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Acclaimed director, author visit IIT

Hannah Larson

ASSISTANT EDITOR

History is a relatively untold subject at IIT. Plus, it's not every day IIT actually makes history by welcoming an A-list celebrity to our campus.

On Friday, February 2, Illinois Tech's Humanities Department, College of Science and Letters, and the newly formed Lewis College of Human Sciences sponsored a documentary screening and subsequent discussion on Oliver Stone and Peter Kuznick's documentary "The Untold History of the United States: The Bomb."

"The Untold History of the United States" is a 10 part Showtime Network documentary series, and a book of the same name, accompanies the documentary, rounding out to approximately 750 pages. The authors, Oscar-winning director, writer, and producer Oliver Stone, and Dr. Peter Kuznick, the Director of the Nuclear Studies Institute at the American University have been working on "Untold History" since 2008.

Though the documentary, and subsequent book have only been released since late 2012, there has been significant controversy surrounding Stone and Kuznick's joint work. Stone is no stranger to controversy; many of his racy films have been targeted for their historical inaccuracies ("JFK"), as well as their suggestive themes ("The Doors," "Scarface.") "Untold History" proves to follow that pattern.

Upon the documentary, and book's release, one reporter from The Daily Beast touted Kuznick and Stone's work as "historical illiteracy," while others have deemed it a new way to question the history we have accepted as a nation, for so long. "Untold History" even garnered praise from former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Before the screening, Professor Maureen Flanagan, Humanities Department Chair, and Dr. R. Russell Betts, Dean of the College of Science & Letters, spoke about IIT's distinguished guests' accomplishments, as well as explaining Stone's absence from the pre-screening festivities, saying he was still in the hotel room, recovering from the flu.

"We must realize the importance of why [Stone and Kuznick] made this documentary," Flanagan said. "History is messy because it's made by people. We must strive for discussion and dialogue."

The episode shown on campus, titled, "The Bomb" dealt with Harry S. Truman's decision to drop the atomic bombs on Japan during World War II (WWII). Kuznick and Stone took extra care to champion Henry A. Wallace, a lesser known figure of history.

Wallace served as President Franklin Roosevelt's (FDR) Secretary of Agriculture (1933 to 1940), and Vice President (1940 to 1945.) He also served as President Harry S. Truman's Secretary of Commerce from 1945 to 1946.

Kuznick relayed an intriguing story about the 1945 presidential election, as historical background before the documentary was played.

"For Oliver and I, Wallace was a visionary," Kuznick expressed. "It was the century of the common man, the people's revolution."

Kuznick went on to explain that during the 1944 Democratic National Convention, Wallace came in first during the first round of casting ballots, but by the third, Truman had been selected based on his more moderate views. Wallace, considered radically left-wing, was unfavorable to much of the Democratic Party, especially considering FDR's rumored declining health status. The vice presidential nominee was thought to be especially prepared to take over the Oval Office. Though FDR tried to preserve his previous administration, he buckled to preserve the Democratic Party.

After the expected moments of technical difficulty, the documentary began.

Narrated by Stone, the video is a compilation of primary source newsreels, Hollywood movie excerpts, and other miscellaneous propaganda. The most notable being snippets of the Looney Tunes Cartoons that portrayed the U.S. Axis enemies in a less-than-flattering manner, and that have since been banned from television. The Duke



himself even makes an appearance in an excerpt of a wartime movie where he becomes one of many casualties. Gregory Peck appears in a portion of "Twelve O'Clock High."

The movie excerpts exemplify Stone's famous film aesthetic, while the historical fodder brings everything to life. Kuznick's particular words and historical rhetoric reverberate throughout the script.

Audio excerpts also provided a sense of reality, a la FDR's "fireside chats." The direct recordings also reinforced many of Kuznick and Stone's suggestions about this era.

The movie deploys many shock value tactics, courtesy of Stone's influence, such as the use of the racially insensitive cartoons, extensive footage of the Japanese internment camps, and footage of the aftermath of the atomic bombings of Japan. Though Stone is known for his unnerving cinematography, but the fact that the footage and audio clips used are real, adds a macabre element to the documentary.

