

Just Mercy | Characters & Events

INTRODUCTION - CHAPTER 2

Proximity to the condemned and incarcerated made the question of each person's humanity more urgent and meaningful, including my own. (p.12)

BRYAN STEVENSON

"You can't understand most of the important things from a distance, Bryan. You have to get close." (p.14)

BRYAN'S GRANDMOTHER

INTRODUCTION

Higher Ground

Bryan Stevenson

Main voice of the story, we meet Bryan as a twenty-three-year-old Harvard Law Student. Having grown up in a poor and racially segregated area on the eastern shore of Delaware, he is exposed to and experienced the restrictions that shaped his family and community.

Steve Bright

The Director of the Southern Prisoners Defense Committee (SPDC) who Bryan meets during his internship and inspires him further to assist those condemned on death row.

Steve was in his mid-thirties and had a passion and certainty that seemed the direct opposite of my ambivalence... He showed none of the disconnect between what he did and what he believed that I'd seen in so many of my law professors. (p.5)

Henry

The young man Bryan is asked to meet to deliver the message regarding his case. It is the first time Bryan visits death row and meets a condemned prisoner.

I was astonished that he was so happy. I relaxed, too, and we began to talk. It turned out that we were exactly the same age... Within an hour we were both lost in conversation. (p.10)

Bryan's Grandmother

She is born in 1880, her parents were born in 1840 and had previously been slaves. She is very influential in shaping Bryan's world-view.

The legacy of slavery very much shaped my grandmother and the way she raised her nine children. It influenced the way she talked to me, the way she constantly told me to "Keep close." (p.14)

CHAPTER 1

Mockingbird Players

Judge Robert E. Lee Key

Bryan receives an angry phone-call from Judge Key at the start of his work on Walter's case. The Judge paints Walter to be a dangerous drug dealer and pressures Bryan to withdraw.

Eva Ansley

Bryan's friend with whom he helps start a nonprofit law office in Alabama to provide free, quality legal services to condemned men and women on death row. She plays a significant role in championing the work that Bryan describes in this *Just Mercy*.

Willie Tabb, Vernon Madison, Jesse Morrison, and Harry Nicks

The four other condemned men whose cases Bryan had been working on along with Walter's. Bryan visited all of them on death row the same day he met Walter for the first time.

Walter McMillian

A generally respected black man from Monroeville, his personal and economic success had gained him both admiration and suspicion. He is the main suspect in the murder of Ronda Morrison, and is illegally put on death row before being convicted. Bryan's involvement in his case is the main storyline of *Just Mercy*.

Harper Lee

The author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, who like Walter, is from Monroe County. While her community reveled in the celebrity of her book, she secluded herself upon returning to her hometown.

Karen Kelley

A young white woman with whom Walter has an affair. Karen is going through a divorce at the time of Walter's arrest, and her husband's outrage at his wife further exposes her scandalous involvement with Walter.

Tony Pace, Mary Cox, and John Tompkins

The African American man and white woman surrounding the *Pace v. Alabama* (1883) case. John Tompkins was the lawyer who represented the couple, being part of a small minority of white professionals who saw racial integrity laws as unconstitutional.

Russell Charley

A man from Monroe County who was known by Walter's family growing up. He found to be lynched when Walter was twelve, the lynching believed to be motivated by an interracial romance.

Ronda Morrison

The eighteen-year-old young woman found murdered in the Monroe Cleaners where she worked, November 1, 1986. It is her murder that Walter is blamed for and his case revolves around.

Sheriff Tom Tate

The newly elected county sheriff shortly after the Ronda Morrison murder takes place. He is a local of Monroeville and is faced with the pressure of Ronda's Morrison's unsolved murder.

Ralph Myers

A man with whom Karen Kelly begins to associate with during her divorce. He has a troubled upbringing and a fear of fire from being badly burned as a child. He has a lengthy criminal record and with Karen Kelly is implicated in the murder of Vickie Lynn Pittman. He has a habit of changing what he tells investigators for his own personal and misguided gain, and is one of the "witnesses" testifying against Walter.

Vickie Lynn Pittman

Another woman who is murdered in a neighboring county. Vickie is from a poor white family with several members having criminal history. Her murder investigation is more successful but receives less attention in comparison to Ronda Morrison's.

Isaac Dailey

The man Ralph Myers first accuses for the Vickie Pittman murder. He is a black man with a bad reputation, but he is discovered to have been in jail the night of the Pittman murder.

CHAPTER 2

Stand

Charles (Charlie) Bliss

Bryan's law school classmate from North Carolina with whom he shares an apartment in Atlanta. He is indeed home when Bryan is held at gunpoint and his car illegally searched outside their apartment.

Lourida Ruffin

A man whose case Bryan had been investigating when he was questioned by police. Lourida had been stopped by police and arrives at the jail beaten and in need of his asthma medication. This case and another involving a black teenager who was shot by police involve the Gadsden, Alabama community.

Older man in a wheelchair

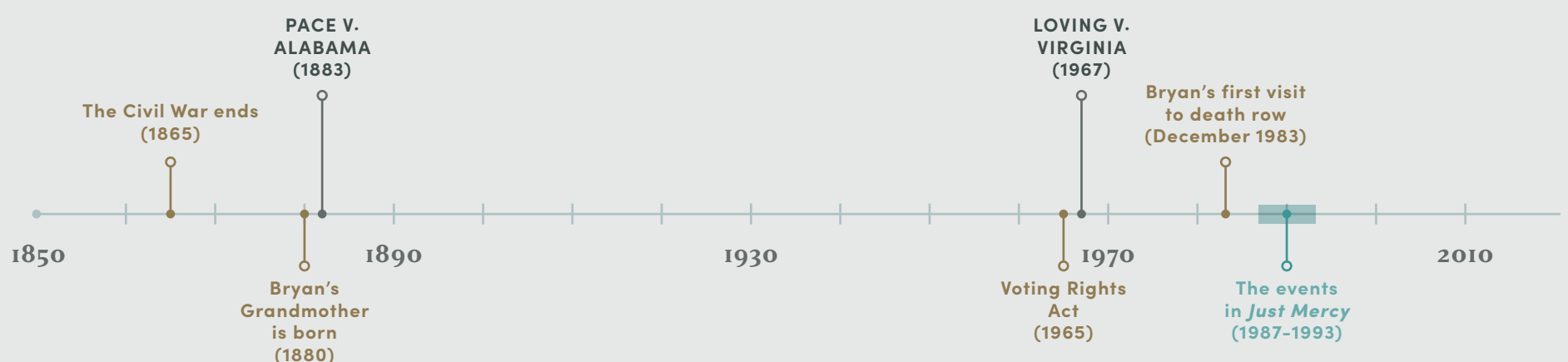
A man who attends one of Bryan's speaking events at a small African American church. His own experiences challenge and encourage Bryan to "beat the drum for justice" (p. 46).

PACE V. ALABAMA - 1883

The case involving Tony Pace, an African American man, and Mary Cox. The two fell in love and were arrested, convicted, and sentenced to two years in prison in Alabama. The United States Supreme Court upheld the restrictions on interracial sex and marriage, and affirmed the prison terms put on Pace and Cox. "Following the Court's decision, more states passed racial integrity laws that made it illegal for African Americans, and sometimes Native Americans and Asian Americans, to marry or have sex with whites." (p.28-29)

LOVING V. VIRGINIA - 1967

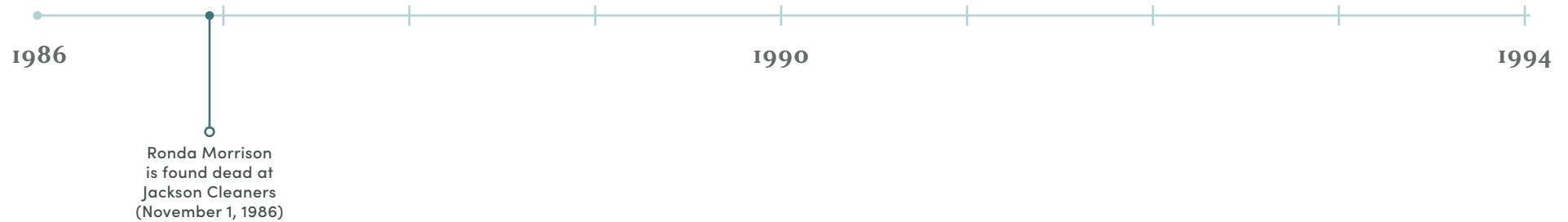
The trial in which the United States Supreme Court struck down anti-miscegenation laws. However, restrictions on interracial marriage still persisted, including in Alabama during 1986, when Walter met Karen Kelly.



Timeline: The events in *Just Mercy*

(1987 - 1993)

Chapter 1-2



CHAPTER 3 - CHAPTER 4

He saw in the people who arrested him and processed him at the courthouse, even in other inmates at the jail, a contempt that he'd never experienced before... He genuinely believed he accusations against him had been a serious misunderstanding and that once officials talked to his family to confirm his alibi, he'd be released in a couple of days. (p.55)

BRYAN STEVENSON (REFERRING TO WALTER)

"It's been so strange, Bryan. More people have asked me what they can do to help me in the last fourteen hours of my life than ever asked me in the years when I was coming up." He looked at me, and his face twisted in confusion. (p.89)

HERBERT RICHARDSON

CHAPTER 3

Trials and Tribulations

Simon Benson

The Alabama Bureau of Investigation (ABI) lead investigator. Along with Sheriff Tate, he feels the pressure from the community to make an arrest in the Ronda Morrison murder. He is part of the decision to arrest Walter primarily based on Ralph Myer's allegation.

