

The background features a complex network of white dots of varying sizes, interconnected by thin white lines. The dots are scattered across the frame, with some forming larger, more prominent clusters. The overall aesthetic is that of a digital or neural network. The background color transitions from a deep purple at the top to a bright pink at the bottom.

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption

Written by Bryan Stevenson

Published by griefconvention

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Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption

By Bryan Stevenson

Just Mercy Audiobook

A powerful true story about the potential for mercy to redeem us, and a clarion call to fix our broken system of justice—“from one of the most brilliant and influential lawyers of our time

Just Mercy A Story Of Justice And Redemption

Bryan Stevenson was a young lawyer when he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and children trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system. One of his first cases was that of Walter McMillian, a young man who was sentenced to die for a notorious murder he insisted he didn't commit. The case drew Bryan into a tangle of conspiracy, political machination, and legal brinkmanship—and transformed his understanding of mercy and justice forever.

Just Mercy Analysis

Just Mercy is at once an unforgettable account of an idealistic, gifted young lawyer's coming of age, a moving window into the lives of those he has defended, and an inspiring argument for compassion in the pursuit of true justice.

Just Mercy Author

--randomhousebooks.com

Not since Atticus Finch has a fearless and committed lawyer made such a difference in the American South. Though larger than life, Atticus exists only in fiction. Bryan Stevenson, however, is very much alive and doing God's work fighting for the poor, the oppressed, the voiceless, the vulnerable, the outcast, and those with no hope. Just Mercy is his inspiring and powerful story.

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption

Just Mercy Audible

Re-read. This time via audio. Bryan Stevenson is in the Netflix documentary the 13th. I just watched it. I highly recommend it!

I'm late to the party so there is not much for me to say about this book that has not already been said. What I will say is that This is a Very Important Book! If you have not read it you must!!! It should be required reading for high school. I had no idea the injustice that occurred in this country when it came to death row. I live in a state in which the death penalty Re-read. This time via audio. Bryan Stevenson is in the Netflix documentary the 13th. I just watched it. I highly recommend it!

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Bryan Stevenson is an incredible man for all that he has done for death row inmates. They are making this into a movie. I'm so glad they are!

Put it at the very very top of your to read list! It's that important! ...more

Just Mercy: Following the Road Less Taken

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption was chosen as a Group Read for June, 2015, by On the Southern Literary Trail. My special thanks to Jane, my good friend who nominated this selection.

Bryan Stevenson

Bryan Stevenson has written a compelling memoir with Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption. This is an important work which should be read by any individual who is concerned with the concept of Justice and incidents of Injustice that me Just Mercy: Following the Road Less Taken

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Bryan Stevenson has written a compelling memoir with *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*. This is an important work which should be read by any individual who is concerned with the concept of Justice and incidents of Injustice that merit compassion and mercy.

Stevenson, the founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, and its Executive Director, is a committed advocate opposed to the imposition of the death penalty, an advocate for unjustly imprisoned children, and an iconic American citizen at the forefront of discussing racism as reflected in the Judicial System. It is a book that will surprise you, shock you, and appall you. Simply put, read this book, one of the Ten most noted books of 2014 by the New York Times, the Washington Post, and numerous other literary reviews.

My work with the poor and the incarcerated has persuaded me that the opposite of poverty is not wealth; the opposite of poverty is justice. Finally, I've come to believe that the true measure of our commitment to justice, the character of our society, our commitment to the rule of law, fairness, and equality cannot be measured by how we treat the rich, the powerful, the privileged, and the respected among us. The true measure of our character is how we treat the poor, the disfavored, the accused, the incarcerated, and the condemned. • -Bryan Stevenson

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption revolves around the case of an innocent man, Walter McMillian, a black man who had a white girl friend in Monroe County, Alabama, framed by the Sheriff, the District Attorney, and convicted by a Jury for the murder of a clerk in a dry cleaner's shop. Condemned to die. The Sheriff and the District Attorney ignored the evidence that exonerated him. Manufactured the dirty evidence that convicted him and placed him on death row. Incredibly, though no law provided for it, the Sheriff succeeded in McMillian being held on death row prior to trial within the Alabama penitentiary system. McMillian was held on death row for a total of six years.

Walter McMillian, Exonerated

Although the case occurs in the home town and county of Harper Lee, the community which has gained fame from Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, there is no Atticus Finch to implore the Jury, "For the love of God, do your duty."

Bryan Stevenson surfaces as a real life Atticus Finch who ultimately gathers the evidence, uncovers the chicanery and political machinations that imprisoned McMillian. Stevenson who was a young fledgling attorney not long out of law school. He has argued cases before the United States Supreme Court five times.

Walter McMillian is a man to cheer for. Stevenson is a man to be emulated by so many others in the Justice System. But Stevenson does not gleefully celebrate his victories, the exoneration of the innocent. A bubbling anger appears to roil within him at the injustices he has continued to attempt to right in those years following McMillian's exoneration.

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption

That anger, for me, is understandable yet disturbing. I have to wonder if Stevenson bears a burden that prevents him from having faith in any system responsible for the administration of justice. Whether it is difficult for him to approach any adversary opposite the court room without feeling there is the possibility of fairness.

