



“America’s Nelson Mandela” Bryan Stevenson set to unite a diverse crowd of 2500+ students, activists, churches for March 28 John Paul Jones Arena address

February 15, 2023

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA - Theological Horizons, in partnership with [Central Virginia Community Justice](#), [The Project on Lived Theology at UVA](#), and [UVA Arts](#), is mobilizing local churches, justice organizations, student groups and community activists to welcome [Equal Justice Institute](#) Founder and *New York Times* bestselling author Bryan Stevenson for the 2nd annual Scoper Lecture in Christian Thought at 7:00 pm on Tuesday, March 28, 2023 in the John Paul Jones Arena, followed by a conversation with UVA President Jim Ryan.

The address, titled [“Act Justly, Love Mercy: Exploring the Heart of Equal Justice.”](#) will explore the spiritual foundations of Mr. Stevenson’s work as a pioneer in the criminal justice field addressing systemic racial injustice and working on behalf of those who have been wrongly convicted or unfairly sentenced. To date, nearly 3400 of the arena’s 5500 available seats have been sold for this unprecedented event, which has also mobilized almost 50 [Community Partners](#) and Event Sponsors representing a diverse range of local schools, faith groups, justice and community organizations.

“Bryan Stevenson is an inspiration for so many of our students, and his message of hope is so timely for our wider university community which is still grieving from the tragic shooting last fall,” said Karen Wright Marsh, Executive Director for Theological Horizons. “Seeing the way groups and individuals from across the ideological spectrum are rallying to support this event is such an encouragement that despite our painful history, differences, and divisions we can still connect around a shared desire for justice and mercy to prevail.”

Mr. Stevenson’s bestselling book, *Just Mercy*, recounts the story of one of his first cases in which he secured an acquittal for Walter McMillan, an African-American man sentenced to death for a murder he did not commit. In 2019 the story was adapted into the box-office hit *Just Mercy* and the HBO documentary *True Justice*. Community Partners participating in the event will host book discussions and film screenings using [resources tailored for the Charlottesville community](#) in the weeks leading up to and following the lecture. The event will also include songs of justice and faith featuring several local musicians.

“To see this community coming together around the message of racial justice is really hopeful,” said Eddie Howard, Executive Director of Abundant Life Ministries and a member of the event’s Host Committee. “We’ve tolerated a lopsided justice system for too long, harming our most vulnerable communities. It’s time we follow Mr. Stevenson’s example and listen to what our faith has to say about caring for ‘the least of these’.”

The March 28 event is the second annual Scoper Lecture Series in Christian Thought, which brings eminent scholars to the University of Virginia to explore the breadth of Christian expression in science, medicine, culture, and the arts. The series is generously funded by UVA parent and past UVA assistant professor of ophthalmology [Stephen Scoper, M.D.](#) and his wife Nancy. Last year’s speaker was *New York Times* bestselling author and Duke associate professor, Kate Bowler, PhD.

“Too often, faith perspectives can be unhelpfully narrow,” Dr. Scoper said. “It’s so important we hear from people like Bryan whose inspiring work can challenge and stretch our understanding of what really matters.”

This event is open to the public. Tickets may be purchased for \$8 (plus fees) via Ticketmaster at www.theologicalhorizons.org/Stevenson. For groups of 20 or more tickets are discounted to \$6/person (plus fees) or guests may purchase a livestream ticket for \$4. This event will not be recorded.

Contact: Sarah Ross, Event Lead, Theological Horizons, Smr7cf@virginia.edu or 540-735-6179

BRYAN STEVENSON BIO

Bryan Stevenson is the Founder and Executive Director of the [Equal Justice Initiative](#), a human rights organization in Montgomery, Alabama. Mr. Stevenson has argued and won multiple cases at the United States Supreme Court, including a 2019 ruling protecting condemned prisoners who suffer from dementia and a landmark 2012 ruling that banned mandatory life-imprisonment-without-parole sentences for all children 17 or younger. Mr. Stevenson and his staff have won reversals, relief, or release from prison for over 135 wrongly condemned prisoners on death row and won relief for hundreds of others wrongly convicted or unfairly sentenced.

Mr. Stevenson has initiated major new anti-poverty and anti-discrimination efforts that challenge inequality in America. He led the creation of two highly acclaimed cultural sites which opened in 2018: the Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. These new national landmark institutions chronicle the legacy of slavery, lynching, and racial segregation, and the connection to mass incarceration and contemporary issues of racial bias.