Larry Ikner

The District Attorney's investigator. He along with Sheriff Tate and Simon Benson, make the decision to arrest Walter for Ronda Morrison's murder.

Michael Donald

A young African American man who had been lynched in Mobile in 1981. Sheriff Tom Tate threateningly refers to the event while he is arresting Walter. It was a hate crime that resulted after a mistrial was declared involving a black man accused of shooting a white police officer. When local police ignored the evidence of this being a hate crime, the black community and civil rights activist persuaded the U.S. Department of Justice to get involved.

Ted Pearson

A longtime resident of South Alabama and Monroe County District Attorney for twenty years. At the time of Walter's arrest He has plans to retire but disdains the fact that during his tenure "his office had been criticized for failing to solve the Morrison murder more quickly" (p.58). After Myer's calls Sheriff Tate from Holman's death row, Ted Pearson proceeds with his case against Walter.

Bill Hooks

A young black man who is known as a "jailhouse snitch" (p. 50) for cooperating with local law enforcement. At the time of Walter's arrest Hooks is in jail for

burglary but agrees to look at Walter's truck and "connect" it to Ronda's murder, in exchange for release from jail and reward money. His claims of seeing of Walter's "low-rider" truck at the cleaners, making him the second witness in the case and giving law enforcement what they need to charge Walter with murder.

Evelyn Smith

Walter's sister and one of the members present at the fish fry held at the McMillian house the day of the murder. She is able to recall a friend arriving late to the fish fry that day due to the traffic delay caused by murder.

"...traffic in Monroeville was completely backed up. Cop cars and fire trucks, looked like something bad happened at that cleaners." (p.51)

Jimmy Hunter

Walter's mechanic friend who was at his house helping him replace his transmission the day of the murder.

Ernest Welch

Known as the "furniture man," he owns a local furniture store and is Ronda Morrison's uncle. He stops by Walter's house early in the afternoon on the day of the murder to collect money from a purchase. He informs those at the house that his niece had been murdered that morning and discusses the news with them for a while. When called to the stand, Welch claims that he went to the McMillian residence on a different day.

Wayne Ritter

A death row inmate at Holman Correction Facility whose execution is scheduled shortly after Walter McMillian and Ralph Myers arrive. It is during Ritter's execution that Myer's breaks down and agrees to cooperate with officials regarding Walter's case.

As the prisoners talked more and more about the details of the Evan's execution and Wayne Ritter's impending execution, Myers became more distraught. On the

night of the Ritter execution, Myers was in full crisis, sobbing in his cell... He called Tate the next morning and told him that he would say whatever he wanted if he would get him off death row. (p.57)

John Evans and Arthur Jones

Two men on death row whose electrocutions are some of the first to take place at Holman after executions had resumed. John Evans' execution takes fourteen minutes and three attempts due to a malfunction in the chair's electrode.

Russ Canan

The man who volunteered to represent John Evans. At Evan's request, Canan witnesses his execution and later files an affidavit describing the electrocution as cruel and unusual punishment.

J. L. Chestnut and Bruce Boynton

Two black criminal lawyers from Selma, both with strong civil rights credentials. Walter's family and friends raise money to have these two men represent him instead of the attorney that had been appointed by the judge. Officials saw Walter's ability to hire these men as confirmation he had been dealing drugs. They are unsuccessful in proving Walter's innocence.

Joe Hightower

A man who is called to the stand during Walter's trial and confirms he had seen Walter's truck at the cleaners. Prior to the trial, Walter had never heard of Joe Hightower

allows jury decisions to be overridden by a judge and is typically popular during election years. At the time of *Just Mercy* judge overrides were still practiced in Alabama; it has since been abolished. Michael Lindsey was one of two men who Bryan had been repeatedly asked to help by his new clients on Alabama death row.

David Bagwell

Michael Lindsey's lawyer and respected civil attorney from Mobile. After his previous work on the Wayne Ritter case he writes an angry letter which made public his complaints about death penalty cases. Bryan cites his letter as causing more distrust between prisoners and lawyers.

Horace Dunkins

The other man who Bryan is asked to help by his Alabama death row clients. While Dunkins has intellectual disabilities, the Supreme Court's stance at the time "upheld the practice of executing the 'mentally retarded'" (p.71). His botched execution makes national news for being cruelly mishandled and his body is later subject to an autopsy, against his family's wishes.

Herbert Richardson

Herbert desperately calls Bryan with only thirty days until his execution date. An intelligent and kind man, he is also a Vietnam War veteran whose war experiences only add to the damage caused by his broken upbringing. While Herbert's actions caused harm, he had no intention to kill. He faces numerous legal setbacks, including the State deciding to invoke a "transfer of intent" to make his case eligible for the death penalty (p.77). He requests to have "The Old Rugged Cross" played before his execution.

Rena Mae's mother, MaryLynn, and Auntie

Family members of the victim of Herbert's bomb. They approach Bryan for his help after Herbert's hearing.

CHAPTER 4

The Old Rugged Cross

Michael Lindsey

A man who had originally been sentenced to life imprisonment without parole from his jury. His death sentence was the result of a "judge override,"—a practice that

STRAUDER V. WEST VIRGINIA - 1880

It was during this case in 1880 that the Supreme Court ruled that excluding black people from jury service as unconstitutional. However, Bryan explains that the practice of excluding black people—even in diverse counties—was still maintained even decades after the civil rights revolution. Judges and jury commissions found loopholes to maintained underrepresentation by summoning racial minorities and women but excluding them from serving on a jury.

BATSON V. KENTUCKY - 1986

The Supreme Court ruling that allowed "prosecutors could be challenged more directly about using peremptory strikes in a racially discriminatory manner" (p.60).

ATKINS V. VIRGINIA - 2002

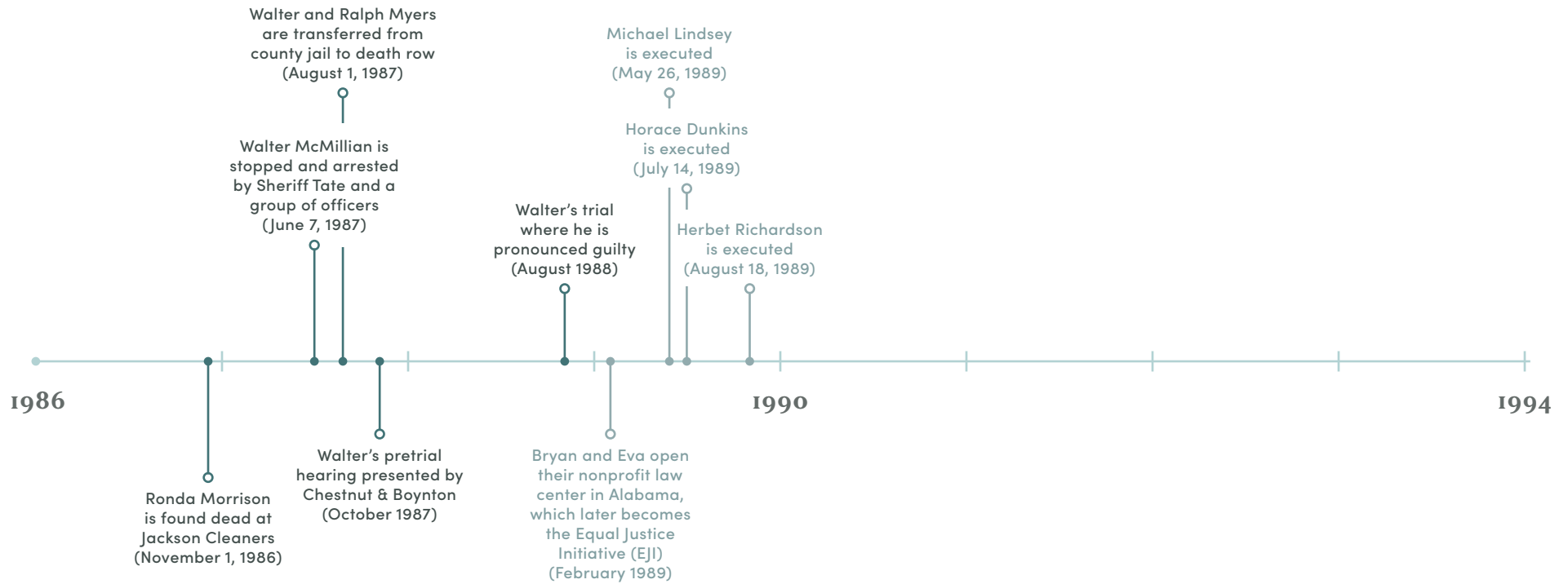
In Atkins v. Virginia, the Court recognized that executing people with intellectual disabilities is cruel and unusual punishment and banned the practice as unconstitutional. For many condemned and disabled people like Horace Dunkins, the ban came too late. (p.71)



Timeline: The events in *Just Mercy*

(1987 - 1993)

Chapter 3-4



CHAPTER 5 - CHAPTER 6

“I feel like they done put me on death row, too. What do we tell these children about how to stay out of harm’s way when you can be at your own house, minding your own business, surrounded by your entire family, and they still put some murder on you that you ain’t do and send you to death row?” (p.93)

ARMELIA HAND

I found something refreshing in the moments I spent with clients when we didn’t relate to one another as attorney and client but as friends. Walter’s case was becoming the most complicated and time-consuming I’d ever worked on, and spending time with him was comforting even though it made me feel the pressure of his mistreatment in ways that became increasingly personal. (p.103)

BRYAN STEVENSON

CHAPTER 5

Of the Coming of John

Armelia Hand

Walter McMillian’s older sister. She is one of the members present when Bryan is introduced to the group of Walter’s concerned relatives and friends.