I was a prosecuting attorney for almost twenty-eight years. I spoke for vulnerable populations. Abused children, victims of sexual assault, both women and men who were undeniable victims of domestic violence. I directed our County's Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Program for almost four years. I began the private practice of law and for nearly two years, represented children as a Guardian Ad Litem, and Adults charged with Criminal Offenses. The years finally took their toll. I am thankfully retired. The Equal Justice Initiative Office is only ninety odd miles away. I owe Bryan Stevenson a vist. Maybe a little volunteer work.

Alabama's Electric Chair, currently stored in the attic of Holman Prison.

Sunday Morning Coming Down: a Reader's Reflection

I'm having a most unusual Sunday morning. I'm listening to the music of Dale Watson, led there while contemplating Capital Punishment. I'm having a cup of coffee. I've been thinking. A lot.

Reading takes you on strange journeys.

"Yellow Mama" was the name given to Alabama's Electric Chair. Although the Alabama Legislature had authorized death by electrocution in 1923, there was no way to carry out that sentence until 1927.

Kilby Prison, 1922-1969, Montgomery County, Alabama

Alabama needed a way to electrocute Horace DeVaughan for a double murder committed in Birmingham. Inmate Ed Mason, an English cabinet maker by trade who was serving 60 years for theft and grand larceny, built Yellow Mama. The chair was painted with yellow paint from the nearby Highway Department. The same paint used to paint lane indicators on State roads. The inmates named the new chair.

While well built, the chair didn't work too well. On April 8, 1927, Horace DeVaughn was the first human being to experience "riding the lightning." It was a long ride.

"He prayed to Jesus for hours beforehand, and accepted no food, drink or cigarettes on the night of the execution. In his final statement he expressed that he had been forgiven and had no hard feelings toward anyone, and asked for someone to tell his mother goodbye and that his soul was saved. DeVaughan underwent three 2,000 volt discharges between 12:31 and 12:42 AM. At the first 40-second

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jolt his body surged forward, a thin gray smoke flowed from under the electrode over his head, and the odor of burning flesh was apparent. After the second discharge, flames were seen on his leg, but he was still alive. After the third jolt, he was pronounced dead. Twenty were present as witnesses, included Moore's brother, George, who traveled from Coffeyville, Kansas and claimed a piece of DaVaughn's belt as a souvenir of his visit." (The Montgomery Advertiser, Montgomery, Alabama, (2002))

Horace Devaughn was a black man. Two weeks later, Virgil Murphy, a veteran of World War I who was convicted in Houston County of murdering his wife, became the first white man electrocuted in the chair. Before the state's use of the electric chair, executions generally were carried out in the counties by hanging. (The Alabama Department of History and Archives)

Tuscaloosa County "Old Jail," where the gallows were

So here I am listening to music by a Birmingham, Alabama, native singing about sitting in that chair. Most of my professional career it was my duty to uphold the imposition of the death penalty. No easy burden. It's a lot to think about when you ask a man's jury of his peers to kill him. I have the utmost respect for Stevenson, though we would have been on opposite sides of the court room had we ever met in one.

I have tried my share of Capital cases. The verdicts in each case was guilty. However, the Jury's sentencing recommendation in all but one Life in Prison Without Parole. Those Defendants will never walk out of prison alive. Unless the Legislature changes the law regarding Life Without Parole. It's quite possible. The State is going broke. The prisons are overcrowded. There is a growing geriatric population in our prisons.

The law prevents an Alabama Prosecutor from telling a Jury that the Legislature could one day allow the possibility of parole in a Capital case. Were a Prosecuting Attorney do that, it would be reversible error.

In each Capital case I have tried, the Judge presiding followed the Jury's sentencing recommendation. In each case, I did not ask the Judge to override the Jury's recommendation. In my opinion the Jury had spoken. The verdict was Just. When the Jury recommended Mercy, I believed Justice had been done.

There is that one case, though. The case where I sought the death penalty, the verdict was guilty. I strenuously argued to the Jury that the only appropriate sentence was death. The Jury's recommendation was death. The Judge presiding imposed the death sentence. That was fourteen years ago. The case remains somewhere in the seemingly endless series of Appeals.

The Defendant murdered his two month old son. Beat and shook him to death. The child had two rib fractures on his chest. The child had eight rib fractures on his back. Picture holding a baby in front of you. Your thumbs gently resting on his chest, your fingers cradling each side of his back. The weight of the baby supported underneath his arms by the flesh between your thumbs and forefingers.

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Think of the amount of force necessary to break the cartilaginous ribs of a two month old child. Consider it the same degree of force as the impact of two vehicles colliding each travelling at sixty miles an hour. Consider that the baby's brain was shaken so hard that his brain swelled within his soft skull to the degree the pressure became so great his brain shut down all autonomous nerve processes.

The verdict was just. I have no, absolutely no reason, to be ashamed of the verdict I sought, the sentence I sought. Yet I live with the fact I asked twelve men and women to kill another human being. It will bring you down. But it the life denied a child who will never have the opportunity to grow up that haunts me. I do believe there are cases where the denial of mercy is just.

But. There is always the possibility of a "But." I agree with almost every word Bryan Stevenson wrote.

Surprised?

Two Diverging Roads

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and Iâ€™
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken"

Bryan Stevenson and I started out on the same road. Neither of us intended to become lawyers.

