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"Up Against the System!": Investigating Systemic Problems; Inventing Systemic Solutions (text and video)

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“Up Against the System!”

Investigating Systemic Problems; Inventing Systemic Solutions

INTRODUCTION

It goes without saying that this past year has been eventful, challenging, and at times downright depressing. COVID-19, the murder of George Floyd, the contested elections—all with so much misinformation being spread, and with such serious consequences.

But there was one moment that to me was immensely encouraging—the widespread protests across the country, and internationally, targeting police brutality against people of color. Even here in Bloomington, we witnessed a large protest rally, with a crowd of at least 1,000 demonstrators.

This powerful movement, which galvanized around the slogan “Black Lives Matter,” marked a major step forward in the long, ongoing struggle in our country against racism.

Particularly striking to me was the understanding of the problem as one of “**systemic racism**.” As one African-American recently maintained after the first week of the George Floyd murder trial, [audio clip “I think that most of the things that are going on are systematic....”]. As this comment succinctly points out, **systemic** racism suggests that, rather than being a problem of individual thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors, larger, deeper causes of discrimination and oppression exist, causes that inform and reproduce the racist thinking and behaviors that for centuries have permeated American society—and continue to do so today.

But as often as we may have used the term “systemic racism,” how deeply have we examined what “system” or “systems” we are talking about? And more, how should we—as we used to say when I was in college—“go up against the system”?

It's an issue that I've been trying to get a better handle on over the past months. I can't presume to have come up with definitive answers, but I'd like to extend the challenge to all of us today to grapple with these vital questions.

But why in the world would I, a China historian--a professor of Asian Studies--be wanting to address "systemic racism" and larger systemic problems we face today? Perhaps a selected sketch of my personal background will provide an explanation.

OKLAHOMA

[audio clip of the song "I'm proud to be an Okie from Muskogee"]

Yes, I was born in Muskogee, Oklahoma. This song by country singer Merle Haggard was written in 1969. It was a time of sharp divisiveness in America—sound familiar?—not only over "sex, drugs, and rock & roll," but, perhaps more importantly, over the Vietnam War and Black liberation struggles. Although Haggard claimed that he wrote the song as a joke, poking a bit of fun at some of the more conservative elements of American society at the time, "Okie from Muskogee" shot to the top of the pop charts and became one of the conservative anthems of the times, lauding the values of the 1950s status quo.

Actually born in California, Merle was not a genuine Okie. I was—and my childhood would set me on a path clearly at odds with Haggard's depiction. You see, my dad was a pastor of a "mission" church in the African-American community of Muskogee, and when I was a toddler, he established a new congregation in the Black community of nearby Tulsa.

My social surroundings as a child were unusual. Ours was a White family, but we were deeply embedded in the life of the Black community of North Tulsa. Oklahoma was in the South, where laws still enforced Jim Crow codes of racial segregation.

Muskogee and Tulsa were also located in what had once been called “Indian Territory.” The capital of the Cherokee Tribe, Tahlequah, was nearby, as was Okmulgee [Same Map:], capital of the Muskogee (or Creek) Tribe. Here lived the descendants of those native peoples whose vast lands had once covered much of present-day Georgia and Alabama, but who had been subject to government policies of “Indian removal”—including the infamous “Trail of Tears”—and forced to relocate in what became Oklahoma.

So as a child in Tulsa, I was surrounded by friends embodying a multiplicity of racial and ethnic groups. In 1956, I entered kindergarten, the first year that Tulsa reluctantly desegregated its public schools in the wake of the historic Brown vs. the Board of Education verdict two years earlier. So I headed off to school with my best friends, Scotty (White), Nancy (Indian), and Thomas (African-American). From my youngest days, inter-racial living and equality were natural to me. But I was to learn that my natural feelings as a five year-old were **not** the reality in the larger society around me.

Our church in North Tulsa was located in a community with a history both vibrant and horrifying. Greenwood, the center of North Tulsa, settled and built by formerly enslaved African-Americans, had, by 1910, become so prosperous that it came to be known nationally as America’s “Black Wall Street.”

