

Intro Video

Photo) This is a photo of my siblings a year and a half before my birth. Six weeks later, on Feb 10, 1966, (Photo). my father's 39th birthday, Dr. Martin Luther King spoke on this campus for the second time. (Pause for Clip)

This is my world in black-and-white (Photo). Thank you for this humbling opportunity to speak to you today. In sharing my story, I am part of the urgency of now. I am continuing what my parents started long ago - the fight for peace, equity, and justice.

(photo) I identify as black. My birth mother is white, and my birth father is black. I have not met either of them. I am a Christian, and I believe my journey has led me to this moment. Adopted into an all-white family in 1968 (photo), I grew up in an all-white city. When I would look in the mirror as a child, I knew I was different. My skin was darker (photo), and my hair was curly. I had blonde hair on my arms, and I knew I was unlike anyone else where I lived. (Photo) But I didn't see someone people would dislike because of those differences. I grew up in Wausau, Wisconsin, where I seldom saw anyone of color other than on TV. It turns out that my hometown was designated the "Whitest City in America." (photo) In a census taken in 1970, in a town of over 30,000 people, there were four people of color, and I was one of them. Life opened my eyes to how parts of society viewed me when I was eight years old. (Pause for video)

(Photo)My parents gave me an opportunity in life as a black child in White America.

My world in black and white is the story of my life, the book I haven't written yet. Where do I begin? How do I start to explain so many things that I've been feeling my entire life but never put pen to paper? How can I tell you what it feels like to see the world through the lens of a white and a black person, all while experiencing it through the skin of someone who's black? (Photo) How can I tell you what it feels like to experience the worst of racism and the best of equality? I have seen and felt America from many angles and lenses. I am not an expert on race relations, but my real-life experience is something I wish everyone could feel as they reflect on race in America.

I had two loving parents who were "necessary pioneers" far ahead of their time. (Photo) My mother was a nurse, and my father was a high school teacher. They had six children before me. My parents somehow managed to put all seven of us through college from 1972 through 1990.

(Photo)That was my father in the fall of 2015. During fall break, I took a drive back home to interview him. I never knew the story of why they chose to adopt. My mind was racing and flooded with questions as I made the five-hour trek north. It was two years before he passed, and I had so many questions. Here I asked him why he wanted to adopt. (Pause before Clip) (Photo) Where was he going with this? Here was my father, the man who taught me how to read and write, attended every athletic contest from high school through college, and

even came to the IWU campus when we hosted the NCAA here in 2000. What did he mean he didn't want to adopt? But that started what was going to be quite possibly the most meaningful four hours of my life. As the late afternoon changed from dusk to darkness, my father took me on a journey and shared things I never imagined. I didn't need to ask any more questions as he spoke for four hours. And I listened to how he had unwittingly prepared to adopt his entire life. (photo)

The year was 1946. My father was in the Navy stationed in San Francisco. He and some fellow sailors were returning to the base after a night of heavy drinking. As the sailors rode the trolley, my father noticed a black man also wanted to get on the trolley. (pause for Clip)

And at that moment, my father's journey as a civil rights activist began. (Photo)

After the Navy, my father enrolled at the University of Wisconsin and studied History and English. He became an Abraham Lincoln encyclopedia and a civil rights activist. He held a Master's degree in History, English, and Biology. I took three of his classes in high school, Exposition, American Literature, and Advanced Composition. C+, B+, A- and he actually failed one of my older brothers. It was in his classes that I first started to learn to think critically. I would love to go back in time and absorb as much as I could from his classes.

As my father continued to share stories into the night, it all came clear to me how his life experiences prepared him to become my father. With six children already, adoption wasn't on his mind. But it was on my mom's mind and this is what happened when she brought it up: (Pause for Clip)

This is me and my best friend in 1984. (photo) He went to 5 different elementary schools in as many years. The final one, he was the only white kid in the school. It was an incredible twist of fate that I went to an all-white school, and he moved to Wausau, and we have been best friends since 1980 (Photo). He lived with his mother and they were poor. My dad became a father figure to him and spent many nights at our house and took my dad for an English class. Here he is speaking at my dad's funeral. (pause for clip)

This is my favorite photo(photo)This is shortly after my sledding incident and just before I met my best friend. My dad taught me to see color. Color is beautiful. That doesn't mean I go around consciously looking at others and thinking, oh that's a black person or a white person. If life were only a workplace where our entire purpose was to get along and be cordial but not learn about each other, life would be boring, dull, mundane. Life would be a sterile environment in which we are not allowed to see the colors of people. When you see a beautiful sunrise it can be filled with infinite ever-changing

clouds. What if we only saw the world in black and white? (Photo then photo).