Each of us felt the compulsion to do something meaningful. As Mr. Stevenson decided he could not help others by continuing his studies in philosophy by philosophizing, I decided not to be a teacher of history, a professor of Classical languages, or even a psychologist, though I took my undergraduate degree in that field.

Actually, I attempted to bluff the Chair of the Department of Psychology into allowing me to undertake my graduate studies in his department a semester earlier. I told him, "Well, if no assistance-ships are available, I'll apply to Law School." It seemed a good idea at the time. I had been tutoring the daughter of a Law Professor in her Latin studies. When the Chair smiled and answered, "We must all do what we must do, Mr. Sullivan," I nodded, swallowed, left his office and applied for entrance to Law School.

I was offered a Graduate Assistant-ship by the Department of Psychology the same day I received my acceptance to the School of Law. In my youthfulness and arrogant pride I turned down the offer and entered the study of Law.

Bryan Stevenson and I also agree about the traditional Law School curriculum. It is esoteric, It is a tortuous experience being the victim of the "Socratic" method of teaching. Students of the law are

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drilled in the art of confrontation and argument. To me, the desire to "Win" and not "Lose" is instilled in the student of Law. And, therein, lies the danger of Hubris in an adversarial process where the possibility of pride overtakes principle.

Perhaps, I have greater faith in our Judicial system than Stevenson. Or, perhaps I have too much.

There is the point at which we took the road the other did not.

The Tragedy of Walter McMillan

The behavior of two Monroe County District Attorneys primarily contributed to Walter McMillian's conviction and unlawful imprisonment. There should be consequences. Sanctions. The paramount duty of a District Attorney is not to secure a conviction, but to do the right thing. As prosecutors, we are lawyers just as those who are engaged in the private practice of law. I sport a tee shirt that defines a Prosecutor as a lawyer held to a higher standard. I personally always believed that, practiced that.

On June 11, 2015, retired District Attorney Charles J. Sebesta, Jr. was disbarred by State Bar Association of Texas for professional misconduct in obtaining a conviction of Robert Graves for a Capital Murder of six people on the basis of testimony he knew to be perjured. Further, Sebesta flagrantly withheld evidence proving Graves innocence. As a result Graves, an innocent man, was imprisoned for eighteen years for a crime he didn't commit.

It has been fundamental constitutional law since 1963 that prosecutors have an absolute duty to disclose evidence exculpatory to the Defendant. In other words, evidence which might be favorable to the Defendant. See *Brady v. Maryland*, 373 U.S. 83 (83 S.Ct. 1194, 10 L.Ed.2d 215)

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremeco...>

In its opinion disbarring Sebesta, the Texas Bar Association found he had violated his ethical duty by: eliciting false testimony from Robert Carter, a Co-Defendant;

failing to disclose the exculpatory evidence of Carter's statement the night before trial, clearing Graves of involvement in the crime;

eliciting false testimony from a Texas State Ranger regarding Carter's statements about Graves' involvement;

threatening an alibi defense witness with prosecution for the same murders, when he had no evidence to support her involvement, apparently causing her to decide not to testify on Graves' behalf;

failing to disclose that a prosecution witness was under felony indictment by Sebesta's office at the time of his testimony.

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See <http://www.prosecutorialaccountabilit...> (2015).

That's simply as it should be. Stevenson's blistering memoir makes me cringe.

Bryant Stevenson attributes many of the problems he confronted to the lingering affects of slavery. Statistics do not lie. That racism exists is undeniable. Stating racism is the primary cause for the manner of imposition of Capital Punishment doesn't work for me. I initially intended to be a Defense Attorney. I cut my chops on the cases of Sacco and Vanzetti, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. My legal literary mentors were Clarence Darrow, Louis Nizer, Melvin Belli and allen dershowitz.

My take on McMillian's case hinges on the base instinct to win at all costs. The very instinct to which law students are subjected throughout their education, whether that is the intent of Law Schools or not. It is a weakness of human nature to submit to the will to win whatever the cost.

Just Mercy isn't perfect. Following is an excerpt from the Sunday Review of Just Mercy, Ted Conover, The New York Times, October 17, 2014.

“Just Mercy” has its quirks, though. Many stories it recounts are more than 30 years old but are retold as though they happened yesterday. Dialogue is reconstituted; scenes are conjured from memory; characters’ thoughts are channeled — la true crime writers: McMillian, being driven back to death row, ‘was feeling something that could only be described as rage ... “Loose these chains. Loose these chains.” He couldn’t remember when he’d last lost control, but he felt himself falling apart.’ Stevenson leaves out identifying years, perhaps to avoid the impression that some of this happened long ago. He also has the defense lawyer’s reflex of refusing to acknowledge his clients’ darker motives. A teenager convicted of a double murder by arson is relieved of agency; a man who placed a bomb on his estranged girlfriend’s porch, inadvertently killing her niece, “had a big heart.”

William Faulkner sums it up for me.

“Some things you must always be unable to bear. Some things you must never stop refusing to bear. Injustice and outrage and dishonor and shame. No matter how young you are or how old you have got. Not for kudos and not for cash: your picture in the paper nor money in the back either. Just refuse to bear them.” -Gavin Stevens, *Intruder in the Dust*, 1948.

Extras!