But in 1921, Greenwood became the site of one of the worst race massacres in U.S. history. Roused by a sensationalist newspaper report of a young Black man “assaulting” a young White woman when he grabbed her arm in an elevator, a huge, White lynch mob advanced on Greenwood with guns blazing and incendiary bombs dropping from airplanes overhead. Scores of Greenwood residents were killed, and the whole community was burned down, leaving 10,000 people homeless amidst the ashes. Three decades later, when we moved to Tulsa, Greenwood had yet to be restored to its former prosperity.

Through his work, Dad learned of this past and responded to ongoing racial injustices. He joined the local chapter of the NAACP—at that time, the organization most active in confrontational politics against white supremacy--and

he helped establish the Tulsa chapter of the Urban League, serving as its first secretary and second president. He was the only White person to be invited to join the otherwise all-African-American Greenwood Chamber of Commerce. He was recognized in the community for his efforts—oftentimes successful—to counter the White Citizens’ Council, bigots who were engaged in intimidation campaigns to maintain segregated housing in the city. Dad described them as the Ku Klux Klan in business suits.

In 1959, Dad accepted a position to work in the Lutheran Church’s national organization for racial justice; its headquarters were supported by Valparaiso University, where Dad also joined the Theology Department.

On to Valparaiso

Our family’s move north to Valparaiso presented me with a culture shock. Not only did my new third-grade classmates tease the Oklahoma accent out of me, but Valpo more generally struck me for its all-White racial homogeneity. Dad’s work, however, now on a national stage, kept racial issues at the forefront of our family’s dinner-time discussions.

In 1963, he traveled to the nation’s capital for the “March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom,” and heard in person Dr. Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech.

Just a few weeks after the D.C. March, we learned from one of Dad’s pastoral colleagues in Birmingham, Alabama, that a bomb had exploded in the 16th St. Baptist church, killing four little girls who were attending Sunday school.¹ I had just turned 12. It was the first time in my life that I really began to *feel* shock, sadness, and anger at the reality of racism.

These events of 1963 contributed to the passage the next year of the Civil Rights Act. But equality and freedom proved elusive. In 1965, protests over the killing of a voting rights activist by an Alabama state trooper, led to the famous march from

Selma to Montgomery. My dad—and my oldest brother, Pete, who was then a college freshman—both traveled to Selma to join the march.

My dad and brother's participation in this historic event inspired in me a deep desire to follow their examples as, what we would call today, an "ally" of the Black freedom movement.

Vietnam Links with Civil Rights

But 1965 marked another important turning point in American history: the U.S. government was vastly increasing its support of South Vietnam's string of brutal, anti-Communist dictators by deploying combat troops for the first time—189,000 by year's end. Within two years, the results of this expanding war were becoming clear, and Dr. King made a bold decision.

On April 4, 1967, exactly one year to the day before he would be assassinated, King spoke at the Riverside Church in New York City, linking the racial injustice at home with what he called "the madness of Vietnam." His devastating critique of two decades of American actions in Vietnam were powerful, but his speech was entitled, "*Beyond Vietnam*." King did not address Vietnam as a horrific *aberration* of U.S. policy, but rather as a symptom of a "far deeper malady." America, he charged, was on the wrong side of a world revolution, as "the need to maintain social stability for our investments" accounted for U.S. military involvement, from Latin America to Southeast Asia. He quoted John F. Kennedy's observation from five years earlier: "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible make violent revolution inevitable." (This quote inspired the title for my book, *China's Inevitable Revolution*.)

The words of this speech that came to resonate most powerfully with me were these

A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa, and South America, only to take the profits out with no

concern for the social betterment of the countries, and [it will] say, “This is not just.”

Through this speech, Martin Luther King was identifying systemic linkages between white supremacy and the war in Vietnam. The analysis was not lost on me.

