



MADE OF IIRON

Turning conversation into action, one student at a time.

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It's April, and the NFL Draft is in Chicago for the first time ever. Millions of people came from all over the country to watch, but Zane Clarke Waxman* isn't here as a spectator—they're here as a protester, standing with students who aren't just classmates, but fellow organizers.

Above their heads, posters read, "Student power over corporate greed." Clarke Waxman joined more than 100 other students across the city in a protest challenging Roosevelt University's financial aid policies, in an attempt to force the administration to acknowledge the misinformation given to marginalized students about financial aid. Some were asked to withdraw from the university because they couldn't pay sufficient tuition, according to the *Chicago Tribune*.

In October, Roosevelt president Ali Malekzadeh apologized for the "inaccurate information" the university gave students, saying that the same mistakes would not be repeated.

"It's very rewarding to see people who really don't want to have to deal with the problems we're talking about, forced to," Clarke Waxman says.

For Clarke Waxman, organizing people and resources to create action like this is the only thing that ever has a tangible impact. Change happens when you get people to stand together and challenge corrupt institutions, Clarke Waxman says.

That's how they got interested in IIRON, the Illinois and Indiana Regional Organizing Network, and then went on to be a founder of Northwestern's IIRON chapter.

Dealing with systemic imbalances of power is not a new experience for Clarke Waxman, who grew up between multiple households in low-income and mixed-race families. They heard stories of a black step-grandfather who was denied work opportunities and forced into segregated communities after fighting in World War II as a Tuskegee Airman.

In 2010, Clarke Waxman came to Northwestern and began taking political science courses, learning about what they saw as corrupt campaign financing practices and what they now say is one root cause of inequality in America.

"I became very, very depressed," Clarke Waxman says. "I felt like the challenges we face were insurmountable, as a species, as a planet."

And so, after two years, Clarke Waxman took a break from Northwestern. They returned to Evanston in September 2013 with a newfound interest in community organizing.

They resumed classes in March 2014 just as IIRON was looking to grow at Northwestern. IIRON emphasizes the power of young people and uses collective action to challenge systemic issues. The IIRON Student Network (ISN) trains students by building chapters on Chicago-area campuses.

Clarke Waxman calls the timing "auspicious," and maybe it was. ISN

*Clarke Waxman's preferred pronoun is 'they.'