"Yellow Mama," Dale Watson, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y44B2...>

"The Death of the Death Penalty," DAVID VON DREHLE, *Time Magazine*, May 28, 2015"
<http://time.com/deathpenalty/>

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"The Death Penalty Information Center," <http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/>

"The Equal Justice Initiative," <http://www.eji.org/>

...more

Just Mercy Audiobook Free

I often think that my grandparents and parents lived in interesting times. They saw so many things come about in their day. Theirs were exciting times. Women won the right to vote, slaves were freed, and medical advancements were plenty. It was the time of The Industrial Revolution, electricity, the telephone, planes, trains, and automobiles so to speak. I tend to downplay the important breakthroughs of my life and times, Television, Computers, a second industrial revolution of Technology, several wars, the quest for Space, and The Civil Rights Movement.

I have always gone back and forth in my opinion about capital punishment and the death penalty. The older I get, the more I read, the more I lean to the correctness and reasoning for its abolishment in our state. I haven't come to this decision lightly; it's a real struggle for me. Perhaps this conflict of soul is why books such as Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption interest me so much.

Bryan Stevenson didn't start out walking the path to where he is today. While a student at Eastern University in Pennsylvania, he thought he might choose a career in music or sports. He majored in political science and philosophy and eventually decided on law school. While a student at Harvard in the early 80s, Stevenson participated in an internship in Atlanta, Georgia with The Southern Prisoners Defense Committee (SPDC), relating to race and poverty. During this time he spent many hours seeking appeals for inmates on death row.

• I wasn't prepared to meet a condemned man. •

"I had never seen the inside of a maximum security prison and certainly had never been on death row. •

Steve Bright, the head of the project, met his plane. He told Bryan

• Capital punishment means ~ them without the capital get the punishment. • We can't help people on death row without help from people like you. •

It came time for Stevenson to meet one of the men in a case they were working on. Can you imagine this inexperienced, twenty-three year old driving himself to this high security prison to meet with a man convicted of murder and sentenced to die? Stevenson knew little about capital punishment and had not taken a class in criminal procedure. He wasn't even certain he wanted to be a lawyer or confident that he could make a difference in the race or poverty issues that motivated him thus far. It is here that

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his course is set and his lifetime work begins, even if he was not quite aware of the full impact as yet. His mission was to be to assure the inmate that he could not be executed anytime soon. He meets Henry and ends up apologizing, admitting he is just a law student. After the initial awkwardness they go on to talk for three hours about anything and everything. When itâ€™s time to leave Henry just asks that Stevenson come back again. As Henry leaves the visitation room he sings a part of the hymn On Higher Ground:

â€™m pressing on the upward way,
New heights â€™m gaining every day;
Still praying as â€™m onward bound,
â€œLord, plant my feet on higher ground.â€•

Lord, lift me up and let me stand,
By faith, on Heavenâ€™s tableland,
A higher plane than I have found;
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

After finishing his degree, Stevenson begins taking on cases. One that is documented in detail is that of Walter McMillan, a black man accused of murdering a white woman. There are many others. In my experience of listening to the author narrate his book I couldnâ€™t help but shake my head at the wrongness of many of the convictions. There were times when I had to stop listening and needed to wipe away the tears at manâ€™s inhumanity to man. Mental illness, children tried as adults, poverty and race played a large part in many of the cases explored.

Joe Sullivan was one of the cases of a sentence of life imprisonment without parole given to a juvenile. Joe was just 13 when convicted in Florida to death. His case did not involve a killing, though it was a serious crime. In preparing Joe for his appeal trial Joe wants to recite a poem but canâ€™t remember the last line. After much time he finally says

â€œ Oh wait. I think the last lineâ€™ actually, uh; I think the last line is just what I said. I think the last line is just â€œIâ€™m a good person.â€• â€œ So is Bryan Stevenson.

Another case reviewed is that of Louis Taylor, just 16, in a moment of poor choice visits a happy hour in a local hotel. An article in The Washington Post The State of Equality and Justice in America: The Presumption of Guilt outlines what happens after Taylor serves 42 years in prison. Bryan Stevenson establishes The Equal Justice Initiative, a non-profit in Montgomery, Alabama that represents wrongful convictions and has won many exonerations.

This is a book that will stay with me. It is an important book. Though I listened, I plan to purchase a hardbound edition for our local library. It is one we should own. I also plan to make a donation to The Equal Justice Initiative. That just seems right.

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In the end it became more a matter of just justice than just mercy for me. That is all I wanted, Just Justice!

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Well, I suspect it'll drag you kicking and screaming from your happy place, but I defy you to read Bryan Stevenson's remarkable Just Mercy and not come away affected in some way. If you are at all interested in racial and/or sociopolitical injustice, specifically as it applies to our country's (and more specifically, my adoptive home state, Alabama's) seriously flawed justice and penal systems, this is the book for you. Absolutely haunting, heartbreaking, and unforgettable.

Just Mercy Avery Jenkins

4 stars! What a powerful and inspiring book! Please note, if this was a review of the author, Bryan Stevenson's, career and life story, my rating would be 5+ stars. Words cannot adequately describe how I feel about this selfless man who has spent his career fighting for justice for those who need it most. My rating of 4 stars is simply my review of this book (which is obviously what this site is about). My impression of and respect for Bryan Stevenson as an individual is extremely high and would go well beyond a 4 star rating.