As this "Untold History" segment unfolds, Kuznick and Stone's critique of Truman comes to a head. They suggest that Truman didn't order the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but was rather guilty of omission. Truman didn't say "yes" or "no" to the information he was given, but he knew all of the gruesome details that would come with the attack. They also suggest Truman knew that Japanese Emperor Hirohito had already requested surrender, based on their intimidation by the Russian forces that would eventually invade them. This information is from one of Truman's own diaries.

In the film, the bombing was purportedly described as: "morally reprehensible and militarily unnecessary" by five out

of seven of the U.S. military's five star generals.

The film also tries to dispel the myth that the bombing of Japan won WWII, and the U.S.-centric view that "we won the war." Kuznick and Stone do a wonderful job of convincing and reminding the audience of the U.S.' shortcomings in WWII.

They pose the question: "could the war have been won without the bomb?" The obvious answer, based on the facts that the film provides, is yes. It suggests that the bombing of Hiroshima was just to showcase our new weapon, though the majority of the scientists that worked on it famously rescinded their support for its use, i.e. Oppenheimer, Einstein.

Oppenheimer famously said he had "blood on his hands" from his involvement with the creation of the atomic bomb. Einstein was also quoted as saying that he should have never pushed for the development of an atomic weapon.

The documentary makes a point to note that though Truman suffered no repercussions from his omission of a decision, there was slight evidence that suggested some remorse on his part. Truman stated in his diaries three different times that he knew the development of this technology could end life on the planet.

According to the movie, 85% of Americans, at the time, were convinced that the bomb had ended the war. A topic that was covered extensively was the extreme discrepancies of the Japanese bombings that insulted the memory of those who gave their lives year after year fighting in WWII. Over the years, the U.S. officially cited 23 American POWs, and 318,000 Japanese civilians killed in the Hiroshima bombing, and with 40,000 Japanese civilians and only 250 soldiers from FatMan at the Nagasaki bombing, though these numbers have been subject

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Photos by Bonnie Robinson

Fueling Innovation Campaign sparks multi-million dollar donations

Ryan Kamphuis

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

After weeks of advertising, students, alumni, faculty, and university administration converged upon the MTCC for the unveiling of 'Fueling Innovation - The Campaign for IIT'. Introduced by President John Anderson as a campaign to reinvigorate IIT as a leader in the academic world, the goal of the Fueling Innovation campaign is to raise \$250 million. The money will be used to create new scholarships for potential students, endowed chairs to bring in top-tier faculty, completely renovate Engineering 1 and the Life Sciences building, and construct the Innovation Center that was announced this summer by Anderson and Chicago Mayor Rahm Emmanuel.

The Fueling Innovation campaign has been in the works since 2010, when the university began soliciting alumni for 'Leadership' donations. Anderson described this as the 'quiet phase' of the campaign, where the university worked to raise half of their \$250 million goal. The campaign kickoff on Friday, February 8th signified the achievement of this goal, and the transition from the 'Leadership' phase of the campaign to the public portion of the campaign. Anderson mentioned during the kickoff that over \$131 million had been raised since the beginning of the campaign, and that the entire campaign is on the schedule that was set before it began.

In addition to the public launch, a black-tie soft-launch was held in the MTCC on Thursday night. Days were spent preparing the MTCC for the event and transforming it into a luxury venue. Distinguished alumni, Board of Trustees members, and university administration used the event to give a preview of the campaign before it launched the next day.

The speakers at the public launch talked about the large donations that had already been made to the campaign, and the uses of these donations. Caryl Pucci Rettaliata, the wife of former IIT President John T. Rettaliata, donated \$12 million dollars in memory of her deceased husband, \$2 million of which will go towards creating new scholarships, and \$10 million of which will go towards the complete renovation of Engineering 1, which will be renamed the John T. Rettaliata Engineering Center. It was announced that the renovation of E1 would begin this coming summer. It was also announced that a \$2.5 million dollar challenge donation - a donation is only made if additional \$2.5 million can be raised - had been made in memory of the late Robert A. Pritzker by Colonel James Pritzker. Robert Pritzker is an IIT alumnus and formerly sat on the IIT Board of Trustees. This money is going to be used to renovate the Life Sciences Building, which will be renamed the Robert A. Pritzker Research Center. It was also explained that, of the money already raised, over \$20 million was set to be used to establish new scholarships that would be given out

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