

# Voice of the Highlander

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The student newspaper of Robert T. Hill Middle School in Dallas, TX.

## Project Envision Edition

### Death row to freedom

By 7<sup>th</sup> grader Ty'liyah Smith



The Equal Justice Initiative has been changing lives since 1989. They have helped get hundreds of inmates off death row in Alabama. They also provide legal aid for anyone no matter their skin color or ethnic background. They ensure fair treatment for anyone who cannot afford a lawyer. They have helped over 100 people with cases.

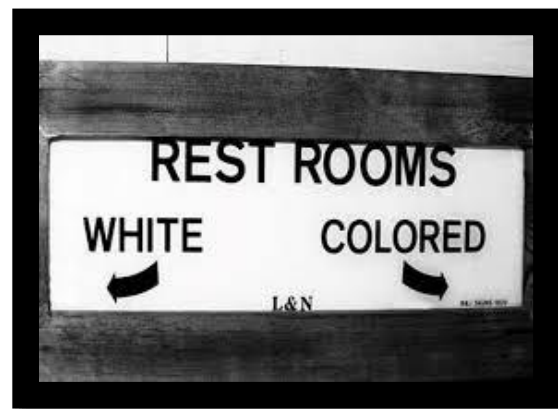
The Equal Justice Initiative all started when an innocent black man, named Walter McMillian, was put on death row. He allegedly killed a white woman, but he did not even know the women. Four years before that case, Bryan Stevenson, started the EJI to help death row inmates in Montgomery, Alabama.

Stevenson won the case and continued to help inmates.

The EJI is helping people all over the United States. They provide legal aid for anyone who can't afford a lawyer. They also help inmates on death row in Alabama. The EJI is working to make American court systems fairer and more equal. Even though America is not there yet, we will get there in the future.

### The Laws That Changed It All

By 8<sup>th</sup> grader Demarion Wreh



Say if you needed a kidney, heart, and/or a new pair of lungs, but the one

that you got is coming from a different race. How would you respond or react? You would take it right? Because no matter what is on the outside, we are all the same on the inside.

Jim Crow Laws are laws that enforced racial segregation in the southern states. Under the Jim Crow system, “whites only” and “colored” signs proliferated across the South at water fountains, restrooms, bus waiting areas, movie theaters, swimming pools, and public schools.

African Americans who even tried to challenge segregation faced arrest or violent action. Here is one law “It shall be unlawful for a negro and white person to play together or in company with each other at any game of pool or billiards.”

This selection is an example of a Jim Crow Law that was in effect in the state of Alabama from the late 19th century to the early 20th century.

These laws worked to enforce segregation amongst the races, which led to civil rights actions by individuals such as Ida B. Wells, and ultimately to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s led by people like Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. Until one day in 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act, which legally ended the laws that changed it all.



For spring break, Mr. Ault traveled to Montgomery, AL and visited the exact location where Rosa Parks was arrested.

## An Image to Follow

By 8<sup>th</sup> grader Cody Fulenwider



Imagine a man that was both a surgeon and a veteran of World War II. Not only was he Mexican American, but he also founded the G.I. Forum. This man’s name was Hector P. Garcia. Garcia was a well-known respected Mexican American that graduated from the University of Texas at Austin. Hector was born to a

loving family of two schoolteachers, therefore growing up to be very educated.

Hector P. Garcia is well known for founding the G.I. Forum. After he was released from care at the hospital, Mexican American veterans were the first thing he thought about. The Veteran Administration was very slow at getting to Mexican American Veterans after the war. Hector worked hard trying to get Mexican Americans the rights they deserve. He also investigated work conditions for migrants in many parts of Texas.

Hector is a well-known respected man in both the U.S. and in Mexico. Without Hector, Veterans may still have the same issues that they used to, and inequality would be just a bit stronger. He has changed the lives of many veterans of all races. It is important that we remember what he has done for our country and our veterans. Hector is truly a man that deserves to be remembered.