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I felt like I was in a constant state of shock while reading the never-ending examples of case law describing people being mistreated and wrongly convicted due to racism and/or to appease law enforcement personnel and goals. I felt sickened reading about the abuse that happens to men, women and children within the prison system. The prison personnel sometimes doing things considered way worse (in my opinion) to these prisoners than what the prisoners were actually incarcerated for. I had a hard time accepting the statistics of how many children under the age of 18 get life sentences without parole for non-homicide crimes and end up being abused in adult prisons (some children only 13 or 14 years old). Add onto this, the overwhelmingly high percentage of prisoners who are mentally ill without a chance of getting the proper help they need within the prison system. And one of the main themes of the book, proved with endless examples, is the "criminal justice that continues to treat people better if they are rich and guilty than if they are poor and innocent". While all of these examples and stories are shocking and upsetting, it was inspiring to learn that Bryan Stevenson was working toward making changes. He "founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and children trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system." Bryan Stevenson's attitude, work ethic and goals were the "light" and positivity shining throughout this book. People like him are what make this world a better place!

I had to be in "full concentration mode" while reading this book as it is very factual, with a lot of statistics and examples. I needed time to fully absorb the details. While I felt these examples provided an eye-opening experience of how extremely unjust the U.S. Justice System can be, I also felt it was slightly overwhelming and hard to keep track of. At times, I felt lost in the case examples as they are referenced back to throughout the book. I understand why Bryan Stevenson would choose to bombard the reader with endless examples - this is what proves and solidifies his points and theories. It's just a lot to take in.

Overall, this was an informative, well-written account by a caring, driven and compassionate man. I think everyone could learn a thing or two from Bryan Stevenson.

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption

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“Mercy is just when it is rooted in hopefulness and freely given.”

Let me be honest. I would never have picked this book to read on my own. But it was my church book club selection.

This is a powerful, scary book. A young black lawyer takes on death penalty appeal cases in Alabama. And he does this because Alabama didn't provide public defenders for those appeal cases. The book delves into all the aspects of the legal system. It also speaks poignantly on the effects of the larger community when s

“Mercy is just when it is rooted in hopefulness and freely given.”

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This is a powerful, scary book. A young black lawyer takes on death penalty appeal cases in Alabama. And he does this because Alabama didn't provide public defenders for those appeal cases. The book delves into all the aspects of the legal system. It also speaks poignantly on the effects of the larger community when someone is unjustly found guilty. When “evidence, logic and common sense” are ignored it makes everyone question whom could be next. It puts to lie the idea we are a democracy as opposed to an elitist society. And don't think it's just the south. My home state, Pennsylvania, is cited for its laws on sentencing juveniles to life in prison. (Even after the US Supreme Court ruled life without parole couldn't apply to juveniles, Pennsylvania said it didn't apply to those already convicted. The State Supreme Court didn't reverse that ruling until 2017).

Stevenson even describes his own run in with the Atlanta police department for doing nothing more than sitting in his car outside his apartment.

I read *The Cadaver King and the Country Dentist* earlier this year. These two books will shock and dismay you when you read the total incompetence or corruption of the southern police force. The fact that men can be found guilty when numerous witnesses place them somewhere else boggles the mind.

In the past, I have struggled with whether capital punishment was the correct outcome for the guilty. Too often, when a horrific crime happens, my attitude towards the killer is to “hang them high”. But this book has cemented in my mind that there are too many reasons that require me to be opposed to it. As Stevenson says, “the real question of capital punishment in this country is “Do we deserve to kill?”

This is a sad book and it is not an easy read. But I still highly recommend it. The existence of the Equal

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Justice Initiative does provide a bit of hope that there are individuals willing to give up a lucrative job to work on behalf of Justice and Mercy. They are the stonecatchers.

...more

Just Mercy Adapted For Young Adults

"We must reform a system of criminal justice that continues to treat people better if they are rich and guilty than if they are poor and innocent".

"Capital murder requires an intent to kill, and there was a persuasive argument that there was no intent to kill in this case and that poor healthcare had caused the victims death.

Most gunshot victims don't die after nine months, and it was surprising that the state was seeking the death penalty in this case."

INJUSTICE!!!!

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Most gunshot victims don't die after nine months, and it was surprising that the state was seeking the death penalty in this case."

INJUSTICE!!!!

Bryan Stevenson's book "JUST MERCY. A Story of Justice and Redemption" is written by a sincere caring man... (HE WALKS THE WALK THAT HE TALKS).

A couple of years ago I read "The New Jim Crow": MASS INCARCERATION in the Age of Colorblindness. It was maybe the most revolutionary book -- (an opening for transformation), to date on the subject...but I had such a challenging time getting past the authors style of writing. Her delivery was very harsh...very cold .. and she seemed to be bitching half the time of not wanting to writ the book...(busy with her kids at home), and making 'me' feel wrong. I felt attacked at times ...and didn't appreciate her 'delivery'. At the same time 80% of the people in my local book club, (30 people), thought her book was the greatest book to date on this subject. Maybe it was.

Yet... I think THIS book shows MUCH MORE sincere heart and compassion. Barry Stevenson is Sensitive - caringand there is nothing egotistical about it

The stories in here can make you tremble- and cry. It's a sad disturbing fact of our life... People have been sexually and physically abused as children, poor medical care for victims, drug addictions, trauma, humiliation, wrongly accused... (dangers & dysfunctions in our prisons)... We live in a society 'still', with injustice, ignorance, and bigotry. People are fearful and angry.