There is so much incredible culture in the world. So much history, so much uniqueness, so much to acknowledge and celebrate and enjoy. This past summer, my son had two friends over for dinner. One from Lima, Peru, and one from Congo, Africa. (photo) This was a moment that I wish my parents would have been able to see. It was a moment that because of how my parents raised me and now how we have raised our son, that it was just four young men from all over the world sitting as friends, as equals, and the thoughts given to race were only that of respect and wanting to learn and know more about each other. My parents showed me by their words and actions that a love of humanity is a lifelong process and must be intentional. Knowing a black person or having a black friend is a too familiar theme of thinking one is anti-racist. (photo) My parents prepared for 42 years to adopt, and I am fortunate to receive their life's work and love. At the end of the summer, two boys came back to stay with us for two weeks. It was wonderful how comfortable they felt in our home, so much so that it was clear to me that college boys making a mess and not knowing how to clean it up is universal across all cultures. (photo) My formative and late childhood years had joy and wonder (photo), but it wasn't all roses. I can remember it clearly; when I was 15 years old, I was at an All-Star baseball tournament, and we were staying at a campground. (photo) A few of the boys had marijuana. I had never seen it, and I was scared out of my mind. They lit up and passed it towards me and said, "you're black; you must have done this. " I grabbed it, and I looked at it, and turned my head away; I didn't say a word and passed it to the next person. (photo) Before my first varsity start in high school basketball, the head coach pulled me

aside and said, "we need you to keep your playground moves within the offense." I played basketball at the same place as all of the other kids in town, but I knew what he meant. I should have been the quarterback for the football team, but the head coach would not have a black kid running his offense. (photo) Our high school used to have the American Legion gold, silver, and bronze award to the best athletes in the school regardless of gender. The gold was given to a baseball player who was first-team all-conference; he was the starter on the basketball team with no other accolades. They handed me the silver despite being first-team all-state in football, track, and all-conference in basketball. I knew it at the time, but it was confirmed that it was because I was black that I didn't get the gold. I was set to go to the homecoming dance with my girlfriend, but her father found out it was me and decided otherwise.

(photo) I share these to illustrate an essential question. Where did all these assumptions about me come from? When I got into college, it was more of the same. Please keep in mind it was the exception and not the rule? But why should anyone go through that? College was the first time I was around other people of color. It was wonderful. I assimilated well because of my experiences and what my parents taught me. (Photo) Going to a black barbershop for the first time was the coolest thing, they did not exist in my hometown.

(photo)My college football coach was Roger Harring. He passed away in 2021. Harring won three national championships and 15 conference titles. He was named to the ESPN top 150 college coaches of all time. In my freshman year at Lacrosse, I sprained my ankle during the second week of practice. My first game back was at Saginaw Valley, Michigan, a Division II program. It was a 10-hour bus ride, and since I was a freshman, the upperclassman chose their seatmate. 315 pound Larry Harlow chose me. I was smashed against the window for 10 hours. (photo)I ended up earning player of the

game and was told I got to fly back on the G. Heileman Brewery 6 person plane.

(photo)The G. Heileman Brewery the old home of the world's largest six-pack was in LaCrosse, and the owner followed the football team. So I went from Larry Harlow to riding in a plane over Lake Michigan. I sat directly across from Roger Harring. He asked me to grab him a beer and to get one for myself. I didn't say no. We ended up having a few more, and as we were getting close to the Mississippi, I could feel my bladder starting to feel uncomfortable. There was not a bathroom on the plane. It wasn't my first time drinking, but the combination of not eating, being on the plane, and the whole situation, I was flat out drunk. When we landed I did the fastest bent-over duck waddle to the bathroom. But I can see Coach Harring now. He was smiling at me as we kicked back old-style beer. How lucky was I? He asked me about my parents and my childhood. (photo) We established a special bond at that moment. Coach Harring saw me; he saw who I was and helped me with opportunities beyond football.

(photo) When I was younger I would often hear microaggressions like "nice tan," As I have aged, my skin has become lighter, which is very common for people of color.(photo) But I'll never erase the damaged look on the face of a college teammate who told me he wished his skin was as light as mine. Many people of color bleach their skin, which on the surface may seem trendy or normal today, but there is an ugly history behind this. The complete opposite of getting a tan to feel and look good, and on many levels to escape the negative connotations surrounding being too dark. There is a song by

Depeche Mode called people are people. (Pause for video) Those lyrics were, "can't understand what makes a man hate another man, help me understand. " In my 53 years of living this experience, I know why things are the way they are with racism, but that doesn't mean I have to accept. On a human level, I refuse to understand it; I can't understand it because, at the core of my being, it doesn't make sense. (Photo)

Here is the critical moment in my history

Let me take you back to 1969 (photo), a year after I had been with my family, but the adoption had not been made official yet. After my father's attorney spoke, the judge looked out into the courtroom with a scowl on his face, my mother in tears, and my sister Susan who was 11 at the time, holding me. The judge said this community isn't ready for this! Where is the father? My father wanted to punch the judge in the face. But he calmed all of that; there was too much at stake. (pause for Clip)

PhotoMy father studied Thomas Jefferson and Lincoln and so many more. Some today say Jefferson is taken out of context, but my father chose those words in 1969 for all to hear, all men are created equal.

