



Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption by Bryan Stevenson

Chapter Map

Chapter Title & Focus	Topics & Page Numbers
<p>Ch. 1: “Mockingbird Players”</p> <p>Introduces Walter McMillian’s story & history of Jim Crow policies; racial hierarchies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevalence of improper legal representation (in this case the judge trying to turn Stevenson off the case): pg. 20-21 • Connection between McMillian’s story and Tom Robinson in <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>: pg. 23-24 • History of slavery and racial hierarchy in Alabama: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Economics: pg. 24-25 ○ Anti-miscegenation: pg. 27-29 ○ Lynching/ violence against men of color: pg. 29-30 • McMillian as threat (tied into historical context) because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Economically independent: pg. 25 ○ Interracial relations: pg. 26-27 • Prejudice as evidence: pg. 31-34
<p>Ch. 2: “Stand”</p> <p>Personalizes Stevenson’s experiences and struggles with injustice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalizing the struggle aka “Getting close” – much of this chapter illustrates a different perspective from which Stevenson is personally connected to issues with the criminal justice system as he reacts to being wrongfully questioned and searched: 39-46 • Prison conditions and abuse: pg. 36-38 • Illegal search/ abuse of authority: pg. 41-42 • Judicial indifference to abuse of authority: pg. 43-44 • “Beating the drum for justice” aka continue to call for justice and bring attention to injustice: pg. 43-46
<p>Ch. 3: “Trials and Tribulations”</p> <p>Walter McMillan is arrested on false testimony.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walter faces racism in law enforcement and the threat of lynching: pg. 48 • An account of the faulty execution of John Evans: pg. 54-55 • Systematic exclusion of African-Americans from jury in McMillan case: pg. 59-64 • Torture: McMillan held on death row prior to conviction: pg. 53
<p>Ch. 4: “The Old Rugged Cross”</p> <p>A brief history of judicial overrides wherein judges can “override” the sentencing of juries and sentence convicted persons to death; the story of Herbert Richardson, a Vietnam War veteran with mental illness and other disabilities, executed by judicial decree.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alabama judge “overrides” life imprisonment sentence and sentences Michael Lindsey to death (includes brief history of judge overrides): pg. 69-70. • The story of Herbert Richardson, war veteran with intellectual disabilities, to be executed in Alabama: pg. 72-78. • The last hours of Herbert Richardson’s life including final goodbyes and preparation for execution: pg. 85-91.

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<p>Ch. 5: “Of the Coming of John”</p> <p>As Stevenson works McMillan’s case, witnesses for the defense face intimidation in the town that considers <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> central to its identity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darnell Houston steps forward to offer testimony undercutting key witnesses in the McMillan conviction. Houston is harassed by law enforcement and threatened: pg. 105-108 • Stevenson encouraged to visit the <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> museum in the Monroeville courthouse by staff while working on McMillan case: pg. 108-109
<p>Ch. 6: “Surely Doomed”</p> <p>The story of Charlie, one of many children facing life in prison or worse in the penal system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Alabama had more juveniles sentenced to death per capita than any other state- or any other country in the world.” pg. 115. • Charlie, 14 yrs. old, faces life imprisonment for killing his mother’s boyfriend after months of domestic violence: pg. 117-120 • Charlie is placed in an adult jail where he faces regular sexual assault. Stevenson eventually secures his release: pg. 124-126
<p>Ch. 7: “Justice Denied”</p> <p>McMillan is denied an appeal. Stevenson looks to bring the case back to trial with new evidence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite insufficient evidence and legal deficiencies, McMillan’s appeal is denied: pg. 127 • Stevenson assembles evidence pointing overwhelmingly at McMillan’s innocence: pg. 131-132 • Ralph Myers, the man pushed by Monroe County officials to offer false testimony leading to the McMillan conviction, confesses false testimony to Stevenson: pg. 134-136 • The impact of class and race of the victim on sentencing: pg. 142-143 • Stevenson and his partner invoke Rule 32 and gain access to Monroe County record as the attempt to bring McMillan’s case to a new trial: pg. 144-145
<p>Ch. 8: “All God’s Children”</p> <p>Further exploration into the mass incarceration of children with emphasis on mandatory life sentencing and solitary confinement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The story of Trina Garnet, a woman with intellectual disabilities, sentenced to life in prison at age 16. In jail she conceives a child after being raped by a guard. The child is placed in foster care. As of 2014 she remains in prison in Pennsylvania- a state with the largest population of child offenders condemned to die in prison in the world: pg. 148-151. • Children in adult prison in solitary confinement: pg. 152-154 • The rise in mandatory life sentences for children: pg. 159 <p>The story of Ian, a child placed in solitary confinement for 14.5 years: pg. 160-162</p>
<p>Ch. 9: “I’m Here”</p> <p>This chapter recounts the three days of testimony in McMillan’s Rule 32 hearing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day One-Ralph Myers reverses his early testimony pointing to McMillan’s innocence in a Rule 32 hearing: pg. 165-171 • Day Two-African-American courtroom attendees blocked from the courtroom reminiscent of the Civil Rights era: pg. 174-177
<p>Ch. 10: “Mitigation”</p> <p>A basic review of the mass incarceration of the mentally ill while highlighting that prisons have taken the place of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass incarceration of the mentally ill: pgs. 186-189 • Stevenson recounts a story where a judge calls for the protection of the “rights of Confederate Americans”: pg. 193 • Stevenson defends Avery Jenkins, a profoundly mentally ill inmate and victim of abuse: pg. 197-200.

