

Equal Justice Initiative founder unearths uncomfortable social truths at BYU forum

Popular social rights activist Bryan Stevenson is bringing his perspective on justice to BYU.

PROVO, Utah – October 11, 2018 – Bryan Stevenson, a criminal justice lawyer known for his unflinching social honesty, will address the BYU community on current racial and social inequalities at the campus forum on Tuesday, October 30.

The topics of police brutality and mass incarceration dominate today's political conversation. As Caucasians in the middle to upper economic classes, many BYU students and neighbors often find themselves more removed from these issues than elsewhere in the United States. Stevenson offers firsthand perspectives on such issues.

"We're excited to provide our students with a new perspective," says BYU President Kevin J. Worthen. "Students need to hear from all sides of these important stories, so when they go to the polls next month, they can make their own well-informed votes. Meaningful information inspires meaningful decisions."

Stevenson founded the Equal Justice Initiative to bring to light the injustices faced by African Americans. He travels the country speaking out about African American history, highlighting the practices of lynching and segregation, as well as the current dilemmas within the justice system. Statistical evidence presented in a recent EJI court case in Washington shows that court judges sentence black defendants to death four and a half times more often than white defendants in similar situations.

"The people of this country need to open their eyes to the hard truths found in the justice system," says Stevenson. "We cannot move forward without acknowledging and confronting them."

The Equal Justice Initiative also takes on the criminal court cases of prosecuted minors. Some 3,000 children have been sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. Thanks to Stevenson's work, the courts recently abolished the practice of adult prosecution of minors. The organization is currently working to release falsely accused death row prisoners.

Stevenson's views will likely contradict the predominately conservative voices familiar to the Utah Valley.

"He can deliver some insight that may have BYU students questioning what they know about the social structure and justice system in this country," says Worthen, "but that's not a bad thing."

Worthen encourages BYU students and neighbors to attend Stevenson's address on Tuesday, October 30 at 11:05 a.m. in the Marriott Center.

About BYU Devotionals and Forums

To encourage lifelong learning, Brigham Young University instituted weekly devotionals and forums. Religious leaders and authorities in the arts, sciences, politics and other areas of study come and share their insights and experiences with students. Recent speakers include Neil L. Andersen, an apostle of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints; DJ Patil, the first U.S. chief data scientist under president Barack Obama; and baroness Emma Nicholson, a European parliament member and founder of AMAR International Charities Foundation. The university presently archives over 70 years of these speeches in its library and website. For more information, visit speeches.byu.edu.

###

Media Contact

Britney Fronk

(208) 850-7759

Britney.Fronk@gmail.com