Minnie Belle McMillian

She is Walter’s wife; hardworking and protective of those she cares about. Upon meeting her for the first time, Bryan describes her as “patient and strong” (p.94) and displays a protectiveness toward him as well.

Walter and Minnie’s children:

Jackie

Walter and Minnie’s daughter, who is in her twenties. They are very proud of the fact that “she’s in College.” She is close and protective of her mother.

Johnny

Walter and Minnie’s twenty-four-year-old son. Also protective of his family. After the initial shock of Walter’s trial verdict he is wrestled to the ground by officers and placed in handcuffs.

“Boot”

Also mentioned as one of Walter and Minnie’s kids.

John

The title character of W.E.B. DuBois short story, “Of the Coming of John.” John is sent off through the support of his community to a school with the hopes that he returns to change things for the better as a teacher. While his education empowers him, he is limited by constraints placed on his community by a white judge. He faces personal setbacks that ultimately have lasting effects on the community he is trying to benefit.

Sam Crook

An associate of Walter’s with whom he had done a lot of work for. He calls and offers support to Bryan and vouches for Walter’s character. Sam is white and a proud Confederate; Walter refers to him as “a very interesting guy.” (p.102)

Darnell Houston

A young man who calls Bryan to explain that he had been with Bill Hooks at the time of the murder. His statement contradicts Bill Hooks testimony that he had seen Walter’s truck outside of the cleaners. He is quickly “punished” for speaking to Bryan and is charged with perjury.

Darnell’s despair, his sadness in recognizing that they could do whatever they wanted him with impunity, was utterly disheartening. From what I could see, there simply was no commitment to the rule of law, no accountability, and little shame. (p.114)

Tom Chapman

The new Monroe County district attorney who succeeds Ted Pearson. While he is said to be more sympathetic, he displays indifference toward the concerns Bryan raises over Walter’s case, including Darnell Houston’s claim that Bill Hooks lied. When pressed further he appears to know more than he initially lets on but maintains that Walter is guilty.

CHAPTER 6

Surely Doomed

Virginia

Charlie’s grandmother who calls Bryan pleading for him to help her grandson, Charlie.

Charlie

A smart fourteen-year-old boy who has no prior criminal history. After killing his mother’s boyfriend he awaits sentencing as an adult at a county jail, facing the maximum punishment. When Bryan visits

him he discovers the boy has been repeatedly abused during his time in the facility.

George

Charlie’s mother’s boyfriend and a local police officer who has a history of drinking and violence. Charlie shoots George after he comes home drunk and hits Charlie’s mom so that she’s unconscious and bleeding. The prosecutor and judge are sympathetic to George and agree that he should be tried as an adult.

Mr. and Mrs. Jennings

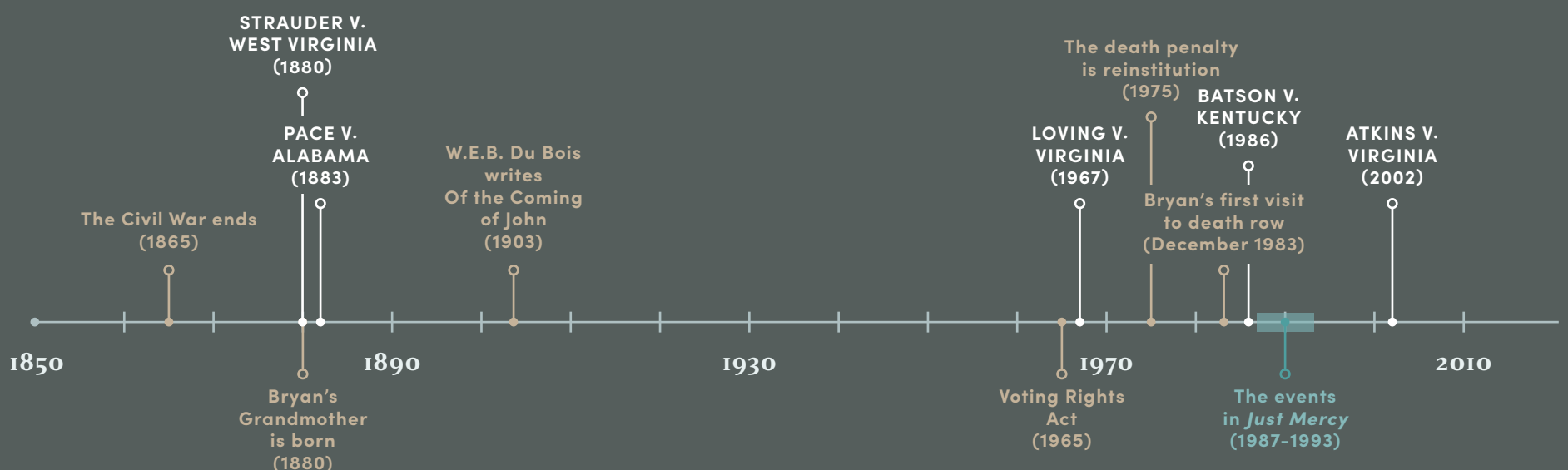
An older white couple that Bryan meets while speaking at a church. Upon hearing about Charlie’s story, they ask if they can help. Bryan is initially hesitant, but he is impressed with the depth of their compassion and generosity.

They never accepted my warnings. Mrs. Jennings was rarely disagreeable or argumentative, but I had learned that she would grunt when someone said something she didn’t completely accept. She told me, “We’ve all been through a lot, Bryan, all of us. I know that some have been through more than others. But if we don’t expect more from each other, hope better for one another, and recover from the hurt we experience, we are surely doomed.” (p. 126)

OF THE COMING OF JOHN - 1903

Written in 1903 and included in W.E.B. DuBois seminal work, *The Souls of Black Folk*. Bryan had identified with the character of John especially during his college years; being one of the first of his family to graduate college he felt the weight of being “the hope of an entire community” (p.101). After meeting Walter’s family and hearing their anguish over his arrest, he considers the story through the eyes of John’s community.

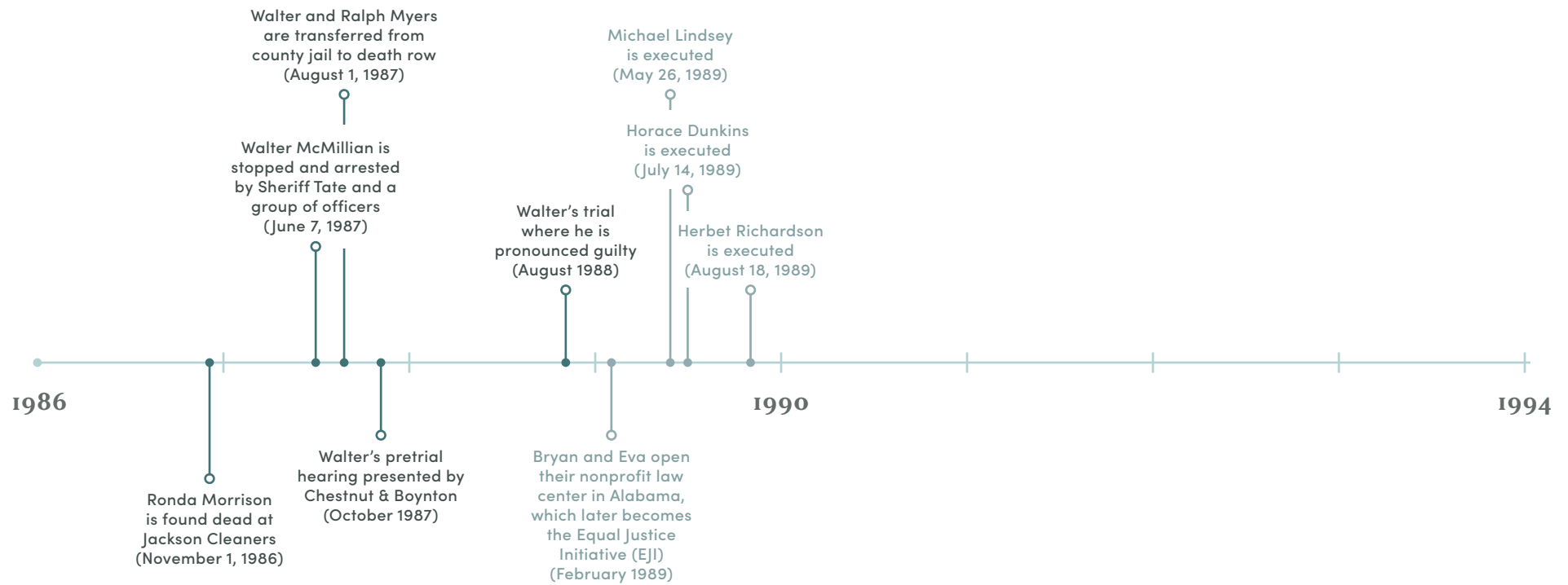
I had never before considered how devastated John’s community must have felt after his lynching. Things would become so much harder for the people who had given everything to help make John a teacher. For the surviving black community, there would be obstacles to opportunity and progress and much heartache. John’s education had led not to liberation and progress but to violence and tragedy. There would be more distrust, more animosity, and more injustice. (p.101)



