



## **Bryan Stevenson**

### **Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption**

*Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Bryan Stevenson is a powerful memoir about his work as a lawyer defending the poor, wrongly convicted, and condemned, focusing on the case of Walter McMillian, a Black man sentenced to death for a murder he didn't commit in Alabama.

The book exposes flaws in the American justice system, arguing for compassion and highlighting issues like racial bias, poverty, and mass incarceration, and was adapted into a major motion picture.

### **Quotes From the Book**

“Proximity has taught me some basic and humbling truths, including this vital lesson: Each of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done. 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.”

“Mercy is most empowering, liberating, and transformative when it is directed at the undeserving. The people who haven’t earned it, who haven’t even sought it, are the most meaningful recipients of our compassion.”

“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-perhaps-we all need some measure of unmerited grace.”

## **Bryan Stevenson Biography**

Bryan Stevenson (born November 14, 1959) is a renowned American lawyer, social justice activist, author, teacher, and founder of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI). Based in Montgomery, Alabama, he has dedicated his career to defending the poor, wrongly condemned, and children in the criminal justice system, winning major Supreme Court victories against sentencing minors to death or mandatory life-without-parole.

**Founder and Executive Director:** He founded EJI in 1989 to provide legal representation to death row prisoners and fight racial/economic bias.

**Legal Victories:** Has helped secure exonerations for over 130 wrongfully condemned death-row prisoners.

**Supreme Court Work:** Successfully argued landmark cases limiting life-without-parole for juveniles.

**Author and Speaker:** Authored the bestseller *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*, which was adapted into a 2019 film.

**Cultural Impact:** Led the creation of the National Memorial for Peace and Justice and The Legacy Museum in Montgomery.

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Bryan Stephenson was born in Delaware and grew up in a segregated community and later earned a bachelor's degree from Eastern University. He graduated from Harvard Law School and Harvard Kennedy School in 1985. His work began with the Southern Center for Human Rights, where he was exposed to the desperate need for legal assistance in the South.

He won a MacArthur Fellowship (Genius Grant) in 1995. He was awarded the ACLU National Medal of Liberty. He was named Public Interest Lawyer of the Year (1996). He currently serves as a Professor of Law at New York University School of Law.

Stevenson founded the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) to provide legal representation to those who are desperate and in need, including the poor and the wrongly condemned.

A central focus in his book is the story of Walter McMillian, who was wrongly convicted and sentenced to death, and Stevenson's fight to exonerate him.

Stephen shines light on a broken justice system. The book details systemic issues, including racial bias, political manipulation, and the death penalty, arguing that the system often fails the most vulnerable.

In his book and in his ongoing work he calls for mercy and compassion. The story in his book serves as a compelling argument for compassion and justice, challenging readers to confront inequality.

His book was a No. 1 New York Times bestseller that remained on the list for hundreds of weeks. It was the winner of numerous awards, including the Andrew Carnegie Medal and the NAACP Image Award.

It was adapted into a 2019 feature film starring Michael B. Jordan and Jamie Foxx.