

THE *Current*

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[Sonia Fernandez](#)

‘UCSB Reads’ Selects Bryan Stevenson Memoir for the 2016 Season

Few things in life are as hopeless as being poor, trapped within a biased legal system and having little or no recourse for escaping the grinding wheels of justice. Such were the circumstances of Alabama resident Walter McMillian, who, despite overwhelming testimony proving his innocence, was found guilty in the 1986 murder of 18-year-old Ronda Miller.

McMillian landed on death row following a trial that lasted only a day and a half.

Fortunately for McMillian, he had attorney Bryan Stevenson in his corner. During the several years McMillian was on death row, the young lawyer worked tirelessly to demonstrate that prosecution witnesses had lied, the prosecutor suppressed key evidence and the case had been mishandled. McMillian was exonerated and released in 1996.

McMillian’s story is one of several that appear in Stevenson’s memoir “Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption,” which also includes compelling accounts of defenses Stevenson made on behalf of other poor and minority defendants who were victims of an unjust legal system. The book has received numerous honors, including the 2015 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction, the 2015 Dayton Literary Peace Prize for Nonfiction and the NAACP Image Award for

Outstanding Work of Literary Nonfiction.

The UC Santa Barbara Library has chosen the book as its [2016 selection for UCSB Reads](#).

An annual event now in its tenth year, UCSB Reads engages the campus and the Santa Barbara community in conversations about a key topic while reading the same book. UCSB Reads is presented by the UCSB Library, in partnership with the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor. A committee that included faculty and staff members, administrators and student representatives made this year's selection.

On January 12, UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang, Executive Vice Chancellor David Marshall and University Librarian Denise Stephens will be on hand at the UCSB Library to distribute free copies of the book to registered UCSB students. Copies of "Just Mercy" will be on sale at the UCSB Bookstore as well.

A variety of UCSB Reads events, including faculty panels, book discussions and screenings, will take place throughout the winter and spring quarters, on campus , the Santa Barbara Public Library system locations and elsewhere. All open to the public, these will culminate in a public talk by the author on April 18 in UCSB's Campbell Hall.

In 1989, Stevenson, a professor of law at New York University School of Law and a MacArthur Fellow, founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a nonprofit legal organization dedicated to defending death row prisoners, juvenile offenders and those who have suffered racial bias in the criminal justice system. His book is being adapted for film.

Questions about UCSB Reads can be directed to Rebecca Metzger, assistant university librarian for outreach and academic collaboration, at rmetzger@library.ucsb.edu or (805) 893-2674.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society.

All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.