Timeline: The events in *Just Mercy*

(1987 - 1993)

Chapter 5-6



CHAPTER 7 - CHAPTER 8

He ultimately admitted that he had never known anything about the Morrison murder, had no clue what had happened to her or anything else at all about the crime... If even half of what he said was true, there were a lot of people involved in this case who knew, from the mouth of his sole accuser, that Walter McMillian had had nothing to do with the murder of Rhonda Morrison. (p.136)

BRYAN STEVENSON (REFERRING TO RALPH MYERS)

The relative anonymity of these kids seemed to aggravate their plight and their despair. I agreed to represent Trina, Ian, and Antonio, and our office would eventually make challenging death-in-prison sentences imposed on children a major focus of our work. But it became immediately clear that their extreme, unjust sentences were just one of the problems that had to be overcome. (p.160)

BRYAN STEVENSON (REFERRING TO TRINA GARNETT, IAN MANUEL, AND ANTONIO NUÑEZ)

CHAPTER 7

Justice Denied

Judge John Patterson

The chief judge of the Alabama Court of Criminal appeals. Judge Patterson is also the former governor with a history of fiercely opposing civil rights and using his own power to do so. He is present when Bryan's delivers his appeal argument for Walter's case, to which his only response is, "Where are you from?" (p.128).

Michael O'Connor

A brilliant recent Yale Law School graduate whom Bryan hires for the organization, and assists in managing Walter's case. From a working class Philadelphia family, Michael's own battles with drug addiction in his early life are his motivation for helping others.

His academic credentials got him into Yale Law School, but his heart was still connected to all the brokenness his years on the street had shown him. When I interviewed him for the job, he was apologetic about the darker episodes in his past, but I thought he was perfect for the kind of staff we were trying to build. (p.130)

Clay Kast

The mechanic who converted Walter's truck to a low-rider. He confirms that the modification was done over six months after the murder, proving that Walter's truck could not have been the truck described by Myers and Hooks.

Tutwiler Prison for Women

Alabama's only women's prison, and one of the oldest prisons in the state. Bryan and Michael go to Tutwiler to talk to Karen Kelly who is serving a ten-year

sentence for the Pittman murder. Bryan makes note of the visible differences in security restrictions at Tutwiler in comparison to the men's prisons.

Vic Pittman

Vickie Pittman's father; he had been implicated as a suspect for Vickie's murder but was never formally charged.

Mozelle and Onzelle

Vickie's two aunts (they are twin sisters) who have been collecting information on her murder hoping to find answers. When Bryan and Michael meet the sisters at their house, they voice their frustrations about being overlooked by both the prosecutor and the victims' rights group.

"They treated us like we were low-class white trash. They could not have cared less about us." Mozelle looked furious as she spoke. "I thought they treated victims better. I thought we had some say." (p.140)

CHAPTER 8

All God's Children

Bryan tells the stories of three people who were children when they were sentenced to life in imprisonment in adult prisons:

Trina Garnett

The youngest of twelve children living in an area of Chester, Pennsylvania that has extraordinarily high poverty, crime, and unemployment rates with the worst-ranked public school system. Trina grows up exposed to extreme abuse and instability of the worst kind that exacerbate her emotional and mental health. At fourteen is tried and sentenced as an adult for second-

degree murder after she accidentally sets fire to a house, causing two deaths. She endures the dangers of prison for thirty eight years, including giving birth handcuffed to a bed after being raped by a correctional officer.

She wanted to know she was not alone in the world. We tracked down her sisters and arranged a visit where Trina could see her son, and it seemed to strengthen her in ways I wouldn't have thought possible. (p.161)

Ian Manuel

At thirteen years old Ian is sent to one of the toughest prisons in Florida for being part of an attempted robbery and shooting Debbie Baigre in the process. While he had plead guilty he was still sentenced as an adult. Being thirteen and small for his age, the prison placed him in solitary confinement to keep him from being abused by the adult prisoners. He spent eighteen years in solitary. The first phone call he makes in prison is to Debbie Baigre on Christmas Eve 1992, to apologize and express his remorse.

"It's like the system has buried me alive and I'm dead to the outside world... But today, just the simple handshakes we shared was a welcome addition to my sensory deprived life." (p.162)

Antonio Nuñez

Growing up in South Central Los Angeles, Antonio is surrounded by gang violence and domestic violence. After experiencing the traumatic death of his brother he is sent to live with relatives where he thrives. After returning home he still struggles with being in closer proximity to his brother's death. A smart kid, he consistently displays progress in environments of stability and structure. He has an ongoing record due to unfair targeting/questioning by police, which

is common practice in his neighborhood. At the age of fourteen he is sentenced to life in prison as an adult for going along with a fake kidnapping and shooting at undercover cops; no one was injured.

He had a strong desire to learn and was so determined to understand that he would read a passage over and over, looking up unfamiliar words in the dictionary we sent him, until he got it. (p.161)

Debbie Baigre

The woman who is shot by Ian Manuel during the attempted robbery. She recovers from her wounds and is doing well when she receives Ian's call from prison. She begins corresponding with Ian and becomes his biggest advocate.

"No one knows more than I do how destructive and reckless Ian's crime was. But what we're currently doing to him is mean and irresponsible." (p.153)

George Stinney

At fourteen, George is wrongfully executed by the State of South Carolina in 1944, for the murders of two white girls who had lived nearby. During a community-wide search for the girls, he mentions having seen them earlier that day when they approached him and his sister. The next day he is arrested based on the sheriff's testimony of George's "alleged confession." He is later convicted by an all-white jury for rape and murder, and executed a month later.

Eighty-one days after being approached by two young girls about where flowers might be found, George Stinney was pronounced dead... It was an example of how policies and norms once directed exclusively at controlling and punishing the black population have filtered their way into our general criminal justice system. (p.159)

BOOTH V. MARYLAND - 1987

The Court's decision to prohibit victim impact statements—"evidence about the status, character, reputation or family of a homicide victim" (p.141). They were considered to be too inflammatory and emotionally charged in front of a jury, and could introduce arbitrariness into the sentencing process. There was also the risk that those without the resources to advocate for themselves or deceased loved one would be looked at unfavorably.

MCCLESKEY V. KEMP - 1987

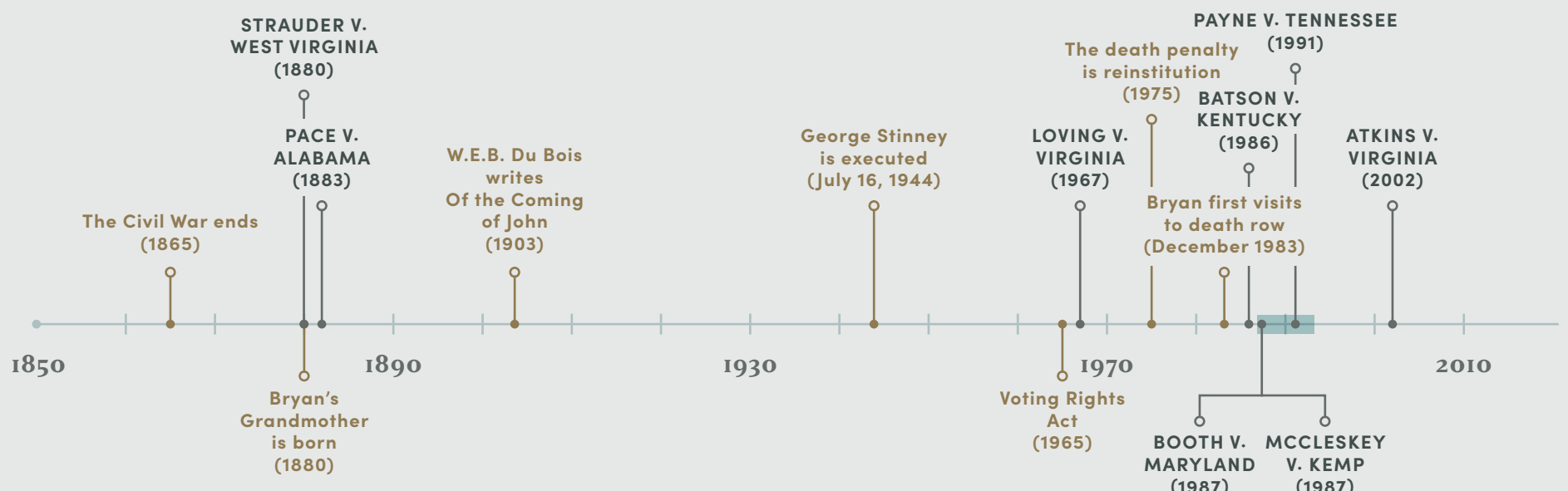
The case of a black man convicted of armed robbery and murder of a white police officer, which presented evidence that capital sentencing is administered based on the race of the victim. The study, initially conducted in Georgie, revealed that "black defendant and white victim pairings increased the likelihood of a death sentence." (p.142)

PAYNE V. TENNESSEE - 1991

The Court's reversal of *Booth v. Maryland*, upholding the rights of states to present evidence about the character of the victim in a capital sentencing trial. This reversal brought about less anonymity and more press coverage to trials, playing up the conflict between offender and victim.