# James Farmer

By 8<sup>th</sup> grader Evelyn Vazquez



James Farmer was a civil rights activist and the leader of Congress of Racial Equality. He sadly passed away in July 9, 1999, but C.O.R.E is still here and still trying to bring about racial equality for all people regardless their race, creed, sex, age, disability, religion or ethnic background.

The most important part of James Farmers story was that he was a leader not a follower he wanted equal rights for everyone that is why he founded C.O.R.E. His organization is still up and running and people are still trying to have equal rights.

My conclusion is that C.O.R.E. is still here and they are still fighting for our rights and have been successful. We hope that core will be successful with their plans in the future.



Richard Miles, who was sentenced to prison for 15 years for a murder he did not commit, spoke to Hill 7<sup>th</sup> graders on March 9. He has now started a non-profit called Miles of Freedom to help former prisoners get back on their feet with housing and jobs.

## We are all equal

By 8<sup>th</sup> grader Emely Rodriguez



The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People or NAACP was founded to help people of color like myself and many others. It is the oldest civil rights organization in our country.

The NAACP is an organization

dedicated to help people of color against racism. The mission is to secure political, education, social and economic. The NAACP established their national office in New York in 1910. The NAACP has helped many against racial injustice especially in the field of law.

Racial Inequality is still very much alive. This is not the issue we have nowadays. We have homophobia and racism and many others. Our world is not perfect, but we can make it better. We are all equal no matter the race, gender, and sexual orientation.

## A True Hero

By 8<sup>th</sup> grader Angela Tapia

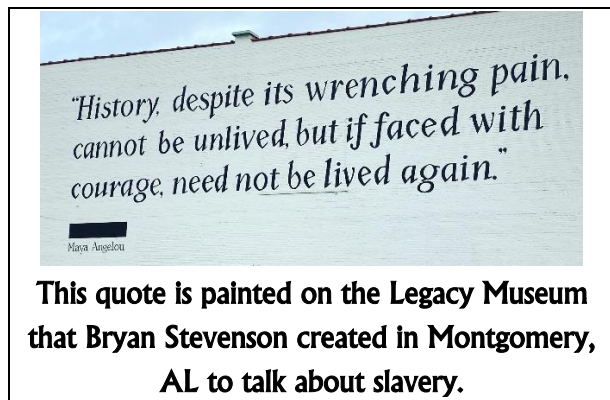


Bryan Stevenson is a lawyer, social justice activist, clinical professor and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative. But before all that he was born in Milton, Delaware on November 14, 1959. He went to Eastern University

in St. David's, PA. And attended Harvard Law school. He now lives in Montgomery, Alabama to help the poor and minorities in the criminal justice system.

Mr. Stevenson worked on some very big cases in his life. For example, he worked on the Walter McMillian case back in 1993. Walter McMillian was convicted of murder and was on death penalty for 6 years. Mr. Stevenson and the staff of EJI had got enough evidence to prove that Mr. McMillian was innocent. He has done many cases like this where people get convicted of something they did not do.

The world is very crucial and at times your race could affect how people see you. Your race could get you in trouble in this world. But there are people like Bryan Stevenson and the Equal Justice Initiative that want to help those that are innocent. Your race/ skin color should not matter in this world and yet sadly it does. Bryan Stevenson has helped so many and will continue to help those that need it. He is truly appreciated.



# What was the Voting Rights Act of 1965?

By 7<sup>th</sup> grader Katie Dotson



The Voting Rights Act of 1965 prohibits racial discrimination in voting. If we did not have it, a lot of us would not be able to vote. This act was signed by Lyndon B. Johnson. People of color would not be able to vote without it. It has helped our society.

On August 6, 1965, President Johnson signed this act into law, enabling African Americans to vote. During the civil rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's, activists endured various forms of mistreatment and violence.

One event that outraged many Americans occurred on March 7,

1965, when peaceful participants in a Selma to Montgomery March for voting rights were met by Alabama state troopers who attacked them when they refused to turn back. It was a grueling sight. Some protesters were badly beaten. The incident was captured on national television.