Many blessings - (THANK YOU ...THANK YOU.. *Bryan*), for your life dedication and work.

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption

Not many people would do the work that he does. It's not only this book which is AMAZING -- AMAZING... (very easy & engaging to read), but it's Bryan's life work that must be acknowledged.

Once again... "WE MUST REFORM A SYSTEM OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE THAT CONTINUES TO TREAT PEOPLE BETTER IF THEY ARE RICH AND GUILTY THAN IN THEY ARE POOR AND INNOCENT."

**Thank you to my several Goodreads friends who read this book before me... and sharing your Thoughts... feelings ... (pain & passion on this subject). ...more

With all the recent protests across the nation, sparked by the high-profile deaths of several unarmed black men, this is an incredibly timely read.

This book is an account of the author, Bryan Stevenson, and his life calling. Stevenson first began helping death row prisoners, mostly black, who had had no legal defense of any kind. He discovered there were thousands who were completely innocent. This led him to start an organization called the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) which is still going st With all the recent protests across the nation, sparked by the high-profile deaths of several unarmed black men, this is an incredibly timely read.

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While this book looks at the historical doggedness of injustice and specific court rulings, it also includes deeply personal accounts of those who have lived, and not lived through it. I was shaken to my core reading of our countries many abuses and long standing hostility towards those of color, or in poverty. A quote that rings true throughout this book is; "Capital punishment means ' them without the capital get the punishments.'

While many states are involved, the Deep South is where Stevenson began his work. Most Southern states still have deep-seeded resentments and fear of black men. Many prisoners are never provided counsel. The outlandish false claims against them are never challenged, and if they are, it is still nearly impossible to get around prejudiced judges and court systems. Many, many, children and the mentally challenged are sent to their deaths, or to languish in prisons their whole life where the most egregious acts imaginable are committed.

And, look out if you are a poor woman. Prenatal care is impossible for many to afford, sometimes resulting in still-born deaths. These states are now sentencing many women to death if they cannot prove their baby was delivered stillborn. Two thirds of all women on death row are there because of

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption

protecting themselves against abusive men, or not being able to prove a still-born death. Stevenson states, " My work with the poor and incarcerated has persuaded me that the opposite of poverty is not wealth. The opposite of property is justice." Powerful words!

I believe one must look at the long history of injustice to gain perspective on today's unrest. This book does just that. Highly recommended.

...more

Just Mercy Audio

We never read anything in a vacuum. Every book is filtered through the lens of experience, history and daily life.

It may have been a coincidence that I read Just Mercy only days after a horrific mass shooting at a historic black church in Charleston, South Carolina, but it didn't feel like chance. Having such fresh evidence of racism and violence in the South made the events discussed in this book all the more real.

Bryan Stevenson is a lawyer in Alabama who works to defend the poor and the wrong. We never read anything in a vacuum. Every book is filtered through the lens of experience, history and daily life.

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Bryan Stevenson is a lawyer in Alabama who works to defend the poor and the wrongly condemned. This book highlights his personal journey and several of his prominent cases, but more importantly, it is about America's flawed criminal justice system.

Stevenson gave a good summary of his mission when he first met civil rights activist Rosa Parks, and she asked about his work:

"Well, I have a law project called the Equal Justice Initiative, and we're trying to help people on death row. We're trying to stop the death penalty, actually. We're trying to do something about prison conditions and excessive punishment. We want to free people who've been wrongly convicted. We want to end unfair sentences in criminal cases and stop racial bias in criminal justice. We're trying to help the poor and do something about indigent defense and the fact that people don't get the legal help they need. We're trying to help people who are mentally ill. We're trying to stop them from putting children in adult jails and prisons. We're trying to do something about poverty and the hopelessness that dominates poor communities. We want to see more diversity in decision-making roles in the justice system. We're trying to educate people about racial history and the need for racial justice. We're trying to confront abuse of power by police and prosecutors" I realized that I had gone on way too long, and stopped abruptly.

Ms. Parks leaned back, smiling. "Ooooh, honey, all that's going to make you tired, tired, tired."

I shared that story to make you smile, but be prepared that this book will make you angry, angry, angry. Stevenson has encountered innumerable cases of blatant racism among police, judges and juries, and

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he himself was nearly arrested because he was black, even though he had done nothing wrong.

Stevenson's story is a powerful one, and I hope this book is read far and wide. Highly recommended for everyone.

Favorite Quote

"We are all implicated when we allow other people to be mistreated. An absence of compassion can corrupt the decency of a community, a state, a nation. Fear and anger can make us vindictive and abusive, unjust and unfair, until we all suffer from the absence of mercy and we condemn ourselves as much as we victimize others. The closer we get to mass incarceration and extreme levels of punishment, the more I believe it's necessary to recognize that we all need mercy, we all need justice, and â€” perhaps â€” we all need some measure of unmerited grace." ...more

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption

"I believe that in many parts of this country, and certainly in many parts of this globe, that the opposite of poverty is not wealth. I actually think, in too many places, the opposite of poverty is justice. Ultimately, you judge the character of a society, not by how they treat their rich and the powerful and the privileged, but by how they treat the poor, the condemned, the incarcerated. Because it's in that nexus that we actually begin to understand

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Excerpt from Bryan Stevenson's 2012 TED Talk

Bryan Stevenson is the founder of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) and a professor at NYU Law School

Bryan Stevenson has written an extraordinary memoir in which he describes his career as a lawyer and activist. For more than 30 years, Mr. Stevenson has taken on the mantle of defending the poorest among us. On this book, he skillfully chronicles his relentless fight to raise public awareness of the biases and racism that are so embedded in the United States Justice system, a system that at times seems unable or unwilling to correct even its most glaring mistakes.