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treatment facilities in housing the mentally ill.	
<p>Ch. 11: “I’ll Fly Away”</p> <p>After being denied relief, Stevenson and McMillan move towards an appeal. With the help of the Alabama Bureau of Investigation McMillan wins his freedom.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McMillan in denied relief after the Rule 32 hearing: pg. 205-206 • A discussion on the role of the media in the McMillan case: pg. 209-213 • A ruling from the Alabama appellate court grants Walter a new trial: pg. 219-220 • Walter is granted his freedom after the state joins Stevenson is arguing for his innocence: pg. 224-226.
<p>Ch. 12: “Mother, Mother”:</p> <p>The mass incarceration of poor women, especially women of color, often encouraged by hysterical fears of child abuse, is explored through statistics and the story of Marsha Colbey.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After giving birth to a still born child and burying that child in her yard, Marsha Colbey, poor and unable to pay for adequate defense, is wrongly convicted of murdering her infant child and sentenced to life in prison: pg. 228-235 • Background and contemporary accounts of the mass incarceration of poor women: pg. 235-239
<p>Ch. 13: “Recovery”</p> <p>Details the months after McMillan’s release from prison. McMillan and Stevenson speak publicly against capital punishment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media coverage of McMillan case in wake of release; increased media attention to capital punishment: pg. 242-243 • Complications of McMillan’s return into his community after six years on death row: pg. 244 • State policies on financial compensation for wrongly incarcerated: pg. 245 • McMillan / long-term psychological effects of time spent on death row: pg. 244 • DNA evidence exposing wrongful convictions: pg. 249 • Stevenson receives Olof Palme International Human Rights Award: pg. 250-251
<p>Ch. 14: “Cruel and Unusual”</p> <p>Discusses Equal Justice Initiative’s (EJI) challenge to prosecution & life imprisonment without parole of minors. Focuses on the case of Joe Sullivan, a 13 year-old with mental disabilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misidentification/profiling of young African American male in sexual assault case: pg. 256 • Prosecution of children in juvenile vs. adult courts: pg. 257 • Inadequacy of appointed counsel/subsequent wrongful conviction: pg. 258 • Sentencing of Joe Sullivan, 13 year old w/ mental disabilities to life imprisonment in Florida: pg. 259 • Rape, sexual assault of minor in prison; health effects of trauma: pg. 259 • “Prison-industrial complex”—“Between 1990 & 2005, a new prison opened in the United States every ten days”: pg. 260 • EJI uses 2005 Supreme Court decision banning death penalty for juveniles under Eighth Amendment to challenge juvenile life-without-parole sentences: pg. 264-266 • EJU use neurological, psychological, and sociological evidence to argue that sentencing children to life imprisonment without parole is cruel and unusual punishment: pg. 267-272
<p>Ch. 15: “Broken”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McMillan’s decline into trauma-induced dementia: pg. 275-276 • Increased rate of executions in Alabama, despite slowing national trend/