The event that was shown on TV was called 'Bloody Sunday'.

This event played a big part in the 15th Amendment. African Americans could vote. It would be so different in the world today, if this act had not been passed. It has played a big role in U.S. history.



Mr. Ault visited the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, AL. This is where those protesting unequal voting laws were beaten on TV.

## Opinion: Racial Inequality

By 8<sup>th</sup> grader Jaime Batista



Equality has never been a reality since not all people have the luxury to have a home or even the privilege to walk down the sidewalk without getting harassed. Race can play a major role on how certain people see you. Whether it is racial supremacist or just racists in general. Racial inequality sometimes leads to racial injustice which leads to unlawful actions by the court.

Non-profit organizations are spreading awareness of this issue. The most important thing to take from this is to help spread awareness to people and help. After all, what could a little pep talk do?

## Who was Barbara Jordan?

By 8<sup>th</sup> grader Kaylon Edwards



Barbara Jordan's full name is Barbara Charline Jordan. Charline was born on February 21, 1936 and died on the 17th of January of 1996. She worked as an American Lawyer and educator.

Barbara Jordan is an icon in Black History due to her many achievements. Barbara Jordan unsuccessfully campaigned for the House of Representatives during 1962 and 1964. Finally, in 1966 she won a seat in the Texas senate and became the first African American State Senator. She was re-elected to a full term in the Texas Senate in 1968.

## Wrongly convicted



By 8<sup>th</sup> grader Ceferino Cruz

Anthony Ray Hinton was born June 1, 1956. Hinton got sentenced for the 1985 murders of two fast food restaurant managers. Before he got sentenced, his life was good but then he got wrongly convicted for something that he did not do. He was sentenced to death for the crimes.

After nearly 30 years on death row, his case was thrown out and he was released. The most important thing about this person is that when he was in jail and then he got out he wrote a book. The book is called 'The Sun Does Shine'. It discusses his life in and out of prison.

This story is important for people because Anthony Ray Hinton spent 28 years on Alabama death row for two murders he did not commit, and people need to read his book because it is interesting to read.

# The law that ended Segregation

By 8<sup>th</sup> grader Breanna Bailey



The year was 1964 when segregation ended. Before then everyone was separated because of color. When people believed black and whites couldn't coexist.

We needed to end segregation. It was a separation between blacks and whites. It was everyone including schools, buses and even water fountains.

President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

This law is important because it changed the U.S. in so many ways. Without it the U.S. would be different. Including schools and education and so much more.

We should really be thankful for this act, and why this was ended, because it made a big difference.

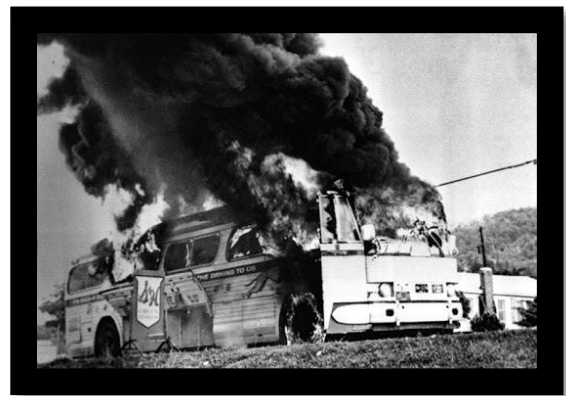
We spoke with Ms. Melancon from LBJ Presidential Library in Austin, TX.

"The Civil Rights Act is a very important act," said Melancon.

Today we can go to school and simply sit with someone who is a different race. This has impacted so much today, even though this happened years ago it is something we should still think about today.

## Freedom Rides

By 7<sup>th</sup> grader Hillary Martinez



Do you know anything about the freedom rides? You should care about this topic because it is part of the American Civil Rights movement.

This is really important in racial inequality. The freedom riders challenged this status quo by riding interstate buses in the south in mixed racial groups to challenge laws.

Freedom Riders helped end racial segregation in Southern U.S. public transit in 1961.

