Then I found Chicago was a major hub for human trafficking. Once I realized my own city was not stepping up, I felt called to do something.

Q. How has being female influenced you or your experience getting to where you are now?

A. Growing up in a culture where women are commodified and sexualized, and feeling the impact of what it's liked to live in a rape culture, I have always wanted to make the world better for other women.

Q. Has anyone ever tried to prevent you from doing what you wanted to do career-wise?

A. People view this as women's work because the majority of victims are women. But men have to be the spokespeople to help other men realize that sexual exploitation won't end until people stop purchasing it. Also, I started CAASE because I had a passion and a vision, but I didn't go the traditional route of working my way up through the nonprofit ranks. That made some people uncomfortable.

Q. What is the worst advice you ever got?

A. Since prostitution has been around since the beginning of civilization, I will never make a difference in reducing or stopping it so I should just give up.

Q. What were you like as a girl?

A. I was very sensitive. Even watching people fish would make me cry. I was also creative and loved exploring.

Q. What did you think you wanted to do when you grew up?

A. My first hope was to be a dancer on "Solid Gold." But I always knew that I wanted to help people in some way.

Q. Who were your inspirations, real or fictional?

A. In high school I was really moved by the world of Maya Angelou. She turned her experiences into amazing prose and poetry, and made me realize that a painful past did not translate into limited potential.

Q. What was your favorite book as a young child? What is your favorite book now?

A. They're the same: "The Little Prince." He embodied what I value: being honest and kind, letting yourself love something fully, exploring the world and being responsible for the things we love.

Q. What is a typical weekend day like for you?

A. If it's summer, I am on my motorcycle. In winter, I'm teaching aerobics and going swing dancing.

Q. Favorite place to eat where you live and why.

A. I'm vegan, so I really love Raw in the French Market in Chicago. It blows me away what they can make out of raw food.

Q. Please give insight on why you think being female is awesome.

A. I love the opportunity to be able to embrace emotional intelligence without judgment. I also love to challenge commonly accepted gender norms. People are always shocked that I ride a motorcycle, that I'm a woman who boxes, that I love carrying heavy things around. (Laughs.)

Q. What do you have yet to do?

A. I want to travel to Australia one day. I just climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro, so maybe climb one of the other summits.

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