The Pivotal Years

The next two years, 1968 and 1969, were, in many ways, most pivotal to me, setting me on the trajectory I have largely followed to the present. Not only did I endure the shock of the assassination of Dr. King, but I was close to its violent response: nearby Chicago and more than 100 other cities across the country exploded in rebellion. I asked my dad, a long-time proponent of *non-violence*, how he assessed the destruction; he observed allegorically that every passenger train car is equipped with a case on the wall containing an axe and a fire hose, with a sign that directs, ‘In case of emergency, break glass.’”

Fred Hampton and the BPP

It was in the context of growing outrage across the U.S., that, now age 16, I came to meet a young, bright, articulate activist from a near-West Side suburb of Chicago, and to be introduced, with him, to a representative of the increasingly influential and rapidly expanding Black Panther Party. The young man’s name was Fred Hampton.

Fred, a budding student of the law, gifted orator, and dedicated revolutionary, soon rose to become chairman of the Illinois chapter of the BPP, Chairman Fred was guided by an analysis that capitalism had engendered racism, so that of all the struggles at that time, *class* struggle was primary-- the *many* oppressed people against the *few* oppressors--and for this reason, he worked tirelessly to organize what he described as the Rainbow Coalition.

In early 1969, several of my friends and I were invited to join the Rainbow Coalition by a member of the Panthers – here is my button.²

As many of you may know from the recently released movie, *Judas and the Black Messiah*, the FBI and the Chicago police saw Fred Hampton as such an effective organizer of the oppressed poor throughout the city of Chicago that, in a pre-dawn raid on December 4, 1969, they burst into his apartment, unleashed a fusillade of gunfire—and assassinated him, along with fellow Panther, from nearby Peoria, Mark Clark.

YA

My own activism emerged at this time. I participated with some friends in a project to build a house—a home—for an African-American mother from Chicago who wanted to move her family of 6 small children to Valpo from the notoriously drug-infested, gang-controlled public housing project of Cabrini Green. Years before Habitat for Humanity was established, and, in spite of racist resistance in our community, our crew of volunteers erected a comfortable dwelling for this Black family, breaking the color barrier in Valparaiso.

Empowered by this experience, eight of us formed a group we called Youth for Action: YA. It was not long before Army recruiters came to our high school, and we decided to express opposition. It was a significant moment: the previous week, the government had announced the highest number of U.S. casualties in Vietnam to date, *and* the U.S. Supreme Court had handed down its landmark *Tinker v. Des Moines* decision, upholding the 1st Amendment right of high school students to wear armbands in school to protest the war.

On the day the recruiters came, all the junior and senior boys were summoned to the gym—attendance was mandatory—to hear the recruiters tell us of our duties as Americans to fight communism and to tell us, laughingly, their stories of killing

the enemy: the Vietnamese people. Opposed to what Dr. King had described as “the madness of Vietnam,” YA launched our own protest.

Four of us guys sat in the auditorium, wearing our black armbands, while the four gals protested by wearing theirs in their classrooms. As soon as the principal got wind of our actions, we were all rounded up, and, heedless of the Supreme Court decision, faced suspension; more ominously, our names were quickly forwarded to the state police “red squad.”

With parental support and threats of legal action against the school, we were soon reinstated. But for me, the incident generated more serious repercussions. I was a senior, planning to go to college the next fall, and my history teacher—an ultra-conservative, pro-war, ex-Marine—was also head of our local draft board. Upon my return to school, he called me to the front of the classroom, jammed a finger into my chest, and threatened me in no uncertain terms: “You, son,” he declared, “are going to Vietnam!”

What I had observed about the treatment of activists in the Civil Rights Movement was now happening to me: **standing up in protest—even when legal—could lead to traumatic consequences.**

Luckily for me, my 18th birthday was in September; a draft counselor advised me that I could register for the draft where I went to college, and my high school history teacher would have no say over my draft future.

Wisconsin

So in the fall of 1969, I enrolled at the University of Wisconsin, known then not only for its strong academics, but also for its strong student movement.

During my first semester, I attended a life-changing, two-week symposium, focused on the tumultuous current events of the time, both in the U.S. and internationally.