For many years after college, my dad would send me a book on my birthday with a handwritten note. In the book titled "Charles Darwin," he wrote, "I hope you will find some time to become acquainted with Charles Darwin: one of the great intellects of all time. And much-maligned and misunderstood." He sent books, including Freedom Flyers on the Tuskegee Airman and the Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, a must-read to make the connections between

the horrors of slavery and a path to equality. One year for my birthday, my dad bought me a subscription to the Smithsonian Magazine and wrote, never stop your liberal arts education. He often challenged me to go inside myself and be my "own" thinker. (photo) He would say Socrates said so, Emerson said so, Lincoln said so, all the great thinkers said so. Once you do that, there are endless possibilities.

(Photo)

Near the end of the interview, my father told me what having me meant to my mother and him and what they hoped would happen :
(Pause for Clip)

(Photo) When I lead a cycling fitness class I try to make it a learning experience with some of the songs I choose by citing historical events and song meanings along the way. For example "What's going on," by Marvin Gaye, is about anti-war cries and police brutality stemming from the Watts riots. (pause for clip) In my coaching theory class, I have round-table discussions on race, racism, and social justice. I strive to have students leave the course understanding that coaching (at least to me) is so much more than objective results.

(Photo) I bring much of what my dad taught me about critical thinking into coaching and teaching. I love being creative and doing my part in helping to send thoughtful and informed young people into the world.

Before I conclude I would like to share a few interesting facts about my family. My sister Susan was a staff photographer for Cesar Chavez and part of the ground movement for the united farm workers (photo). This is a photo from a Chicago boycott in 1976. Here she is safely carting me around on her banana seat bike in 1969. (pause for video) DeRay Mcksen (photo), the author of “the other side of Freedom, the best-selling book about Ferguson, MO officiated my nephew’s wedding (photo). My cousin, Teresa Algiers, now Teresa Kaepernick adopted a young boy 19 years after my parents adopted me. You may have heard his name - Colin Kaepernick. (photo)

Being a successful athlete requires muscle memory. (Photo) You learn it, you think about it until you don’t have to think about it. Many times you get knocked down. But the more you practice it right, the greater your chance for success. (Photo). Effective Coaching and teaching require the same patience and diligence. Here is a video of two former IWU athletes, the 2000 and the 2018 national champions in the long jump (pause for Clip) Here is a photo of those two athletes together. Nearly 20 years apart, but together as Titans. (photo). This is a photo of two women who were part of a national championship relay. (photo). Gianina Taylor, on the right, now Dr. Gianina Baker named 2020 News Gazette's Forty Under 40 Woman of the Year. She helped pass a resolution declaring racism a public health crisis.

The urgency of now is about bringing people together. With our country being fed so much disinformation the divide over the past few years has become like the grand canyon.

Black and white are what society teaches us. A famous philosopher once said we must unlearn what we have learned. (Photo). There are many parallels between muscle memory as an athlete and daily life. For example, if you want to combat racism but are not sure how it requires practice. There will be challenges along the way and it won't always be easy. (photo) But if you keep your focus, implement strategies and practice them, it becomes who you are.

My world in black-and-white steps outside of the bounds of society to see the spectrum of all colors. (photo) A story that began when two empathetic and educated people found unusual courage to help provide opportunity. My parents taught me to recognize the difference between opportunity and privilege. They showed me how to view situations from outside myself. They embodied the beauty of humanity. They were not color blind. They fought institutions to expand horizons, including their own with many struggles along the way. When I see these trophies (photo) I see my parents (Photo). I see Coach Harring, and I see opportunity. I see Dr. Martin Luther King. When I see my wife (Photo), I am so thankful for the fight my parents went through to get me. Because my parents were anti-racist they gave me an opportunity at life. (photo) Because they were anti-racist my daughter was born and graduated from IWU (Photo).

Because my parents knew that the urgency of now had always been, I have the honor to coach many athletes (Photo then photo, including my son who is a current student here. (photo) Within my father's words, there is a common theme (Photo) that connects all the disciplines where your education has no room or time for something as vile as racism.

A few days ago I had a zoom meeting with (Min-iLL) [Minal Bopaiah](#), (Photo) founder and principal consultant for Brevity and Wit - a strategy and design firm with a focus on making a more equitable and inclusive world. Her book "Equity," (photo) details many ways to make the greatest impact on organizations through equity. After hearing my story she pointed out that having privilege does not isolate someone from racism, but being able to recognize one's privilege is important in leading in the area of diversity equity and inclusion. (Photo) She reinforced what I have been feeling my entire life but I have never really shared it publicly until now.

Many organizations are not ready to tackle the real work needed in the area of DEI. If the urgency of now is our theme, we better roll up our sleeves and get to work.

My parents knew the urgency of now in the 1960s. This is my world in black and white Photo then photo. (clip)