GEORGE STINNEY - JUNE 16, 1944

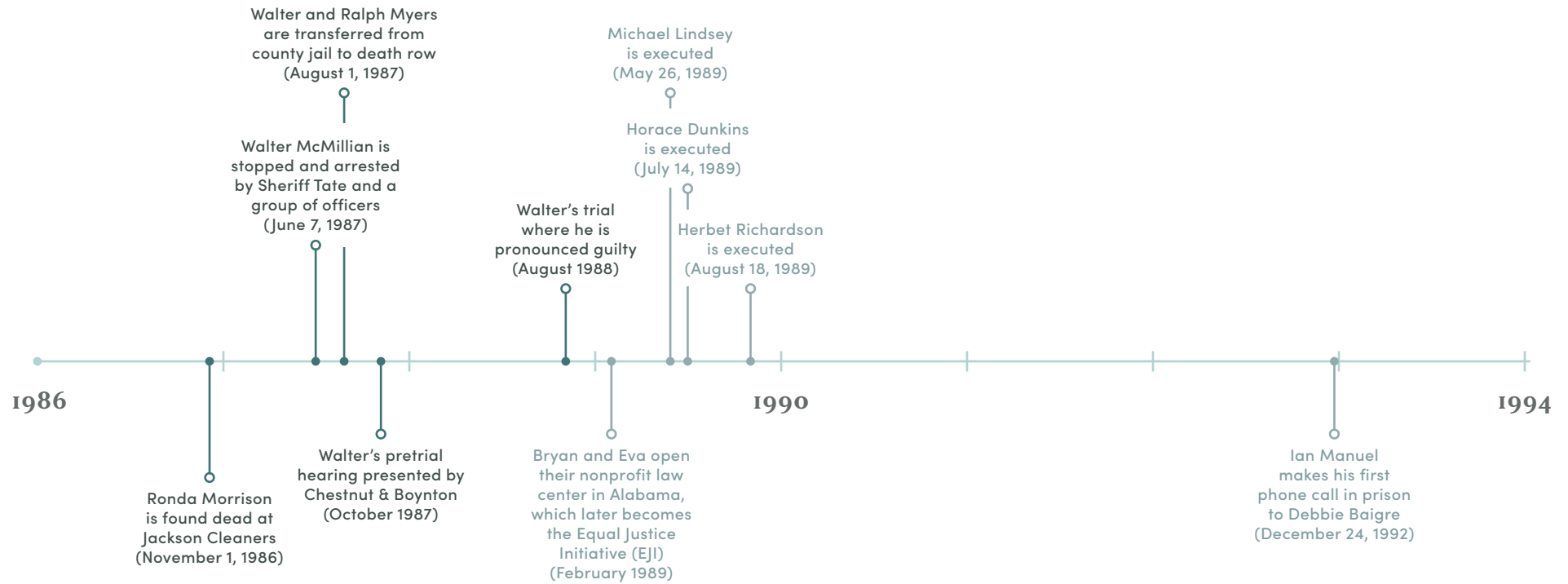
George is wrongfully executed by the State of South Carolina for the murder and rape of two white girls who had lived nearby. His family is threatened with lynching and leaves town, leaving George alone with no family support. When he is condemned to die by an all-white jury, the NAACP and black clergy ask for his sentenced to be converted to life imprisonment. Governor Olin Johnston refuses to intervene. He is sent to the electric chair at fourteen on June 16, 1944, for a crime he did not commit.



Timeline: The events in *Just Mercy*

(1987 - 1993)

Chapter 7-8



Just Mercy | Characters & Events

CHAPTER 9 - CHAPTER 10

I wanted the judge to understand that we weren't simply defending Mr. McMillian from a different angle than his original lawyers. I wanted him to know that we had dramatic new evidence of innocence that exonerated Walter and that justice demanded his immediate release. (p.168)

BRYAN STEVENSON

The inability of many disabled, low-income people to receive treatment or necessary medication dramatically increased their likelihood for a police encounter that would result in jail or prison time... And prison is a terrible place for someone with mental illness or a neurological disorder that prison guards are not trained to understand. (p.188)

BRYAN STEVENSON

"I got so angry coming up that there were plenty of times when I really wanted to hurt somebody, just because I was angry... I think I realized how I'm still kind of angry." (p.201)

THE CORRECTIONAL OFFICER WITH THE PICKUP TRUCK

"Oh, I think we can always do better," I told him. "The bad things that happen to us don't define us. It's just important sometimes that people understand where we're coming from." (p.201)

BRYAN STEVENSON

CHAPTER 9

I'm Here

Brenda Lewis

A paralegal and former police officer who joins Bryan's staff. She is an African American woman, whose previous work in the Montgomery police department had given her an inside view of the abuses of power. Bryan brings her on to assist with Walter's case.

Don Valeska

The Assistant Attorney General and longtime prosecutor. He has a reputation for being aggressive in his prosecuting. He is called in by Tom Chapman to help defend Walter's conviction at the evidentiary hearing.

Judge Thomas B. Norton Jr.

The new judge assigned to Walter's case. He is present for several pretrial hearings and grows frustrated with Bryan's multiple requests for police and prosecution files. He adjourns the last pretrial appearance with, "Three days, Mr. Stevenson. If you can't make your case in three days after all this drama you've stirred up, you don't really have anything." (p.165)

Woodrow Ikner

The Monroeville police officer who was the first on the scene at the cleaners. He testifies at the evidentiary hearing that Ronda Morrison's body was not found where Myer's had previously stated it was. He also reveals that he had been asked by Ted Pearson to say that Morrison's body had been dragged. When he refused to lie he was fired from the police department.

Mrs. Williams

An older black woman who shows up to support Walter and his family. After being selected to enter into the courtroom she encounters one of the police dogs and quickly leaves. She later apologizes to Bryan for not being able to go in the courtroom and recounts her previous experience in 1965. Mrs. Williams returns the next day, determined to enter past the dog. She proudly makes her presence known with a triumphant, "I'm here!" (p.181).

"When I saw that dog, I thought about 1965, when we gathered at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma and tried to march for our voting rights. They beat us and put those dogs on us." (p.179)

Dr. Omar Mohabbat, Dr. Norman Poythress, Dr. Kamal Nagi, and Dr. Bernard Bryant

State mental health workers and Taylor Hardin Secure Medical Facility staff. All four mental health workers give testimony of what Myers shared with them when he was sent to Taylor Hardin. They explain that had been threatened by police to say what they wanted, and reveal that Myers knew nothing about the crime. These conversations between Myers and the doctors had been taken place before Walter's initial trial.

Avery Jenkins

Bryan first interacts with Avery over the telephone which proves to be difficult for them to communicate due to Avery's incompetency. When he meets him at the jail Avery asks Bryan about whether he brought him a chocolate milkshake. Avery has a horrific upbringing in foster care and displays mental illness and intellectual disabilities at an early age. His mental condition gets worse and ultimately lead him to stab a man to death. His lawyers never investigated his background and never presented any of his mental health issues at trial.

CHAPTER 10

Mitigation

George Daniel

A man on Alabama's death row, who has suffered brain damage from a bad car accident. Unaware that he had brain damage, George had gotten into an altercation with police after accidentally boarding a Greyhound bus in the middle of the night. The police officer started using force, George resisted and the two began wrestling. The officer pulled his weapon during the struggle and the gun went off, killing the officer. George is charged with capital murder. His lawyers and a fraud doctor take advantage of him leaving him with no adequate assistance in to defending himself.

Correctional officer with the Confederate pickup truck

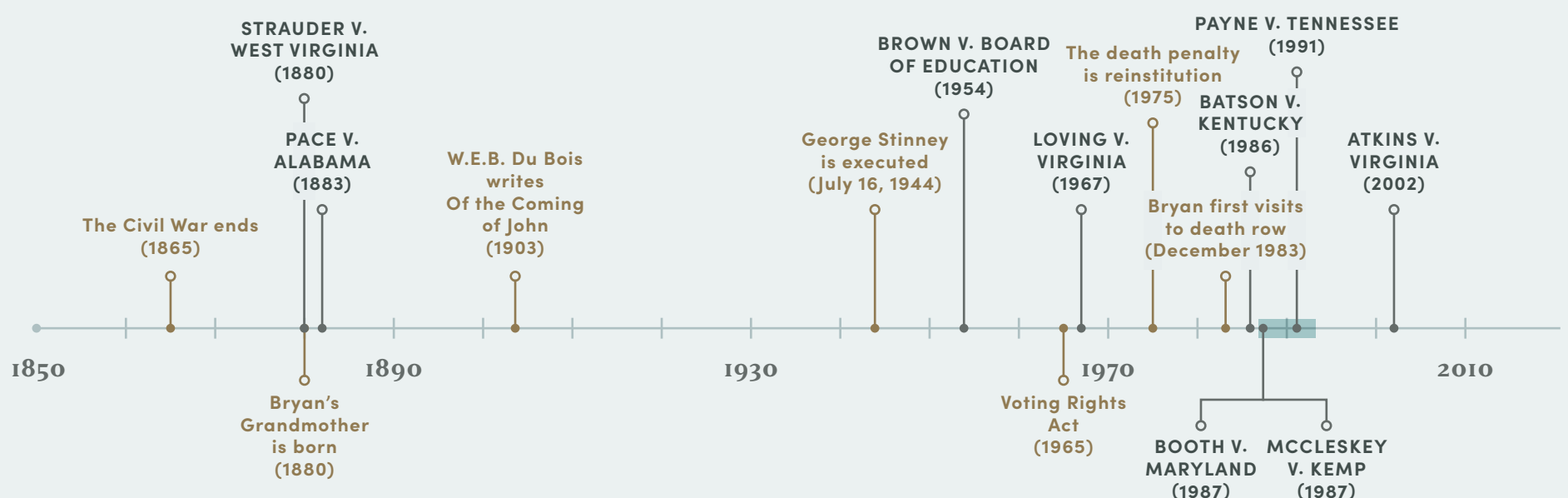
Bryan encounters a pickup truck at the prison where Avery Jenkins is being held. The truck is covered with disturbing Confederate and racist bumper stickers. Once inside the jail, the officer who owns the truck subjects Bryan to an unnecessary strip search and intentionally gives him a difficult time signing in. Bryan is nervous when he learns the officer is assigned to transport Avery to his hearing. When he encounters the officer again after the hearing, he reveals Bryan that he also had a difficult upbringing in foster care.