His clients include prisoners in death row, neglected children prosecuted as adults and placed in adult prisons as well as mentally disabled people unable to receive attention to their special needs.

This book will probably shock, maybe even make you mad, but by the end it'll also leave you with a sense of hope and optimism after you learn how activists like Stevenson continue to tirelessly work on improving and helping correct important aspects of the legal system in the United States.

After reading some of the cases described on this memoir, it would be easy to let cynicism and bitterness set in, but as the extended title of the book suggests, this is also a story of "Justice and Redemption". The author explains how in the middle of finding so many indignities and injustices, as well as plenty of obstacles and hostility towards his cause, he's also found compassionate and sympathetic people willing to help in surprising and unexpected ways.

For a book that's non-fiction, "Just Mercy" is a real page turner. It is written in simple, accessible language and although it's categorized as a memoir, Stevenson spends little time on the book talking about himself or his background. The majority of the book is dedicated to recounting the details of some of the cases he's been involved in throughout his career.

The book starts in 1983, when as a 23 years-old, Harvard Law student Stevenson takes an internship at the Atlanta-based Southern Prisoners Defense Committee. It's there where he's first introduced to death row prisoners and these first experiences helped propelled his decision to become an advocate instead of choosing a more profitable career path.

The electric chair at Sing Sing prison in Ossining, N.Y., in 1953/ Credit Associated Press/ I was surprised to learn that although the use of the electric chair as a method of execution has been in decline since the 1990's, it is still being employed by some States

There's a passage in the book where Stevenson recounts how, after recently moving to Atlanta, he was questioned by the police just for sitting in his car listening to music in front of his apartment. He actually ends up with a gun pointed to his head and was let go only after proving that this was his place of residency.

In 1989, he moved to Alabama, a state with some of the harshest and severe capital laws in the United States. He then founded the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), a nonprofit organization where he still serves as its Executive Director today.

Although "Just Mercy" details more than a dozen cases, it focuses in particular on Stevenson's fight to free Walter McMillan, an African-American man, who was falsely accused and convicted of killing Ronda Morrison, a young store clerk, white woman.

McMillan's crime was basically having an affair with another white married woman. When the community grew impatient with the lack of developments in the case of Morrison's death, the police found in McMillan, who was a man married himself, a perfect suspect. They ignored that McMillan had no connection or knew the victim, had an alibi in the form of several people that were with him at the time of the crime, and was, the romantic affair notwithstanding, a well-liked and exemplary citizen with no criminal record.

Ironically and in almost poetic justice, these events took place in Harper Lee's hometown of

Monroeville, Alabama. Walter McMillian's trials and appeals took place in the 1980's and 1990's, not in the 1930's, but one can't help drawing parallels between Bryan and Walter and their fictional counterparts Atticus and Tom. But unlike Harper Lee's fictional character and fortunately for McMillan, Stevenson did win the case to free him. The road to get there though was certainly a long and painful one.

During the next few years, Stevenson and his colleagues investigated the McMillan case and, in the process exposed how corrupted authorities at every level conspired to build a false case.

Here's a sample of some of the many rules and laws that were broken in the case of McMillan:

- McMillan was placed in death row 15 months before his trial.

- Police officers coerced witnesses into fabricating false testimonies in order to build a case.

- The Jury selection process was clearly racially discriminatory.

- Prosecutors failed to provide defense lawyers with crucial exculpatory evidence.

Even in the face of all these new evidence and facts, the trial Judge denied Stevenson's motion requesting a new trial.

It wasn't until CBS's 60 Minutes and other national news outlets called attention to the story, that the State Prosecutor decided to open his own inquiry. After re-examining the case, the investigators concluded that "There is no way that Walter McMillan killed Ronda Morrison". Six weeks later the Alabama Appeals court reversed McMillan's conviction and shortly after dismissed all charges.

It would be easy to dismiss the case of Walter McMillan as something of an anomaly, but as the case of McMillan unraveled throughout the book, Stevenson also exposed the disgraceful ways in which our Justice system treats minors.

Here are some interesting facts about the execution of juvenile offenders in the US***

- Beginning with the first in 1642, at least 366 juvenile offenders were executed. Twenty-two of these occurred during the current era (1973-2005), constituting 2.3% of the total of the 949 executions during this period.

- Of the 38 death penalty jurisdictions in the United States (37 states and federal), 19 jurisdictions have expressly chosen a minimum age of 18, 5 jurisdictions have chosen an age 17 minimum and the other 14 death penalty jurisdictions use age 16 as the minimum age.

- Essentially every other nation in the world has joined international agreements prohibiting the execution of juvenile offenders, with only the United States refusing to abandon its laws permitting the juvenile death penalty.