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<p>McMillan suffers with trauma-induced dementia, while EJI scrambles to keep up with increasing rate of executions in AL. Jimmy Dill, a death row inmate suffering from a severe intellectual disability, is executed despite Stevenson’s attempts to win relief.</p> <p>**Stevenson calls for “just mercy”: “The power of just mercy is that it belongs to the undeserving. It’s when mercy is least expected that it’s most potent—strong enough to break the cycle of victimization and victimhood, retribution and suffering. It has the power to heal the psychic harm and injuries that lead to aggression and violence, abuse of power, mass incarceration” (294).</p>	<p>media influences: pg. 280-281</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stevenson argues in front of Supreme Court, raising questions about legality of lethal injection: pg. 281 • Supreme Court rules in <i>Baze v. Rees</i> that lethal execution protocols & drug combinations aren’t inherently unconstitutional, despite prisons’ questionable means of securing drugs to carry out lethal injections: pg. 282 • Alabama’s trial and execution of man with intellectual disability, despite Supreme Court’s ban on executions of mentally disabled: pg. 283- 288 • Jimmy Dill executed & Stevenson nearly gives up: pg. 288-291 • Stevenson remembers meeting Rosa Parks: pg. 291-293
<p>Ch. 16: “The Stonecatcher’s Song of Sorrow”</p> <p>The EJI continues work on issues involving children, and Stevenson is encouraged by hopeful developments. Still, there is work to be done. He outlines four institutions that shape American racial consciousness.</p> <p>Includes story of Joshua Carter and Robert Caston: “juvenile lifers who had been [in prison] for decades” (303). EJI wins release for both prisoners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2010--Supreme Court rules: “Life imprisonment without parole sentences imposed on children convicted of non-homicide crimes is cruel and unusual punishment and constitutionally impermissible”: pg. 295 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2012—EJI wins constitutional ban on mandatory life-without-parole sentences for children convicted of homicides &: pg. 295 ○ EJI continues work on children’s issues: pg. 296-297 • EJI wins relief for 100 prisoners in Alabama; slows execution rate by litigating lethal injection protocols <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2013: AL has “lowest number of new death sentences since...1970s”: pg. 297 • Nationwide, rate of mass incarceration slows <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2012: “U.S. saw first decline in its prison population in decades”: pg. 298 • California bans mandatory sentencing “three strikes” law; nearly bans death penalty by popular vote: pg. 298 • Four institutions in American history shape our approach to race: pg. 299-301 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Slavery 2. Racial Terror <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. “lynching created modern death penalty” b. convict leasing—see Douglas Blackmon’s <i>Slavery by Another Name</i> c. racial hierarchy 3. Jim Crow

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. legalized racial segregation b. legacy of racial profiling 4. Mass Incarceration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. “overrepresentation of people of color” b. “disproportionate sentencing of...minorities” c. “targeted prosecution of drug crimes in poor communities” d. “criminalization of new immigrants/undocumented people” e. “collateral consequences of voter disenfranchisement” • Angola, former slave plantation where inmates forced into manual labor: pg. 303-304 • EJI wins release of Joshua Carter, 16 year-old African American: pg. 304 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New Orleans, 1963: beaten by police & coerced into confession to rape; given death penalty ○ 1965: Louisiana Supreme Court overturned conviction due to beating; Carter sentenced to life imprisonment at Angola • EJI wins release of Robert Caston, inmate who spent 45 years at Angola for non-homicide crime at age 16: pg. 304 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ disabled as a result of work at Angola