



Cinema/Chicago and the 48th Chicago International Film Festival

Education Outreach Program Screening: *The Interrupters*

Director: Steve James

125 minutes, unrated, in English

Synopsis: *The Interrupters* tells the moving and surprising stories of three Violence Interrupters who try to protect their Chicago communities from the violence they once employed. From acclaimed director Steve James and bestselling author Alex Kotlowitz, this film is an unusually intimate journey into the stubborn persistence of violence in our cities. Shot over the course of a year out of Kartemquin Films, *The Interrupters* captures a period in Chicago when it became a national symbol for the violence in our cities. During that period, the city was besieged by high-profile incidents, most notably the brutal beating of Derrion Albert, a Chicago High School student, whose death was caught on videotape. The film's main subjects work for an innovative organization, CeaseFire, which believes that the spread of violence mimics the spread of infectious diseases, and so the treatment should be similar: go after the most infected. (Synopsis written by Kartemquin Films)

Recommended for: humanities, social studies, cultural studies, film and video studies

Appropriate for: high school students (this film contains mature language and violent subject matter)

1. What is your reaction to the violence and subsequent death of Derrion Albert being caught on camera? What do you think about violent acts that go viral? How has this issue affected Chicago?
2. What is your opinion of CeaseFire? Research the organization and its history.
3. Think about a time you witnessed a violent act or heard about one. Do you think the Interrupters could have helped the situation? Why or why not, and how?
4. What student from the film did you feel most connected to and why?
5. Which Interrupter was the most memorable to you and why?
6. Much of the violence in the film is caused by people seeking revenge or wanting to retaliate against another act of violence. Why are revenge and retaliation motivators for crime?
7. What do you do to stay away from violence in your neighborhood, community, friend-group or school? What are positive things that a person can participate in to stay away from harmful environments?
8. Do you think youth with violent backgrounds or homes are able to turn their life around? Talk about Ameena Matthews and her background, motivation and role as an Interrupter.
9. *The Interrupters* tells stories from numerous communities and neighborhoods in Chicago. Why do you think Chicago has such an issue with violence? Research violence in Chicago and talk about why it has peaked or dropped.

10. How can you help your own community or neighborhood interrupt violence? What resources are available to you to make a positive impact?

Useful Links and Resources:

The Interrupters website (includes trailer): <http://interrupters.kartemquin.com/>

Interview with film producer and acclaimed writer Alex Kotlowitz:
http://chicagoist.com/2011/08/09/alex_kotlowitz_talks_about_the_inte.php

CeaseFire website: <http://ceasefirechicago.org/>

Information about Cinema/Chicago's Education Outreach Program:
<http://cinemachicago.org/education/>

Schools that do not send in essay requirement will not be allowed to attend future Education Outreach Screenings.