My Pivot to China

Two of the lectures--both on China--had a particularly profound effect on me. At that time of the Cold War, I knew almost nothing about the country behind the so-called "Bamboo Curtain." A historian from Wisconsin and an economist from Stanford each reported that remarkable social experiments were being launched there, efforts to alter fundamentally—and *systemically*—the values and practices of China's old society.

- **By empowering the laboring classes**, with workers as managers and managers as workers;
- **By narrowing inequalities between men and women** with the provision of jobs, childcare, paid maternity leave, reproductive rights, freedom of marriage and divorce, the sharing of household responsibilities, and the eradication of the sexualization of girls and women;
- **By eliminating elitism in education and extending opportunities for study to those—the poor, the peasants—who had historically been excluded**, by overhauling the admissions criteria (no more entrance exams; students evaluated by the people from their localities) and restructuring curricula to serve social needs and social justice; and
- **By providing innovative, effective, affordable, and accessible medical care** to all of China's vast population.

A society built *not* on the **the *material* incentive to "Maximize Profit"**, but on the ***moral* incentive to "Serve the People"** profoundly intrigued me--and appealed to me.

China and African-Americans

On many fronts, revolutionary China was capturing the attention of political activists, in the U.S. and around the world. Beginning with the visit in 1959 of NAACP co-founder and noted scholar W.E.B. Dubois, Chinese leaders had held

cordial meetings with a number of leading African American activists, and Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong had twice, in 1963 (at the time of the March on Washington) and in 1968 (after the assassination of Martin Luther King), issued strong statements of support for the Black liberation struggles in America. The Black Panther Party was studying and popularizing the writings of Mao.

Beyond the African-American struggle, one of the first ***Women's Liberation*** organizations in New York City during the 1960s promoted the idea of **consciousness-raising**, which the activists derived from the experiences of Chinese peasant and women's associations, documented in the widely read book at the time, *Fanshen*.

In France, following the massive 1968 worker-student revolt, the intelligentsia there, too, gravitated toward the thinking of Mao and the experiences of the Chinese Revolution. Creators of French New Wave Cinema, Francois Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard were inspired by China, and two of the 20th century's most influential philosophers, existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre and feminist Simone de Beauvoir, joined with many others in spreading the ideas of Chinese socialism in the newspaper, *La Cause du Peuple* (*The People's Cause*).

In short, the study of China captivated me. My interest only deepened when relations between the U.S. and China began to thaw—and the American people got their first glimpse of the PRC—during President Richard Nixon's widely publicized trip to China in 1972. The following year, as a senior in college, I was elated when chosen to travel myself as part of a month-long study tour.

In the intervening years since that time, I have had many other meaningful experiences, but, while deepening, refining, and nuancing my values and understanding of the world, they have served largely to build on the fundamentals that had been established during my youth.

To the Present

So what about the present? In many ways, this country and the world have changed since my formative years in the 1960s. At that time we had no personal computers—the *one* computer at Wisconsin and the *one* computer at Cornell (where I first went to grad school) each took up the space of a giant basement room on campus. We had no cell phones; we actually had to literally *dial* landline numbers. We saw very few people of color on television, no open same-sex relationships; even married couples slept in separate twin beds. Examples of women newscasters, politicians, and professionals were almost nowhere to be seen.

But many other features of society have changed little—or worsened. Poverty remains widespread, and, since the beginning of the 1980s, when the anti-regulatory, neoliberal form of capitalism began to sweep the world, the concentration of wealth in the hands of the very few has grown exponentially, as has the gap between rich and poor, both in the U.S. and globally. Think about this: according to Oxfam, 82% of the wealth generated in 2017 went to 1% of the global population, while the poorest 50% of the world's people, 3.7 billion in number, received *none* of that wealth. And during this past year of pandemic, the trend has only accelerated.