EDMUND PETTUS BRIDGE, SELMA - 1965

The site of the Bloody Sunday where civil rights activists were beaten while trying to march for voting rights. Mrs. Williams' explains to Bryan that the dog at the courthouse had reminded her of the violence she had encountered while marching at the bridge in 1965.

BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION - 1954

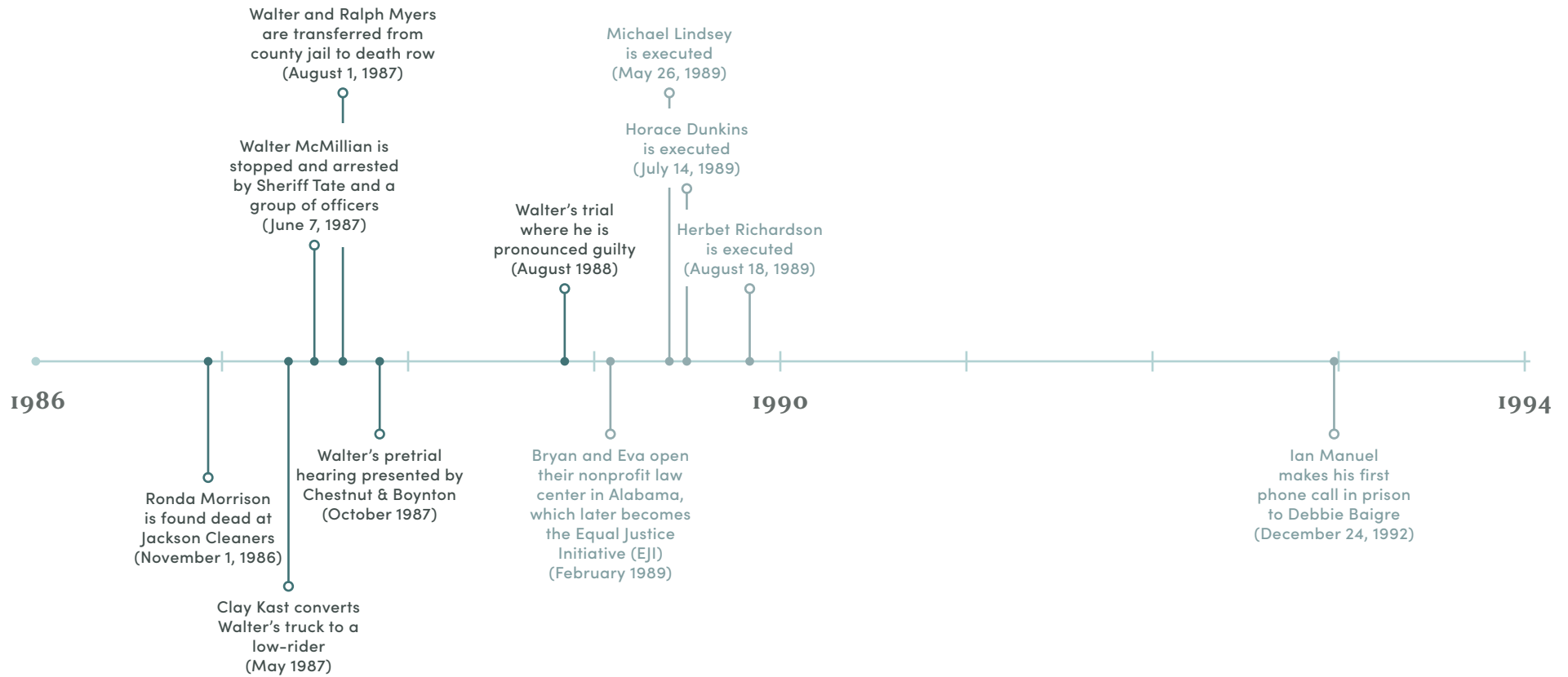
The case that declared racial segregation in public schools as unconstitutional. Bryan says that it was after this landmark ruling many Southern States decided to ramp up their visible allegiance to the Confederacy.



Timeline: The events in *Just Mercy*

(1987 - 1993)

Chapter 9-10



Just Mercy | Characters & Events

CHAPTER 11 - CHAPTER 12

“I’ve always told people ‘no lie can live forever,’ and this has always been one big lie.” (p.219)

MINNIE MCMILLIAN

CHAPTER 11

I’ll Fly Away

Sharon

The receptionist for Bryan and Eva’s organization, she is often one to field any bomb threat calls that come through the office. Bryan describes her as a young mother of two and having grown up in a poor, rural white family. She speaks to people “plainly and directly” (p.204), including anyone making bomb threats.

Bernard Harcourt

One of Bryan’s new attorneys on staff who is assigned to replace Michael O’Connor. Originally raised in New York City by French parents, he graduates from Princeton before pursuing a law degree. He comes to Montgomery intrigued by the issues involved in death penalty cases, and life in Alabama.

Walt Harrington and Pete Earley

Walt, a journalist for the *Washington Post*, had previously written a piece about Bryan’s work on Walter’s case. He passes along the information to Pete, another journalist. Pete also looks into the case for himself and finds the evidence against Walter to be completely insufficient.

Ed Bradley and David Gelber

Ed Bradley, a veteran reporter, and his producer come to Monroeville after Bryan decides to move forward with the 60 Minutes spot. They speak to many people related to the case and conduct an extensive interview with Tommy Chapman. Local media and officials and are critical of the “outsider” viewpoint which they believe skews the case to show Walter too favorably.

Tom Taylor and Greg Cole

Two ABI investigators hired by Tommy Chapman to conduct an additional investigation into Walter’s case. When they meet with Bryan, their findings confirm what his team has already discovered. They encourage Bryan and Bernard to shift their focus on finding the actual killer, thinking this might help to prove Walter’s innocence. But doing so would also keep Walter in prison for longer, “to maintain the status quo” until the real killer is found (p.217).

The Suspect

Several witnesses had told us that around the time of the crime, a white man had been

seen leaving the cleaners. We had learned that before her death, Ronda Morrison had been receiving menacing calls and that there was a man who had been avidly and inappropriately pursuing her—stopping by unannounced at the cleaners, maybe even stalking her... We had been contacted by a white man who seemed intensely interested in the case. He would call wanting to talk at length about what we were investigating. He would hint at having information that could help us, but he was coy and slow to share anything concrete. (p. 216)

Ken Nunnally

Another lawyer from the attorney general’s office who Bryan has worked with on other cases takes. Ken takes over Walter’s appeal. Later, Bryan learns that the “attorney general’s motion asked the court to stay the litigation and not issue a ruling because they ‘may have uncovered exculpatory evidence favorable to Mr. McMillian that could entitle him to a new trial’” (p.218). Bryan is furious that the State would delay a ruling because the evidence suggests Walter’s innocence.

Václav Havel

Bryan shares how he was inspired by the Czech leader’s perspective on hope:

People struggling for independence wanted money and recognition from other countries; they wanted more criticism of the Soviet empire from the West and more diplomatic pressure. But Havel had said that these were things they wanted; the only thing they needed was hope... The kind of hope that creates a willingness to position oneself in a hopeless place and be a witness, that allows one to believe in a better future...(p.219)

Pamela Baschab

She is a new judge who replaces Judge Norton after he retires. At the hearing, she communicates upfront that she intends to grant the motion to dismiss all of Walter’s charges.

CHAPTER 12

Mother, Mother

Marsha Colbey

A mother from a poor, rural Alabama town that had been hit by Hurricane Ivan. Her and her husband work hard to rebuild their lives and ensure stability for the six children. While pregnant with her seventh child she gives birth prematurely to a stillborn son. After a neighbor

inappropriately calls police to investigate the missing baby, Marsha is arrested and charged for capital punishment. At trial, the State introduces inflammatory evidence to paint her as a neglectful mother. The case catches the attention of local media, playing up the “dangerous mother” story. She is ultimately sent to Tutwiler Prison for Women on a life sentence without parole.

Debbie Cook

Marsha and Glen Colbey’s nosy neighbor who calls the police to question Marsha of the absence of her baby.

Officer Kenneth Lewellen

The officer who spoke with Debbie Cook and later questions Marsha. When Marsha interacts with the officer she is outraged by the investigating and reacts badly. He notices the marked grave site beside the Colbey’s home and the baby is later exhumed.