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â€œRoper v. Simmons was a landmark decision in which the Supreme Court held that execution for crimes committed at an age less than age 18 is prohibited by the United States Constitution.

***Source: â€œDEATH SENTENCES AND EXECUTIONS FOR JUVENILE CRIMESâ€• by Victor L. Streib Ella and Ernest Fisher Professor of Law -Ohio Northern University-2005

Stevenson points out how as a society, and with the help and advances in Developmental Psychology and Neurology, we have come to the understanding that kids and teens are not responsible enough to vote, drink or smoke, and yet in plenty of cases, we still allowed for the Justice System to charge minors as adults.

In â€œJust Mercyâ€•, Stevenson also chronicles the stories of many minors, some of whom are guilty of committing serious crimes, including homicide. But he makes a very convincing argument that many of these kids are themselves victims of neglectful and abusing parents, rape, mental disabilities and a lack of access to a decent education system.

Although we have stopped the practice of putting teens in death row, the number of minors that are in jail for life due to crimes other than homicide is still staggering.

Walter McMillian is reunited with friends and family on the day of his release in 2003 following EJIâ€™s campaign. He served six years on death row.

Walter McMillan died in 2013, only 10 years after he was exonerated from death row. He was in bad health but as Stevensonâ€™s remarks â€œHe remained kind and charming until the very end, despite his increasing confusion from the advancing of dementiaâ€•.

Stevenson is today, along with his mentor, Stephen Bright, one of the nationâ€™s most influential and inspiring advocate against the death penalty. He and his EJI colleagues have obtained relief for over one hundred people on Alabamaâ€™s death row, and won groundbreaking Supreme Court cases restricting the imposition on juveniles of sentences of life without parole.

Several times while reading this book, I broke down in tears, sometimes due to a deep sense of empathy with so many people that have endured so much pain for so long, the realization that probably many have died without having a chance at receiving justice, but also shame at my own ignorance and indifference to these issues.

And yet reading this memoir gave me hope. As Stevensonâ€™s says â€œNo one is as bad as the worst thing they've ever doneâ€•, it is that kind of perspective that makes this such an inspiring read.

At the end of the book, thereâ€™s a note where the author provides a link to the EJIâ€™s web site for

people that might be interested in working with or supporting his organization.

Here is the link:

<http://www.eji.org/>

Or your can email them at: contact_us@ej.org

Hereâ€™s a link to Bryan Stevensonâ€™s wonderful 2012 TED Talk:

http://www.ted.com/talks/bryan_steven...

This book is recommended for anybody who is interested and cares about equality, reconciliation, racial and social justice in the United States.

Update April 4, 2015

Bryan Stevenson and EJI were able to obtain a new trial and eventually the release of Anthony Ray Hinton, an Alabama man that was held in death row for 30 years, accused of two crimes he didn't commit.

Mr. Hilton was released yesterday and was greeted by family and friends.

Here's a link to the story: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/mo...>

Bryan Stevenson walks behind Anthony Ray Hinton after he was released on Friday from an Alabama prison.

Update September 7, 2015

I wanted to share this video with my Goodreads friends in which Charlie Rose interviews Ta-Nehisi Coates and Bryan Stevenson.

In their own and but pretty distinct ways, these men are two of the most influential voices we have speaking on behalf of the African American community in the United States at the moment.

Coates, as a younger prominent thinker, journalist and educator and Stevenson as a tireless fighter for social justice and someone who to me, has become the embodiment of decency and compassion.

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The two interviews run close to an hour, but I believe if you are interested on these topics, it'll be time well spend.

Here's the link:

<http://www.charlierose.com/>

...more

Just Mercy Audiobook Youtube

Highly recommended reading for anyone interested in the U.S. justice system (or curious about why some people don't feel they receive equal treatment under the law). In *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*, Bryan Stevenson presents what could be dry statistics or empty outrages as stories about real people. However, these stories aren't just about people, but the towns and cities where horrible crimes were committed (sparking cries for justice) and the flawed mechanisms we have for deli

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There is nothing I can write to do justice to this exceptional book. Really, the only thing to say is "Read it!". But here are a few thoughts: *Just Mercy* is both horrifying and awe inspiring. I listened to the audio of *Just Mercy* as read by the author, Bryan Stevenson. I listened to it in 40 minute daily increments as I walked to work or for exercise. Each time I had to turn the audio off, I found it hard to disengage from everything Stevenson has to say about his work as the founder of the Equa

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Stevenson's anecdotes and observations. But what makes Stevenson's book most powerful is the humanity and dignity that he gives to each of his clients. He describes them with respect in the book and clearly treats them with respect in his work -- often describing how they have touched his life. When hearing about some of the prosecutions in *Just Mercy*, at times these cases sounded like parodies -- coming from Canada, what he describes fit within the worst stereotypes we have of how bad the criminal justice system can be in certain parts of the U.S. But it would be too easy to dismiss the book as specific to the American context. The fundamental messages about the importance of fair representation, justice and dignity are true anywhere. Again, words are inadequate. Just read or listen to *Just Mercy*.

A note on the audio: it is read by Stevenson himself. Listening to him talk about his work in his own words is very powerful, especially when he describes his reaction to certain situations or gives voice to some of his clients. ...more