Mr. Stevenson's work has won him numerous awards, including the prestigious MacArthur Foundation "Genius" Prize; the ABA Medal, the American Bar Association's highest honor; the National Medal of Liberty from the American Civil Liberties Union after he was nominated by United States Supreme Court Justice John Stevens; the Public Interest Lawyer of the Year by the National Association of Public Interest Lawyers; and the Olaf Palme Prize in Stockholm, Sweden, for international human rights. In 2002, he received the Alabama State Bar Commissioners Award.

In 2003, the SALT Human Rights Award was presented to Mr. Stevenson by the Society of American Law Teachers. In 2004, he received the Award for Courageous Advocacy from the American College of Trial Lawyers and also the Lawyer for the People Award from the National Lawyers Guild. In 2006, New York University presented Mr. Stevenson with its Distinguished Teaching Award. Mr. Stevenson won the Gruber Foundation International Justice Prize and was awarded the NAACP William Robert Ming Advocacy Award, the National Legal Aid & Defender Association Lifetime Achievement Award, the Ford Foundation Visionaries Award, and the Roosevelt Institute Franklin D. Roosevelt Freedom from Fear Award. In 2012, Mr. Stevenson received the American Psychiatric Association Human Rights Award, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute Fred L. Shuttlesworth Award, and the Smithsonian Magazine American Ingenuity Award in Social Progress. Mr. Stevenson was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Science in 2014 and won the Lannan Cultural Freedom Prize. In 2015, he was named to the Time 100 list recognizing the world's most influential people. In 2016, he received the American Bar Association's Thurgood Marshall Award. He was named in Fortune's 2016 and 2017 World's Greatest Leaders list. He received the Martin Luther King Jr. Nonviolent Peace Prize from the King Center in Atlanta in 2018.

Mr. Stevenson has received over 40 honorary doctoral degrees, including degrees from Harvard, Yale, Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania, and Oxford University. He is the author of the critically acclaimed New York Times bestseller, *Just Mercy*, which was named by Time Magazine as one of the 10 Best Books of Nonfiction for 2014 and has been awarded several honors, including the American Library Association's Carnegie Medal for best nonfiction book of 2015 and a 2015 NAACP Image Award. *Just Mercy* was recently adapted as a major motion picture. He is a graduate of the Harvard Law School and the Harvard School of Government.

ABOUT THE EVENT HOST AND CO-HOSTS

Theological Horizons supports believers and seekers by providing a welcoming community for engaging faith, thought and life. An independent non-profit organization centered at The Bonhoeffer House, Theological Horizons is adjacent to Grounds at the University of Virginia. Learn more at www.theologicalhorizons.org.

Central Virginia Community Justice provides a brave space for those involved in harm to lead their own accountability and healing. CVCJ facilitates restorative conferences to divert cases away from the criminal system, as well as to repair harms outside of the system. Through dialogue, those impacted by harm have voice and power to address their needs, and those responsible for harm have the opportunity to take accountability through their actions and acknowledgement. Learn more [here](#).

The Project on Lived Theology at UVA is a research initiative, whose mission is to study the social consequences of theological ideas for the sake of a more just and compassionate world.

<https://www.livedtheology.org/>

UVA Arts catalyzes and facilitates research, creative production, and service in the arts departments and schools and with numerous affiliates, partners, and community and student-driven arts organizations at the University of Virginia. Learn more at <https://arts.virginia.edu>

2023 SCOPER LECTURE SERIES HOST COMMITTEE

- Nancy and Steve Scoper, Virginia Beach, VA | Physician
- Griff and Julie Aldrich, Farmville, VA | Head Basketball Coach, Longwood University
- Barbara Armacost, Charlottesville, VA | UVA Law Professor
- Richard and Susan Dean, Vienna, VA | Attorney, Adjunct law Professor and UVA Alum
- Todd and Judi Deatherage, Burke, VA | The Telos Group
- Carolyn Mitchell Dillard, Charlottesville, VA | Pastor at Zion Hill Baptist Church, UVA Descendants of Enslaved Communities, University-Community Liaison in UVA's Division for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Greg and Tierney Fairchild, Charlottesville, VA | Isidore Horween Research Professor of Business Administration UVA's Darden School of Business and Co-Founders of Resilience Education
- Andrew Hayashi, Charlottesville, VA | UVA Law Professor
- Eddie and Tonya Howard, Charlottesville, VA | Executive Director of Charlottesville Abundant Life Ministries
- Betsy Hutson and Anand Ramana, Vienna, VA | Attorneys at Law
- Irene Flannery Little, New York, NY | Social Entrepreneur
- Steve and Georgeanne Long, Richmond, VA | Physician, UVA Board of Visitors
- Charles Marsh, Charlottesville, VA | UVA professor of Religious Studies
- Elizabeth and Evans Rice, Falls Church, VA | Attorney at Law
- Tim and Maria Tassopoulos, Atlanta, GA | COO, Chick-Fil-A
- Juandiego Wade, Charlottesville, VA | Vice-Mayor, City of Charlottesville
- Sheri Winston, Charlottesville, VA | Associate Director of the UVA Rotunda and Special Events

EVENT SPONSORS (as of 3/7/2023)

Event Sponsors are supporting the event at a level of \$1500 or more.