While many of the most egregious examples of environmental pollution—like Cleveland's Cuyahoga River catching fire—were cleaned up after the emerging environmental movement of the 1960s contributed to the creation in 1970 of the EPA, today we still face the grim realities of environmental disasters such as the Flint water crisis of 2014, which lingers to the present. And we are all aware of the increasing severity of the impacts of global climate change:

As to gender issues, it is no doubt true that, largely as a result of the women's liberation movement of second-wave feminism of the 1960s, many women have indeed achieved prominence, economic independence, and fulfillment through improved opportunities for work outside the home. But it nevertheless remains the case that equal pay for equal work is a goal yet to be realized. And although, as students in my Gateway classes have attested, social norms have changed to expect husbands to share in cooking, cleaning, and childcare, the primary burden

of the family is still shouldered by women. The job loss statistics during the current pandemic bear out this reality: in addition to the double onus of earning a paycheck and keeping house, women have the task of educating the kids; for many, the burden has simply been too much, and they have had to sacrifice jobs outside the home. Moreover, domestic violence has risen and hard-won reproductive rights have been under attack.

What about racism? Have we seen improvement on this front? The Black Panthers organized initially to defend their communities from police brutality and repression. This past year's experiences with George Floyd and Breonna Taylor—just the most prominent of many examples—testifies to the ongoing injustices African Americans face all too often at the hands of the police. Since the 1960s, we have also witnessed the creation of a *new*, widespread expression of racial subjugation, powerfully brought to light by Michelle Alexander in her book, *The New Jim Crow*: **mass incarceration**.

And the wealth gap, the environmental crisis, and gender inequalities described above all hit people of color with even more intensive severity.

Systemic Problems

Of course, the past year, as I indicated at the outset, has also witnessed **resistance**. Among the most thought-provoking and promising elements of this resistance has been a renewed emphasis on “*systemic*” causes.

The wealth gap has been described as “*systemic plunder*.”³

Environmental threats and climate change are increasingly seen not only as Earth *systems* disruptions” from the science side, but, from a societal standpoint, as “*systemic crises*.”

The oppression of women has long been attributed to patriarchy as a “*system*” of male supremacy.

³ “Systemic plunder” can be attributed to British researcher Guy Standing, among others.

And the subjugation of Black people—so strongly exposed today by the Black Lives Matter Movement—has been identified as “*systemic racism*.”

We have come to realize that altering individual behavior is not enough to solve the problems, to right the wrongs that we have faced throughout my lifetime, and still face today. As an individual, I can—and should—attempt to help people in poverty. As an individual I can—and should—attempt to reduce, reuse, repair, and recycle. As an individual, I can—and should—attempt to examine and check sexist behaviors in myself and those around me. As an individual, I can—and should—make every effort to combat racism as I encounter it in my personal experiences.

But the point of looking at **historically-rooted** and deeply entrenched problems “**systemically**” is to recognize three implications: 1) that forces beyond individual attitudes and behaviors shape, limit, and, ultimately, determine outcomes. 2) If the problems are **not** primarily the result of **individual** actions, then the solutions must not be individual; they must be **collective**. And 3), as sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva has pointed out, understanding systemic causes of our most pressing problems means “finding solutions to match the nature of the problem; the **solutions need to be systemic**.”

Fortunately, we are not at point zero in attempting to address systemic problems; a number of scholars and activists--both in years past and in recent times--have offered penetrating analyses and provocative solutions from a systemic perspective. Before concluding, I’d like very briefly to suggest a few such systemic approaches that might help us address three major issues of our times, racism, the environmental crisis, and the crisis in higher education.

As to systemic racism, over the past year we have heard repeatedly that the roots of American racism lie in the system of slavery. That much seems clear. But when did slavery, which has existed in various societies for thousands of years, become *racialized*?

One of the clearest answers to this question was provided in 1944 by Oxford-trained Caribbean scholar, Eric Williams, in his seminal study, *Capitalism and*

Slavery. Slavery, Williams demonstrated, arose from the early merchant capitalist need for plantation labor in the American colonies to produce most profitably tobacco, cotton, and, especially, sugar. The ideology of racism--and its systemic practices in the Americas--was thus created to serve and vindicate the economic exploitation of the plantation slave system of colonial capitalism. "Slavery," Williams maintained, "was not born of racism; rather, racism was a consequence of slavery."

