

Point of Inquiry Team Resigns, Launches New Show with *Mother Jones*

On Friday, Point of Inquiry's two co-hosts—Indre Viskontas and Chris Mooney—resigned from their positions at the Center for Inquiry. On Monday, Point of Inquiry producer Adam Isaak followed suit. This note is to explain our reasons for departing CFI and our future plans.

In May of 2013, when the Women in Secularism II conference took place in Washington, D.C., *Point of Inquiry*—the flagship podcast of the Center for Inquiry—was more successful than it has ever been. Following a format change in 2010, our audience has increased by 60 percent and our growth rate has doubled in the last year and a half. We'd recently done a highly successful live show featuring Steven Pinker before a packed room at the 2013 American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting, and interviewed guests like Oliver Sacks, Jared Diamond, Paul Krugman, and Mary Roach. We had started to incorporate new, successful video content. 2013 featured our most listened-to show ever and we were averaging well over 2 million total downloads per year.

Then came the events at that conference—including a widely criticized speech by Center for Inquiry President & CEO Ronald Lindsay. Lindsay then went further, writing a blog post which referred to a post by one of his critics—Rebecca Watson—as follows: “It may be the most intellectually dishonest piece of writing since the last communique issued by North Korea.”

In response to public criticism of Lindsay's speech and blog post, CFI's Board of Directors issued an ambiguous statement regretting the controversy, but going no further than that.

These actions have generated much discussion, criticism and polarization within our community. In addition, they created an environment at CFI that made it very difficult for our producer, Adam Isaak, to continue working there.

We, like others, welcome Lindsay's recent apology. That apology, however, was not followed by any direct effort to retain Chris or Indre, nor did it make up for the very real toll this controversy has taken upon our podcast and our ability to produce it.

The actions of Lindsay and the Board have made it overwhelmingly difficult for us to continue in our goal to provide thoughtful and compelling content, including coverage of feminist issues, as in past interviews with guests like Amanda Marcotte, Katha Pollitt, MG Lord, and Carol Tavris.

The Center for Inquiry has supported us in the past and has asked Chris and Indre to speak at many of its conferences. We are thankful for that. But we're a team and we do this together. We believe that this controversy has impaired our ability to produce the highest quality podcast under the auspices of CFI and that our talents will be put to

better use elsewhere.

To that end, we are in the process of formalizing a new podcast that will allow us to continue to provide the in-depth interviews with leading intellectuals that made *Point of Inquiry* such a success. We'll announce the name and more details about the new podcast shortly but as of right now, we can already announce something we're all incredibly excited about: the new show will be produced in collaboration with the nonprofit news organization *Mother Jones*. You can follow @MotherJones on Twitter to get the latest updates on the show's official launch. We all look forward to turning our attention to the work at hand, and leaving this controversy behind.

Adam Isaak, Indre Viskontas, and Chris Mooney

For more information or to schedule an interview with Chris Mooney or Indre Viskontas, please contact Adam Isaak at adam@adamisaak.com or at 701-540-5855.