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For Immediate Release:

Community Read Examines Questions of Justice, Equality, Poverty

January 24, 2018

Newton, NC – The Catawba County Library, in collaboration with Catawba Valley Community College, is initiating a community read and discussion series of Bryan Stevenson’s *Just Mercy*, an unforgettable true story about the redeeming potential of mercy, and winner of the Carnegie Medal for Excellence in nonfiction.

Just Mercy is a memorable account of an idealistic young lawyer’s coming of age, an emotional window into the lives of those he has defended, and an inspiring argument for compassion in the pursuit of true justice.

Bryan Stevenson founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those who are most desperate and in need. One of his first cases was that of Walter McMillian, a young man who was sentenced to die for a notorious murder he didn’t commit. The case drew Bryan into a tangle of conspiracy, politics, and legal maneuvering that transformed his understanding of mercy and justice forever, and led to this widely acclaimed book.

“This community read challenges us to consider ourselves as part of a larger community and society,” said Library Director Suzanne White, “bringing us together to share a book, engage civically, discuss important issues of justice, equality, and poverty—and how we can work together to make a difference.”

Programming, which began at CVCC earlier this year, continues through March at all Catawba County Library locations, and includes TED Talks, Book Talks, film screenings, dramatic readings, and more, centered around the concept of mercy in the criminal justice system. There will be limited book giveaways at each event.

On March 20, keynote speaker Anthony Ray Hinton, recently exonerated by Bryan Stevenson's Equal Justice Initiative after more than three decades on death row, will share his powerful story. He will speak at 11 am at CVCC's Tarleton Center, and again at 6 pm at the 1924 Courthouse in Newton, with a reception to follow at the History Museum of Catawba County.

For the latest in library news, visit librarynews.catawbacountync.gov, or stop by your local branch.

[N.B. A schedule of associated events is listed below.]

Cutlines:

- Author Bryan Stevenson with the cover of *Just Mercy*.
- Keynote speaker Anthony Ray Hinton (left) with Bryan Stevenson after Hinton's exoneration.

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About: *The Catawba County Library is our community's place to connect, explore, and grow. We empower lives and build our community by bringing people, information, and ideas together. The library, headquartered in Newton, serves the community with seven locations throughout the county and is a year-round, integral provider of early literacy and lifelong learning resources and programming. The library also provides a full complement of computer and digital services, classes, and support to bridge the digital divide, empower job seekers, and enhance community quality of life and economic health.*



Schedule of Events:

CVCC, EAST WING AUDITORIUM

Criminal Justice System Reform

Wednesday, January 31, 12 noon

Criminal justice reformer and researcher Dr. Melissa Neal discusses how using a racial equity lens can lead to more effective criminal justice solutions and better outcomes.

CATAWBA COUNTY MAIN LIBRARY, NEWTON

How False Confessions Happen

Tuesday, January 30, 6 pm

A viewing of a TED Talk, followed by discussion.

Justice doesn't happen. People make justice happen.

Tuesday, February 6, 6 pm

A talk about the role we play in how justice is determined.

Companion Read: *Orange is the New Black*

Tuesday, February 13, 6 pm

Join us to discuss our companion read, made popular by the award-winning Netflix series of the same name.

A Prosecutor's Vision for a Better Justice System

Tuesday, February 20, 6 pm

A viewing of a TED Talk, followed by a discussion led by Prof. Ronald Wright of Wake Forest University Law School.

In Pursuit of Justice: the Greg Taylor Story

Thursday, February 22, 5:30 pm

A screening of the film about a NC man's wrongful murder conviction, followed by a discussion with the film's producer.

Just Mercy Performance Reading

Monday, March 5, 10 am

CVCC's Play Production class performs pieces from the book.

The Presumption of Innocence

Tuesday, March 6, 6 pm

A viewing of a TED Talk, followed by a discussion led by an ACLU attorney of the Charlotte region.

After Innocence

Thursday, March 8, 6 pm

This gripping documentary explores the impacts of seven criminal convictions since overturned by DNA evidence.

ST. STEPHENS BRANCH

Eyewitness Identification: The System with Joe Berlinger

Saturday, February 24, 2 pm

This episode explores how the system is grappling with emerging insights into eyewitness science.

SHERRILLS FORD-TERRELL BRANCH

Guardian ad Litem Panel Discussion

Monday, February 26, 6:30 pm

Learn more about the child victim advocacy program including panel guests Sydney Smith, district administrator; Karen Harrington, director of Catawba County DSS; Superior Court Judge Gregory Hayes.

SOUTHWEST BRANCH

Why Eyewitnesses Get It Wrong

Tuesday, February 27, 6 pm

CONOVER BRANCH

After Innocence

Tuesday, February 20, 6 pm

CLAREMONT BRANCH

After Innocence

Saturday, February 24, 10 am

MAIDEN BRANCH

Prosecutorial Misconduct: The System with Joe Berlinger

Tuesday, February 20, 6 pm

This episode explores how issues in law enforcement and prosecution can impact justice outcomes.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: ANTHONY RAY HINTON

Tuesday, March 20, 11 am, CVCC's Tarleton Center

Tuesday, March 20, 6 pm, 1924 Courthouse, Newton

Hear from the client of Bryan Stevenson who was exonerated after spending 30 years on Alabama's death row. Reception to follow at the County History Museum.