Their goals were to desegregate interstate transportation, including highways, bus stops, and train terminals.



CORE director James Farmer led 13 Freedom Rides. Many times, the riders were beaten, and their buses were set on fire.

Despite all this, they were very successful in changing racial inequality in our country.

## Movie break racial boundaries

By 7<sup>th</sup> grader Moo Paw



Just Mercy was a movie that was released on December 25, 2019. The director of the movie was Destin Daniel Cretton, and was an adaptation of the book Bryan Stevenson wrote by the same name.

The movie is about Walter McMillian. He was born on October 27, 1941. His wife was Minnie McMillian. In 1988, He got sent to death row.

The reason he got sent to death row is because he was convicted of murdering an 18-year-old white woman in Monroeville, Alabama. He was also put on death row before he was even found guilty. He spent six years on Alabama's death row. In the movie, Jamie Foxx was the one who played Walter McMillian and Michael B. Jordan was the one who played Bryan Stevenson. After Walter McMillian released from prison, he began to suffer dementia.

When the murdering of that girl happened, Walter McMillian was with his family miles away. After spending six year on death row for a crime he did not commit, he finally got released in 1993.

The murder remains unsolved today. Walter McMillian spent his last years trapped in his own mind, convinced he was once again back on death row.

## How were Native Americans treated in the United States?

By Savannah David



The Native Americans were one of the first people in the United States. The French explorer saw Native Americans as highly evolved nations that they could learn from. Spanish explorers saw Native Americans as people that were inferior and

that could be enslaved. They were not at all treated the same.

During the Indian Wars in the late 1800s, all the Native Americans were forced out of Texas and were made to live in reservations. Many of the Native American children were sent to Indian school, so they could learn to act 'white'.

We contacted Mr. Lance Tahmahkera, the great grandson of Comanche Chief Quanah Parker, and he gave us some facts and information, and this is what he said, "My dad never complained about segregation, having to attend border schools or the lower class life he was raised in."

He also said, "He made the most out of all the opportunities for a better life that ever came his way."

This issue played a huge part in equality in the 1800's. The world today would be way different if this issue was not cured or had a solution to it.

I'm very glad that I reached out to Mr. Lance a big thank you to him!

## **The case of Walter McMillan**

By 8<sup>th</sup> grader Corlynda Malvern



**Have you been lied to or lied about?**

**Walter McMillan was lied about in a federal courtroom.**

**He never committed the crime that was said to have been committed, but they still held him in jail for six years. This happened in 1986.**

**The McMillan case lasted one and a half days to convict him of something he never did.**

**One witness said he saw McMillan and another man leave the crime scene of the murder which he said the car was a low rider truck which is incorrect the truck was converted after the murder. They all lied about McMillan which in court landed him behind bars.**

**Walter was on death row for a crime he only heard and seen on TV. The victim was 18-years-old at the time of her murder.**

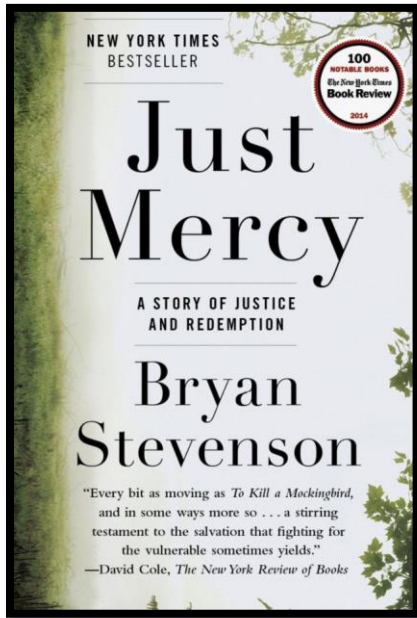
**How would you feel if you were wrongly convicted of a crime such as murder?**

**To take from this story is: false truth leads to someone suffering with the consequences of your action.**

**As you read early in this edition of Voice of the Highlander, McMillan final was able to gain his freedom with the help of the Equal Justice Initiative.**

# Book Review: Early Sunsets Over Monroeville

By 8<sup>th</sup> grader Frank Cochran



Just Mercy is a book written by lawyer and Equal Justice Initiative founder, Brian Stevenson.