Charlottesville Abundant Life Ministries, Charlottesville, VA*
Charlottesville Area Community Foundation, Charlottesville, VA
Christ Episcopal Church, Charlottesville, VA
Corhaven Spiritual Retreat Center, Quicksburg, VA
Dominion Energy, Richmond, VA

Equal Justice USA, Charlottesville, VA*
First Presbyterian Church, Charlottesville, VA*
GreenPoint, Washington, DC
Jefferson School African American Heritage Center, Charlottesville, VA
Resilience Education, Charlottesville, VA*
St. Paul's Memorial Church, Charlottesville, VA*
UVA Division for Equity, and Inclusion, Charlottesville, VA
UVA Office of the Provost, Academic Outreach, Public Service Pathways*
Julie and Griff Aldrich, Farmville, VA
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Elizabeth and Evans Rice, Falls Church, VA
Nancy and Diego Ruiz, Vienna, VA
Maria and Tim Tassopoulos, Atlanta, GA

* Indicates Event Sponsors who are also Community Partners.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS (as of 3/7/2023)

Community Partners are signed up to bring at least 20 participants to the event and promote it.

University of Virginia

Black Law Student Association, Charlottesville, VA
Descendants at the Enslaved Communities at UVA, Charlottesville, VA
Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy at UVA, Charlottesville, VA
Meriwether Lewis Institute For Citizen Leadership, Charlottesville, VA
Public Interest Law Association, Charlottesville, VA
UVA Office of the Provost, Academic Outreach, Public Service Pathways*
UVA Law Christian Fellowship, Charlottesville, VA
UVA Lifetime Learning, Office of Engagement, Charlottesville, VA

Faith Communities

All Souls Charlottesville, Charlottesville, VA
Center for Christian Study, Charlottesville, VA
Charlottesville Clergy Collective, Charlottesville, VA
Church of the Good Shepherd, Charlottesville, VA
Church of the Resurrection, Charlottesville, VA
Congregation Beth Israel, Charlottesville, VA
First Presbyterian Church, Charlottesville, VA*
Insight Meditation Community of Charlottesville

Mt Zion First African Baptist Church, Charlottesville, VA
Restoration Anglican, Arlington, VA
Rumi Forum, Washington, DC
Sojourners United Church of Christ, Charlottesville, VA
St. Paul's Memorial Church, Charlottesville, VA*
Trinity Presbyterian Church, Charlottesville, VA
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Charlottesville, Charlottesville, VA

Community Organizations

100 Black Men of Central Virginia, Charlottesville, VA
Abundant Life Ministries, Charlottesville, VA*
ArkWise Wealth, Charlottesville, VA
Arrabon, Richmond, VA
Bonner Leader Program at University of Lynchburg, Lynchburg, VA
BTE Productions, Keswick, VA
City of Promise, Charlottesville, VA
Community Mental Health and Wellness Coalition, Charlottesville, VA
Delegate Sally Hudson, VA State House District 57, Albemarle County, VA
Equal Justice USA, Charlottesville, VA*
Interfaith Action for Human Rights, Washington, DC
International Rescue Committee, Charlottesville, VA
The Fountain Fund, Charlottesville, VA
Lending Hands, Charlottesville, VA
Resilience Education, Charlottesville, VA*
Selena Cozart Consulting, Charlottesville, VA
The Uhuru Foundation, Charlottesville, VA
Virginia Organizing Project, Charlottesville, VA
Virginia Prison Birth Project, Charlottesville, VA
The Women's Initiative, Charlottesville, VA

Schools and Student Groups

Church Hill Academy, Richmond, VA
Falls Church City Public Schools, Falls Church, VA
ReadyKids, Charlottesville, VA
University of Richmond Christian Law Fellowship, Richmond, VA
Western Albemarle High School, Crozet, VA

* Indicates Community Partners who are also Event Sponsors

Additional Community Partners can sign up at www.theologicalhorizons.org/stevenson

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