2017

President's Convocation (2017 Program)

Illinois Wesleyan University
The Summer Reading Program is an opportunity for incoming students to:

- participate in a shared intellectual conversation with the IWU community;
- express ideas about a common text that many IWU students, faculty, staff, and alumni are reading;
- respond respectfully to ideas others bring to the discussion.

It is also an opportunity to model for and mentor students on faculty expectations and the engaged classroom dynamics they will encounter at IWU. The Class of 2021 was further invited to participate in the First-Year Summer Reading Essay Contest to apply their voices and perspectives by reflecting on their reading of *Between the World and Me.*

Students were challenged to respond to the prompt, “What did you learn from this book that might be significant as you begin this new chapter in your life?” Students responded with submissions, and a diverse group of first-year advisors and faculty representing disciplines across the curriculum evaluated responses and chose the three outstanding essays, which will be made available on the digital commons later this month.

This year’s winners:

**First Prize:** *The Manufacturing of the MENA Race*
by Gabrielle Ghaderi

**Honorable Mention:** *Sibling Worlds*
by David Nicolas Lopez Moncayo

**Honorable Mention:** *The Manmade Construct of Race*
by Tatum Zsorey
Described as one of the “brightest, most poignant writers and observers of the moment that we’re in,” Jelani Cobb writes about the complexity of race in America. He is a graduate of Howard University, where he began a continuing friendship with Ta-Nehisi Coates, author of Illinois Wesleyan’s Summer Reading Program selection, Between the World and Me.

“I write because a different world is possible—we must always remember that,” Cobb has said of his work.

His books include Substance of Hope: Barack Obama and the Paradox of Progress, an insider’s exploration of hip hop titled To the Break of Dawn: A Freestyle on the Hip Hop Aesthetic, and The Devil & Dave Chappelle and Other Essays.

As a staff writer at The New Yorker, Cobb has penned articles about race, culture, the police and injustice. In 2015, he received the Sidney Hillman Prize for Opinion & Analysis Journalism for his columns—praised for combining “the strengths of an on-the-scene reporter, a public intellectual, a teacher, a vivid writer, a subtle moralist, and an accomplished professional historian.”


Cobb received his doctorate in American History at Rutgers University. Before joining the Columbia Journalism School, he was an associate professor of history at the University of Connecticut, where he directed the Africana Studies Institute.

He has received Fellowships from the Fulbright and Ford Foundations. His forthcoming book is Antidote to Revolution: African American Anticommunism and the Struggle for Civil Rights, 1931.
Jelani Cobb
Ira A. Lipman Professor of Journalism
at the Columbia University
Graduate School of Journalism
Staff writer at The New Yorker

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