Reading Williams, I was struck by parallel observations on the roots of systemic racism from other sources. Recall Martin Luther King's observation about capitalist profit-seeking in Latin America, Africa, and S.E. Asia, and Fred Hampton's identical contention that racism is a by-product of capitalism. In Mao Zedong's 1963 and 1968 statements of support for the African-American struggles, the leader of China's anti-imperialist revolution similarly identified racial discrimination in the U.S. as "a product of the colonialist system." And just in the past few weeks, no less an expert on empire than Prince Harry, in his interview alongside his wife, Meghan Markle, pointed to "colonial undertones" informing the racism in the royal family.

Can Williams' analysis help us understand the origins and nature of systemic racism? Can it help us figure out a systemic solution?

Systemic Causes of Environmental Crisis

Similarly, many analyses of climate change and its related pathologies similarly point to systemic causes. Environmental historian, geographer, and sociologist Jason W. Moore is among a cohort of scholars who, in seeking the origin of today's conditions, have found evidence that it lay not in the period of the pollution-pervaded industrial revolution, as many have assumed, but rather in the earlier period of colonization—sound familiar?—when capitalism not only began to change economic relations but also the social and ecological fabric across continents.

In concert with the analysis of Eric Williams, Moore sees the colonial system and its ideology of a limited humanity (limited to males of white European stock) with

provenance over what he calls “cheap nature” (including women and colonized peoples along with other resources of the Earth) as crucial to the accumulation of capital that was needed to stimulate and support industrial capitalism and that yielded resultant environmental harms, including ultimately global climate change.

Can Moore’s analysis help us understand the systemic origins and nature of the environmental crisis? Can it help us figure out a solution?

The Crisis in Higher Ed as Systemic

The list of systemic crises goes on, but there is one more that I’d like to touch on today: the crisis in higher education. For the first time in my lifetime, college administrators and boards of trustees on a mass scale have generated a wave of program closures and faculty terminations, and in the past year, we at IWU have felt the cold force of this current, too. Our programs in Anthropology, French, Italian, and Religion were eliminated, and seven of our colleagues in these programs were told that their jobs were terminated. All these professors were tenured, and two had even stood at this podium in years past as recipients of the university’s award for teaching excellence.

As this is an honors convocation, I would like to take a minute to honor these professors for their many years of service to IWU:

Carole Myskofski

Rebecca Gearhart Mafazy

Chuck Springwood

Scott Sheridan

Chris Callahan

JIN Tao and

Nawa Chaulagain

To the dedicated colleagues listed here, thank you all for your many, significant contributions to our students and to our IWU academic community, both through your departments and through your participation in IWU's interdisciplinary programs, lending them a breadth and depth that will not be replaced—you will be deeply missed.

In the case of this recent crisis in higher education, the origins may be more difficult to identify, but perhaps a clue has been offered in the past weeks by one of Illinois Wesleyan's most distinguished alumnae, the internationally acclaimed poet, author, and ecological biologist, Sandra Steingraber. In late February, she was witness to a mass job termination of her faculty colleagues at Ithaca College. In protest, Dr. Steingraber stepped down from her position and, in her public letter of resignation, turned for explanation of this crisis to a term coined by her fellow environmental scholar and activist, Naomi Klein: "disaster capitalism", Steingraber called it, "as applied to higher education."

In simple terms, disaster capitalism is the effort by private industries to take advantage of societal shocks in order to implement calculated, free-market policies that promise enhanced profits at the expense of the unfortunates who suddenly become victims of the economic force of "the invisible hand."

Can Klein's analysis help us understand the origins and nature of the crisis in higher education? Can it help us figure out a solution?

Conclusion

If we are willing to entertain the proposition that many of the seemingly intractable problems we face in the world today are in fact "systemic," then we should be willing to explore, exhume, and examine the origins, historical contexts, and contemporary expressions of the systems at work. To solve the problems, we should, first, take steps to resist—but more, we should be eager to seek systemic solutions, combining imagination with intellectual rigor, creativity with concerted action. What better purpose can we have for an educational community? What better way to live up to the IWU mission of "diversity, social justice, and environmental sustainability"?

