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## Journalist and Author of *Outcasts United* to Speak at President's Convocation

Aug. 21, 2013

Warren St. John

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— On Wednesday, Sept. 4, Warren St. John, the author of the bestselling book *“Outcasts United: an American Town, A Refugee Team, and One Woman's Quest to Make a Difference”* will be the guest speaker at Illinois Wesleyan University's President's Convocation. The event, which is free and open to the public, will take place at 11 a.m. in Westbrook Auditorium of Presser Hall (1210 N. Park St., Bloomington). IWU President Richard F. Wilson and Student Senate President Brexton Isaacs will welcome the campus community to the start of the 2013-14 academic year. President Wilson and Provost Jonathan Green will conduct the investiture of Beling Professor of Natural Sciences Ram Mohan as the Hess Professor of Chemistry.

Prior to the Convocation, there will be a Q&A session with St. John at 9 a.m. in Beckman Auditorium in the lower level of The Ames Library (1 Ames Plaza, Bloomington). Following the Convocation, St. John will sign copies of his books at 1:15 p.m. in the Young Main Lounge of the Memorial Center (104 E. University Ave., Bloomington).



*“Outcasts United,”* which was published in the United States in 2009 and subsequently in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Japan, and China, was selected for the 2013 Illinois Wesleyan **Summer Reading Program** and discussed by new students, faculty and staff during Turning Titan Orientation in August.

The story takes place in Clarkston, Ga., a small hamlet situated approximately 10 miles from downtown Atlanta. In the 1980s and 1990s, agencies for the resettlement of refugees chose the town as a home for new arrivals. It was hoped that the town's proximity to downtown Atlanta would help the refugees find employment. The earliest refugees were from Southeast Asia. Then refugees arrived from the conflicts in the Balkans and later from Africa and the Middle East, radically changing the cultural landscape of the small southern town.

According to St. John, the story of Clarkston interested him because this kind of change, catalyzed by the movement and displacement of people, is happening all over the United States and Europe.

His debut book *“Rammer Jammer Yellow Hammer: A Road Trip into the Heart of Fan Mania,”* a book about collegiate football fans, was named one of Sports Illustrated's best books of the year, and ranked number one on The Chronicle of Higher Education's list of the best books ever written about collegiate athletics. In his quest to find answers to the question, “Why do fans care?,” St. John joined a caravan of RVers in their migration across the south as they followed the Alabama Crimson Tide, University of Alabama's football team.

In reference to his two books, St. John said, "I think what the books have in common is that they're both essentially about sociology, not sports. They're about how people get along, how they organize themselves socially, how they – we – search for meaning in our lives and a sense of safety amid the unpredictability of the world."

In addition to his two bestselling books, St. John has written for the *New York Observer*, *The New Yorker*, *Wired* and *Slate*, and has reported for *The New York Times*. He was born in Birmingham, Ala., where he attended The Altamont School. He studied English literature at the Columbia College in New York City where he now lives with his wife and daughter.

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