

From: **Sydney Smith** <sydneysmithwriter@gmail.com>  
Date: Wed, Apr 26, 2017 at 8:52 AM  
Subject: Media Inquiry- Deadline 5 PM  
To: Kevin Deutsch <kevinscottdeutsch@gmail.com>  
Cc: "Rhonda R. Shearer" <rhonda.r.shearer@gmail.com>

Dear Mr. Deutsch,

We are working on a new story after having reviewed more of your articles from Newsday. We have the following questions. **Our deadline is 5 p.m.**

1. In Newsweek and Newsday, you quoted a Delia Bell-Powell.

Newsweek, Aug. 20, 2014 , "St. Louis resident and civil rights activist"

<http://www.newsweek.com/2014/09/05/ferguson-recruitment-boon-gangs-265884.html>

Newsday, Nov. 15, 2014, "a civil rights and anti-violence activist in St. Louis, who also works with community activists in the tristate area, including on Long Island."

<http://www.newsday.com/long-island/nassau/records-9-mm-guns-most-frequently-traced-in-criminal-cases-1.9620405>

As Justin Fenton flagged on Twitter, Nexis has no results for a Delia Bell, Delia Bell-Powell or Delia Powell within 30 miles of St. Louis.

[https://twitter.com/justin\\_fenton/status/841329054632554497](https://twitter.com/justin_fenton/status/841329054632554497)

We checked LexisNexis for all of Missouri and there are no living Delia Bells, Delia Bell-Powells, or Delia Powells. There are no Facebook posts, tweets or news stories about her outside of the ones about your stories and a 1945 Alabama newspaper story. She has no media or social media presence.

a) Activists are typically high-profile and want coverage to promote their causes. What is her contact information, since you stayed in touch with her apparently over three months in two states?

b) Where did you meet her?

c) Which community activists or groups in St. Louis and Long Island does she work with?

d) There seems to be no trace of her existence. Do you have any evidence of your fact checking or her real existence?

e) Why is Bell-Powell nowhere to be found, except for in your reporting?

2. In Newsday last year, you quoted a Maryanne Barth of Woodmere. There is no Maryanne Barth listed in public records as living in Woodmere.

<http://www.newsday.com/long-island/crime/craig-myczkowski-arrested-after-following-baby-sitter-into-woodmere-home-cops-say-1.11316342>

- a. Do you have any evidence she exists?
- b. Where did you meet her?
- c. How did you verify her claims of name and town of residence?.

3. In Newsday in 2015, you quoted a Richard Leiter, a “recovering heroin addict” from Rockville Centre. Public records list no Richard Leiter within 30 miles of Rockville Centre. The only Leiters in Rockville Centre have never heard of a Richard Leiter.

<http://www.newsday.com/long-island/heroin-customers-get-home-delivery-through-highly-evolved-network-1.10793195>

- a. Where did you meet him?
- b. How did you verify his name and town of residence?
- c. Do you have any evidence he exists?

4. In Newsday last year you quoted a LaTroy Washington as a friend of Damien Pinckney, who was killed. There are no public records for a LaTroy Washington in New York State. Pinckney’s mother has never heard of a LaTroy Washington.

<http://www.newsday.com/long-island/crime/hempstead-woman-arraigned-in-fatal-hempstead-shooting-1.11902696>

- a. Where did you meet him?
- b. How did you verify his story?
- c. Do you have any evidence he exists?

5. In your Newsday reports last year on the Orlando Pulse shooting, you quoted an Oana Braescu of Fort Pierce who lived next to the Mateens in 2009 and a Frank Severance of Port St. Lucie who talked with Mateen outside Mateen’s Fort Pierce residence.

<http://www.newsday.com/news/nation/orlando-shooting-suspect-showed-signs-of-violence-reports-say-1.11906792>

There are no public records for an Oana Braescu in Florida, or anyone with the last name Braescu in Florida. There are no records for a Frank Severance in Fort Pierce or Port St Lucie.

- a. Where did you meet Oana Braescu?
- b. How did you verify Oana Braescu’s name and town?
- c. How did you confirm Oana Braescu’s story was accurate, given she was recalling an incident she says she overheard between reclusive neighbors seven years earlier?
- d. Where did you meet Severance?
- e. If Severance is “of Port St. Lucie,” why was he talking to Mateen outside Mateen’s Fort Pierce residence?
- f. How did you verify Severance’s story and name?

6. You stated in your NYTimes blogpost letter that the NYTimes ignored your offer to provide information. The New York Times' Phil Corbett told iMediaEthics, however, "If Kevin has additional information that would allow us to find them, we would be happy to get it, and editors have told him that."

- a. Have you provided any additional information regarding the two missing Times sources?
- b. Have you attempted to track down these sources since the Times review to prove their existence?
- c. Where were the 12 step meetings? When did you attend them?
- d. Corbett's statement contradicts your statement that you offered information they have refused. Do you have any evidence (i.e. e-mails) or notes about calls to back up your claims?

7. If people give you fake names (or what isn't their legal names), and it is not unusual for sources to lie, how do you know what they told you was accurate, if you do not check?

8. Regarding Patricia Dula, from your Newsday story on Lu Lingzi:

- a. You stated "I have no doubt she was a student at BU." Why do you have no doubt? She wasn't in the school's record and there is no Patricia Dula in LexisNexis for the state of Massachusetts. Why won't either have a record of her if she exists?
- b. You wrote that "Dula was a number of people I communicated with on and around the BU campus, as well as by phone, email and social media." What is that contact information then so we can confirm her existence?