Kathleen Enstice

A forensic pathologist with “a history of prematurely and incorrectly declaring deaths to be homicides without adequate supporting evidence” (p.231). When law enforcement exhumes the baby’s body, she declares the baby had been born alive without formally examining it. She ultimately performs an autopsy and inappropriately asserts conclusions about the baby’s possible survival and death by drowning.

Dr. Dennis McNally

An obstetrician/gynecologist who examined Marsha two weeks after the stillbirth and testified that the pregnancy was high risk because of her age and lack of prenatal care; making Enstice’s testimony unreliable.

Dr. Werner Spitz

He testifies for the defense that he would not have ruled Marsha’s case a live birth or a homicide. Spitz had also “authored the medical treatise Enstice had relied on in her forensic pathology training” (p.231).

Bridget Lee

A woman from Pickens County, Alabama, who had also given birth to a stillborn baby and was wrongly charged with capital murder. This takes place around the same time as Marsha’s prosecution.

Diane Tucker and Victoria Banks

Bryan’s team had represented two sisters

charged with capital murder after one of them (Diane) had been coerced into pleading guilty for killing a newborn child. Diane, an intellectually disabled woman had undergone a procedure five years prior to the arrest that would prevent her from having children. She allegedly told a deputy sheriff she was pregnant to avoid jail time for another situation

Efernia McClendon

A young teenager who Marsha meets at Tutwiler who is imprisoned after delivering a stillborn baby.

Diane Jones

Bryan’s team represents Diane after she was wrongly implicated in a drug-trafficking operation and condemned to life imprisonment. Her ultimate release gave hope to many of the lifers at Tutwiler. While her case is being addressed, she persistently voices concerns on behalf of her fellow inmates who are desperate for help.

Charlotte Morrison and Kristen Nelsons

Two accomplished attorneys who are part of Bryan’s staff; they consistently meet with Marsha to discuss her case and other concerns. Because of repeated complaints of sexual violence at Tutwiler raised in other cases, Charlotte and Bryan investigate further. After interviewing over fifty women and finding shocking evidence, they file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Justice and release several public reports on the issue.

EJI Honories

Mariah Wright Edelman

Civil rights lawyer and founder of the Children’s Defense Fund

Justice John Paul Stevens

U.S. Supreme Court Justice and a vocal critic of excessive punishment and mass incarceration

Marsha Colbey

Elaine Jones

Former director of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund

Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield

Co-founders of Ben & Jerry’s

NEW YORK TIMES V. SULLIVAN - 1964

Southern officials sued *The New York Times* over an ad they printed. When the officials claimed defamation, they were awarded half a million dollars from a local jury. The case was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, who ruled that plaintiffs must prove malice—evidence on the part of the publisher that a statement is false. While in the South it created more contempt toward national press, this was a victory for the media to talk more openly about civil rights.

CHEMICAL ENDANGERMENT OF A CHILD - 2006

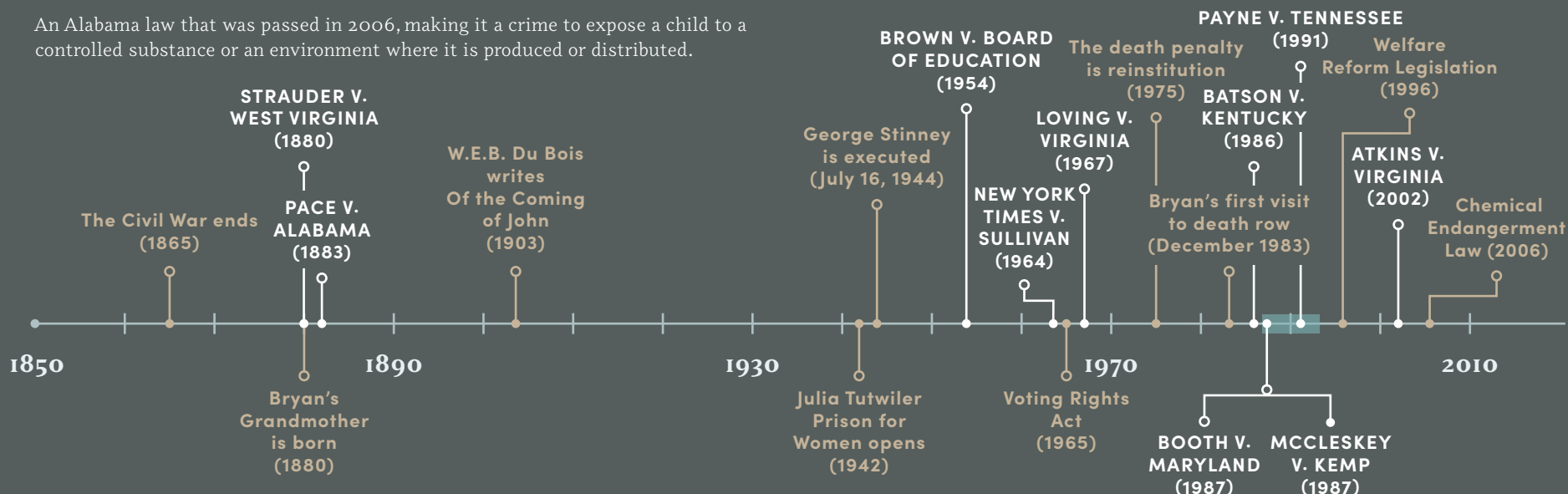
An Alabama law that was passed in 2006, making it a crime to expose a child to a controlled substance or an environment where it is produced or distributed.

WELFARE REFORM LEGISLATION - 1996

Also known as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act, it hugely disadvantaged single mothers (with children) formerly incarcerated for drug crimes.

JULIA TUTWILER PRISON FOR WOMEN - 1942

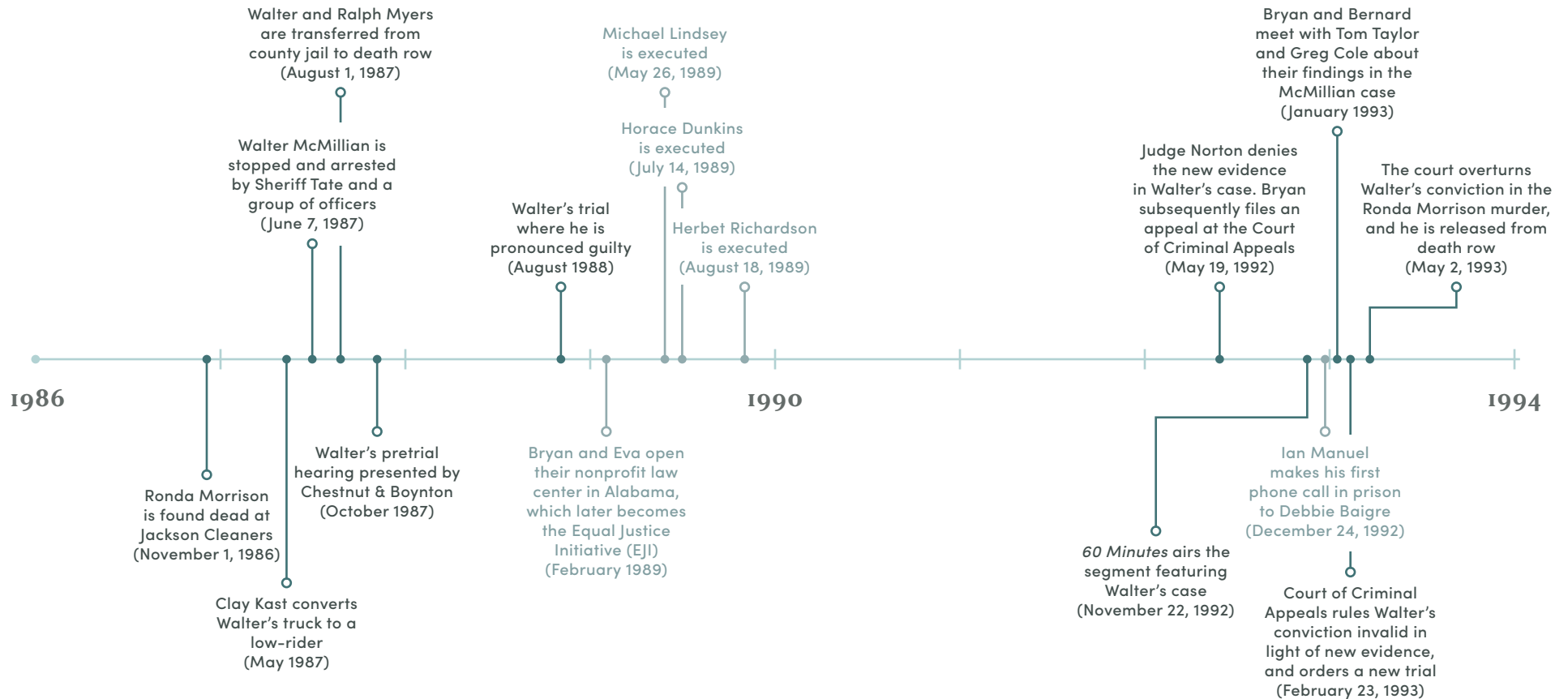
Alabama’s prison for women located in Wetumpka, Alabama, which opened in 1942. It was named in honor of Julia Tutwiler’s push for reforms and education of prisoners. Since then it has since become and overcrowded and an environment of sexual violence.