In the 1960s, vast numbers of activists in the U.S., in China, and around the world—all tried hard, but still fell short of our goals of bringing about systemic change. Nevertheless, even where we fell short, we left lessons to be learned—including some positive experiences to build upon. What efforts were well-conceived and effective? What efforts were mistaken or misguided?

Based on that knowledge, what strategies might bring about systemic solutions to address today's systemic problems? Can social movements like Black Lives Matter, climate justice, food sovereignty, and others become catalysts for *systemic* change? Do we need to build new "Rainbow Coalitions" to unite *all* oppressed groups in society? Can the burgeoning Mutual Aid network play that role? Do we need to replace *material* incentives for maximizing profits with *moral* incentives to "serve the people"? What do we make of the potential for circular economies or the degrowth paradigm? What new projects can be invented and put into practice?

So much exciting work is now underway to study systemic problems and come up with systemic solutions. Such work is imperative; the past year has alerted us that the whole world is calling on us to be part of it. There is no better time than as a college student to commit to the understanding of, resistance to, and, ultimately, elimination of systemic problems. The moment to take up the challenge is now.

FOOTNOTES AND DELETED PASSAGES:

From p. 4

1. Shortly after the bombing, Dad went down to Birmingham to meet with his friend and colleague, Pastor Joseph Ellwanger, himself a committed civil rights activist. Pastor Ellwanger introduced Dad to his congregant, Mr. Chris McNair, a Birmingham photographer who was father of Denise McNair, one of the four slain girls. Dad became close, long-time friends with Mr. McNair, who was later elected as one of the first African American representatives in the Alabama state legislature since Reconstruction.

From p. 5: Dr. King's address to the crowd at the conclusion of the march proclaimed, "There never was a moment in American history more honorable and more inspiring than the pilgrimage of clergymen and laymen of every race and faith pouring into Selma to face danger at the side of its embattled Negroes."
March 25, 1965

From p. 7

2. Fred Hampton on systemic oppression: Fred imagines Dred Scott appearing before the Supreme Court in 1857—Judge Taney explained very clearly to Dred Scott, "Nigger, you're nobody, you're property, you're a slave. ...[T]he systems--the legal system, the judicial system--all types of systems that are functioning in America today was set up long before you got here, brother. Because we brought you over to make money to keep what we've got going, these avaricious, greedy businessmen, to keep what we've got going, going on."

Chairman Fred continued, "[W]e say primarily that the priority of this struggle is class. That Marx, and Lenin, and Che Guevara and Mao Tse-Tung and anybody else that has ever said or knew or practiced anything about revolution, always said that revolution is a class struggle. It was one class--the oppressed--those other class--the oppressor. And it's got to be a universal fact.

"... Capitalism comes first and next is racism. [W]hen they brought slaves over here, it was to make money. So first the idea came that we want to make money, then the slaves came in order to make that money. That means that capitalism had to, through historical fact, racism had to come from capitalism. It had to be capitalism first, and racism was a by-product of that."

Time will not permit me to share other important experiences for me during these and the following years: working in a steel mill; undertaking two years of grad studies at Cornell; facing joblessness and thus spending time on welfare; unloading cargo for a trucking company—paid \$1 for every thousand pounds; landing a job as a forklift driver, leading a union drive, and serving as a union

president; canvassing door-to-door in the public housing projects of Love Canal, then site of the worst environmental disaster from chemical pollution in U.S. history; working seven years as a tennis pro; and ultimately returning to Wisconsin to complete my PhD, including a year of research at Peking University—all followed by 25 years here at IWU.

Our annual intellectual themes offer an excellent opportunity for the campus community to delve into the nature of systemic problems, and to explore systemic solutions. Think about our recent themes: Walls and Bridges; Nation(s) Divided; Women's Power. Women's Justice; The Evolution of Revolution; Changing Climates; Fact or Fiction?; and Health, Healing and Humanity. How rich are the possibilities for exploration of systemic issues offered by such themes?