



Bryan A. Stevenson

Advocate. Lawyer. Prophet. Reconciler. Truth-teller. Servant of justice. Your life's work embodies a relentless pursuit of justice shaped by mercy, challenging systems of oppression, and advocating for the marginalized. Through your resolute commitment, you have illuminated the path toward a more equitable society.

You earned your Bachelor of Arts in philosophy from Eastern University in 1981, graduating with high honors and distinction. In 1985, you received your Juris Doctor from Harvard Law School and a Master of Public Policy from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. While at Harvard, you were deeply drawn to issues of poverty and racial injustice, and your clinical work with death row inmates in Georgia set the course for a career committed to defending those most vulnerable in the criminal justice system.

You founded the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) in 1989 in Montgomery, Alabama, establishing a nonprofit law office committed to defending the poor, the incarcerated, and the condemned with unwavering compassion and courage. Under your leadership, EJI has provided legal representation to people on death row, to children prosecuted as adults, and to individuals suffering from mental illness, while also challenging inhumane prison conditions and exposing racial bias in the criminal legal system. You have led the organization to achieve landmark legal victories, including Supreme Court rulings that banned mandatory life-without-parole sentences for children and prohibited the execution of people with dementia.

In 2018, you and EJI opened the Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice — vital national spaces that confront the legacy of slavery, segregation, and lynching in America and honor the lives lost to racial terror. In recognition of this bold and visionary work, you have received numerous honors, including a MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship and the National Humanities Medal. In the words of President Barack Obama, you are “shining a light on what has been and all that we can be as a Nation.”

Your authorship of *Just Mercy* has profoundly impacted the national conversation on race and justice, offering a compelling narrative that underscores the humanity of those often forgotten. The establishment of the Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice stands as a testament to your dedication to confronting the history of racial injustice in America.

In September 2016, you addressed the Seminary of the Southwest community at our annual Blandy Lecture, inspiring faith leaders and students alike to engage deeply with the work of justice. Your message continues to resonate, reminding us that, “each of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done.”

The Right Reverend Michael Curry has said of you: “Bryan Stevenson is one of the great voices of our time, calling us to justice, to mercy, and to love. He helps us see the face of Christ in the condemned, the incarcerated, and the forgotten.”

In recognition of your steadfast commitment to justice, your transformative impact on the legal system, and your profound influence on the conscience of our nation, the Board of Trustees of the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest is honored to confer upon you the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*.