The EJI is a foundation that fights for the right of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Specifically, capital punishment.

Some people are wrongly convicted, and must get killed, when they did not deserve it. The book tells stories about Stevenson and the stories about the people that he saved from death row.

The first case that he handled was that of Walter McMillan.

When Walter McMillan was convicted in Monroeville, Alabama, for the murder of the 18-year-old white woman, Ronda Morrison, many people knew that something was wrong. McMillan did not kill her. McMillan's alibi was that he was at a church fish fry at the time of Morrison's murder. Morrison was found dead at a store. McMillan was on death row for six years.

Stevenson got McMillan off death row. He presented facts and evidence.

## What causes racial inequality?

By 8<sup>th</sup> grader Ian Marchand



Racial inequality is a problem that has been here for too long. It is when one race thinks they are superior than others and treats them as a third class.

It goes all the way back to 1619, the beginning of slavery, where African Americans were forced to work on plantations for no money at all while getting beat, lashed, and tortured. Even after slavery was abolished in 1865, we

had the problem of segregation, where blacks had limited rights. But even after that African Americans continued to get mistreated and it constantly gets overlooked.

The causes of racial inequality go to the discrimination of blacks in the 1900s.

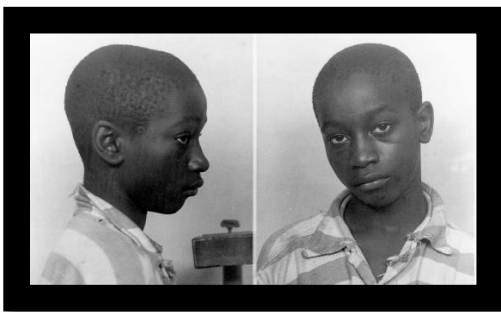
Poverty is also another cause of this, minority races do not have the same economic opportunities as other Americans. Police brutality is a very controversial reason why we still have racial inequality. They are getting arrested and beaten to the ground because of their skin color.

Not everyone has the same life as you. We all come from different backgrounds. Do not make fun of others because of the opportunities you have. Make others feel welcomed.

Racial inequality can be stopped, we just need to all make the effort.

## The youngest ever executed

By 8<sup>th</sup> grader Andrew Sivess



The 6th amendment states that we have a right to a fair trial, but that

was not the case for George Stinney. The poor kid did not even have a chance against his corrupt government. Then again, he was living in South Carolina in the 1940s, so at some point in his life he was going to run into someone racist. Although I did not expect it to be this bad. People did not treat people right back then.

George Julius Stinney Junior Was an African American male born October 21, 1929 in Alcolu, South Carolina. Alcolu was a small, working-class mill town, where white and black neighborhoods were separated by railroad tracks. He lived a normal life, and by that, I mean he had to deal with racists his entire life. African Americans were always treated like this in the south though. Other than that, his life was fine.

One day police found two white girls Betty June Binnicker, age 11, and Mary Emma Thames, age 7 dead in a ditch on March 23, 1944. Police arrested 14-year-old George Stinney as a suspect.

They stated that he had confessed to the crime while under custody, even though he didn't do it. Stinney was convicted of first-degree murder of the two girls in less than 10 minutes by an all-white jury, during a two-hour trial. The court refused to hear his appeal.

He was executed that year, still age 14, by electric chair. The fact that they didn't want to hear his appeal, means they thought he was guilty, regardless of his proof.



Mr. Ault visited Glendora, Mississippi during spring break. This is the location where 14-year-old Emmett Till was murdered in 1955. His murder for allegedly whistling at a white woman and his mother's decision to publish his body caused the Civil Right Movement to start. This new 500-pound, bullet-proof memorial sits along the Tallahatchie River where Till's body was discovered.



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