9. Regarding Joel Gutierrez and Ronaldo Simms, the two men quoted in your New York Daily News story about former cop Eddy Coello being heckled in Bronx Central Booking.

- a. You stated, "I interviewed both men, who provided information demonstrating their accounts were accurate." What information did they provide that proves their accuracy?
- b. Where were they when they provided their quotes? Where did you meet them? Did you meet them walking out of Central Booking together or separately?
- c. Did these men offer their stories to you unsolicited or did you find them and ask?
- d. The NYPD DCPI's standard operating practice is to complete media requests over e-mail. The NYPD DCPI has no record of you e-mailing it in March 2011 regarding Eddy Coello, Ronaldo Simms or Joel Gutierrez. How, then, did you fact check Simms and Gutierrez were held with Coello or their charges?
- e. You describe the two men as jailbirds. Central Booking is not a jail. Why did you call them that? What evidence do you have that the two men have spent time in jail?
- f. You speculated that Simms and Gutierrez both had records sealed or cases dismissed, Neither NYPD nor the Bronx DA has any record of any Ronaldo Simms. What other information do you have to identify or support the existence of Simms and Gutierrez?

g. If you have no documentation why wouldn't you, as a experienced crime reporter, have doubts not only about their names but their story? Namely, 2 "jailbirds" told you that not only did they somehow know it was a cop in Central Booking with them, but the cops there allowed two perps to heckle a fellow cop under arrest? Did you have any reasons to doubt this big talk and fact check who they are, since people, as you say over and over again, give reporters fake names?

h. Since the quote below fell under the answers you provided about the jailbirds, as judged from your statement below, should we conclude you are saying the two "jailbirds" gave you fake names? ("Beyond that, in the real world of reporting, sources sometimes provide names other than their birth names, unbeknownst to journalists. We don't exclude real people from journalism and storytelling because they don't have identities that are intrinsically attached to a stable wireless phone number, or who perhaps live in an apartment that isn't in their name, is jobless, grappling with addiction, or has low level offenses or legal troubles that would preclude them from wanting their real name used, but who are still as real as you or I.").

#### 12. Aahil Khan

a. Our reporting revealed that there is no record of you contacting the school district to confirm Aahil Khan's claims about Mateen -- that he was suspended after cheering after 9/11. You state, "Unsurprisingly, your reporting is wrong. I dispute not only this false claim, but every false claim in this inquiry." Does this mean you have evidence of emails or phone calls making inquiries to the school district? If yes, please provide.

b. You reported Khan "used to hang out with Mateen after school when the now infamous gunman attended Martin County High School." There is no record of any Aahil Khan ever living in Florida, according to LexisNexis searches. Do you have any evidence or information proving he exists?

#### 13. Eric Baumer:

a. You wrote in the Observer, "What name he worked under or has listed on his birth certificate I can't be certain, but I had no reason to doubt his story." Is it correct you are suggesting he gave you a false name and confirming you didn't check to fact check the veracity of the claims and identity of a random man who walked up to you in a restaurant after overhearing you were in town to report on Omar Mateen and then provided you quotes about knowing Mateen?

b. You noted in your article G4S confirmed Mateen's employment; why did you not contact the company where Baumer as "colleague" work hours overlapped with Mateen's?

c. We contacted the 4 Eric Baumers's who have lived in Florida; two were otherwise employed and not the source and the other two live on the opposite coast, more than 125 miles away from where you said you met your source. What is your explanation for your alleged source not turning up?

#### 14. Jason Hart, who you quoted in a Newsday story about Omar Mateen: Gold's Gym has no records of him.

a. Are you saying that the official computer records of membership and gym use from Gold's Gym Port St. Lucie, which has nothing to gain or lose in this matter, is incorrect but your notes are correct? The boss at the gym gave us the information.

b. There are no Jason Harts listed as having lived in Port St. Lucie, as you reported. What is your explanation?

15. You said "I've been a criminal justice journalist for nearly 15 years, and was stepping in blood at crime scenes." This is obviously memorable.

a. When was this? Where was this?

b. Why did you step in blood at a crime scene, apparently tampering with evidence and the scene? Did you get in trouble with authorities for this?

16. Wikipedia/Twitter:

We asked if you were editing or knew who was editing your Wikipedia page, given your page, which you previously directed us to and link to from your website, now warns someone close to you is editing it. You said the "question is so utterly ridiculous" and wouldn't answer. We ask again as it should be a simple yes or no: a. Are you editing your own page? Have you asked anyone to edit your page on your behalf?

b. In addition, the @donvito89 account said you asked for him/her to tweet on your behalf "@pillcitybook asked me to get at people with this shit...." and you retweeted a tweet from it. We repeat, what again should be simple yes or no questions: Did you ask anyone else to tweet on your behalf? What role did he play in your book? Did you set the account up?

Thank you for your time.

Regards,

Sydney Smith

iMediaEthics

reporter

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**As background :** [Art Science Research Laboratory](http://www.artscienceresearchlab.com) is a not-for-profit, co-founded by Rhonda Roland Shearer, an artist, art historian and journalist and her late husband, Harvard professor and scientist, Stephen Jay Gould. ASRL's non-partisan journalism ethics program and news site [iMediaEthics](http://www.imediaethics.org), encourages the media's use of scientific methods and experts before

publication. iMediaEthics also publishes investigations of factual errors and ethical breaches by media outlets.