Timeline: The events in *Just Mercy*

(1987 - 1993)

Chapter 11-12



Just Mercy | Characters & Events

CHAPTER 13 - CHAPTER 14

He admitted fears and doubts he hadn't told me about when he was incarcerated. He had witnessed six men leave for execution while he was on the row... But he told me that he didn't realize how much the experience had terrified him until he left prison. He was confused about why that would bother him now that he was free. (p.244)

BRYAN STEVENSON (REFERRING TO WALTER AFTER HIS RELEASE)

My grandfather's murder left us with so many questions. Now, decades later, I was starting to understand. In preparing litigation on behalf of the children we were representing, it was clear that these shocking and senseless crimes couldn't be evaluated honestly without understanding the lives these children had been forced to endure. (p.267)

BRYAN STEVENSON

CHAPTER 13

Recovery

Clarence Brantley

Brantley had been wrongly convicted and released from Texas death row in 1990. His case was also featured on *60 Minutes*.

Randall Dale Adams

Adam's story was the inspiration for the documentary, *The Thin Blue Line*. He was released from Texas death row shortly after the film's release

Rob McDuff

A longtime friend of Bryan's from Jackson, Mississippi, who assists him with the civil litigation suit for Walter's compensation.

John Thompson

A man who was convicted of a robbery-murder until a crime lab report is found that contradicts the case against him. His conviction and death sentence are overturned and he is released. A jury finds that the district attorney had illegally suppressed the evidence of Thompson's innocence, causing him to spend fourteen years in prison. He files a civil suit and is awarded \$14 million. When the district attorney appeals on immunity laws, the U.S. Supreme Court overturns Thompson's award. Even Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg criticized the Court for the decision.

Harry Connick Sr.

The district attorney who had suppressed the evidence proving John Thompson's innocence. However, because of immunity laws, he is able to retract any judgment received from Thompson's civil suit, as well as the money \$14 million awarded to Thompson.

Governor George Ryan

Bryan refers to Governor Ryan's commuting of death sentences in light of DNA evidence capabilities.

By the late 1990s, the evolution of DNA evidence had helped expose dozens of wrongful convictions. In many states, the number of exonerations exceeded the number of executions. The problem was so significant in Illinois that in 2003, Governor George Ryan, a Republican, citing the unreliability of capital punishment, commuted the death sentences of all 167 people on death row. Concerns about innocence and death penalty were intensifying, and support for the death penalty in opinion polls began to drop. (p.249)

Olof Palme

The prime minister of Sweden who was attacked and killed on February 28, 1986. His murder was never fully solved. Bryan goes to Stockholm to receive the Olof Palme International Human Rights Award that was awarded to EJI.

Bryan's Mother

Bryan mentions that his mother had passed away a few months before his trip to Stockholm. A church musician, she had worked with many children's choirs in her life. He is reminded of her and becomes emotional when the student choir sings to him in thanks for his speech about the work of EJI.

CHAPTER 14

Cruel and Unusual

Joe Sullivan

Joe has mental disabilities and grew up experiencing repeated physical abuse by his father, amidst other family struggles. At thirteen, Joe goes along with a break-in

and is blamed when the victim is later sexually assaulted. A palm-print is discovered that places Joe at the scene of the burglary, but additional evidence that would confirm his innocence of the rape is destroyed by the state. After his appointed appellate counsel files and *Anders* brief, Joe is sent to an adult prison and endures extreme abuse that triggers his mental and physical decline. Bryan is informed of his situation by another prisoner who writes to him on Joe's behalf.

Michael Gulley and Nathan McCants

Two older teenage boys who convince thirteen-year-old Joe Sullivan to accompany them as they break in and steal from Lena Bruner's house. They are apprehended together. When Bruner is later assaulted that same day, both boys blame Joe for the assault. McCants is sentenced as an adult to "four-and-one-half years and served just six months" (p.257), while Gulley is sentenced to a short stint in a juvenile detention facility, despite his extensive criminal history and prior sexual offense. Bryan is informed of Joe's situation when another inmate writes to him on his behalf.

Lena Bruner

The woman whose house was broken into by Gulley, McCants, and Sullivan. Joe is made to repeat in court what the Bruner remembered hearing her assailant say, but she is not absolutely sure it is his voice.

Ashley Jones

A fourteen-year-old girl, convicted of killing two family members and serving her sentence at Tutwiler Prison. After reading a newspaper article about legal decisions, she writes to Bryan expressing interest in the law and EJI's

work but never asking for assistance. When EJI challenges death-in-prison sentences imposed on children Bryan reaches out to her.

Evan Miller

At fourteen he is condemned to die in an Alabama prison. He grew up in and out of foster care and surrounded by drugs and abuse. After an interaction with a drug-addicted neighbor turns deadly, Evan and his friend are charged with capital murder. He is given no favor from the judge and once in prison is confused by the hostility and violence that surrounds him.

When he talked about his own act of violence, he seemed deeply confused about how it was possible he could have done something so destructive. Most of the juvenile lifer cases we handled involved clients who shared Evan's confusion about their adolescent behavior. Many had matured into adults who were much more thoughtful and reflective. (p.266)

Bryan's Grandfather

In light of advocating for teens who had committed violent crimes, Bryan reflects on the senseless murder of his grandfather. Bryan is sixteen when his eighty-six-year-old grandfather is attacked and stabbed to death after a group of teens break into his apartment to steal his television.

Terrance Graham

A sixteen-year-old convicted of a non-homicide but sentenced to life with no parole. Bryan is able to have both Terrance and Joe's cases reviewed by the U.S. Supreme Court in light of the ban on the death penalty for juveniles. Many national organizations and public figures file amicus briefs in support of this new development, including former U.S. senator Alan Simpson.

ANDERS BRIEF (ANDERS V. CALIFORNIA) - 1967

If a defense attorney believes that an appeal is frivolous in a criminal case, the attorney may file an *Anders* brief. The brief notifies the court that the defense attorney does not believe there are grounds to appeal the criminal conviction and asks to withdraw as the defendant's lawyer. The *Anders* brief is named for the U. S. Supreme Court case, *Anders v. California* (1967).

SANTA ROSA CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - 1996

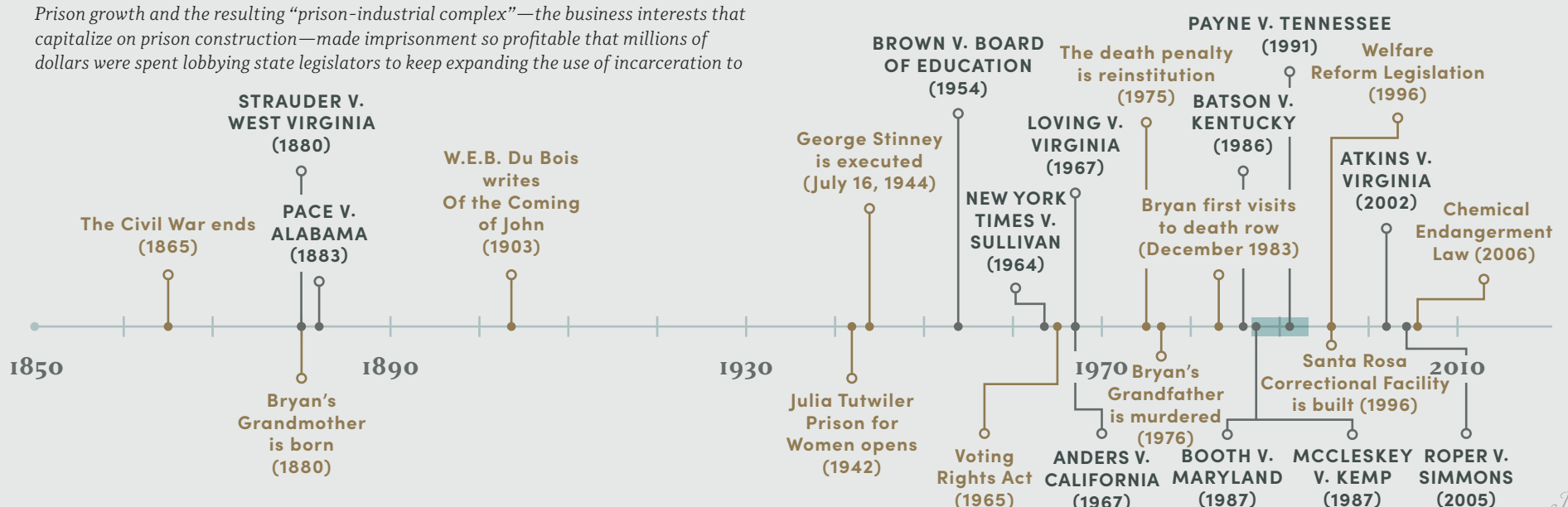
Built to house 1,600 prisoners, Bryan describes the prison as a symbol of the booming industry of incarceration between the 1990 and 2005.

Prison growth and the resulting "prison-industrial complex"—the business interests that capitalize on prison construction—made imprisonment so profitable that millions of dollars were spent lobbying state legislators to keep expanding the use of incarceration to

respond to just about any problem...Never before had so much lobbying money been spent to expand America's prison population, block sentencing reforms, create new crime categories, and sustain the fear and anger that fuel mass incarceration than during the last twenty-five years in the United States. (p.260)

SUPREME COURT ENDS DEATH PENALTY FOR JUVENILES (ROPER V. SIMMONS) - 2005

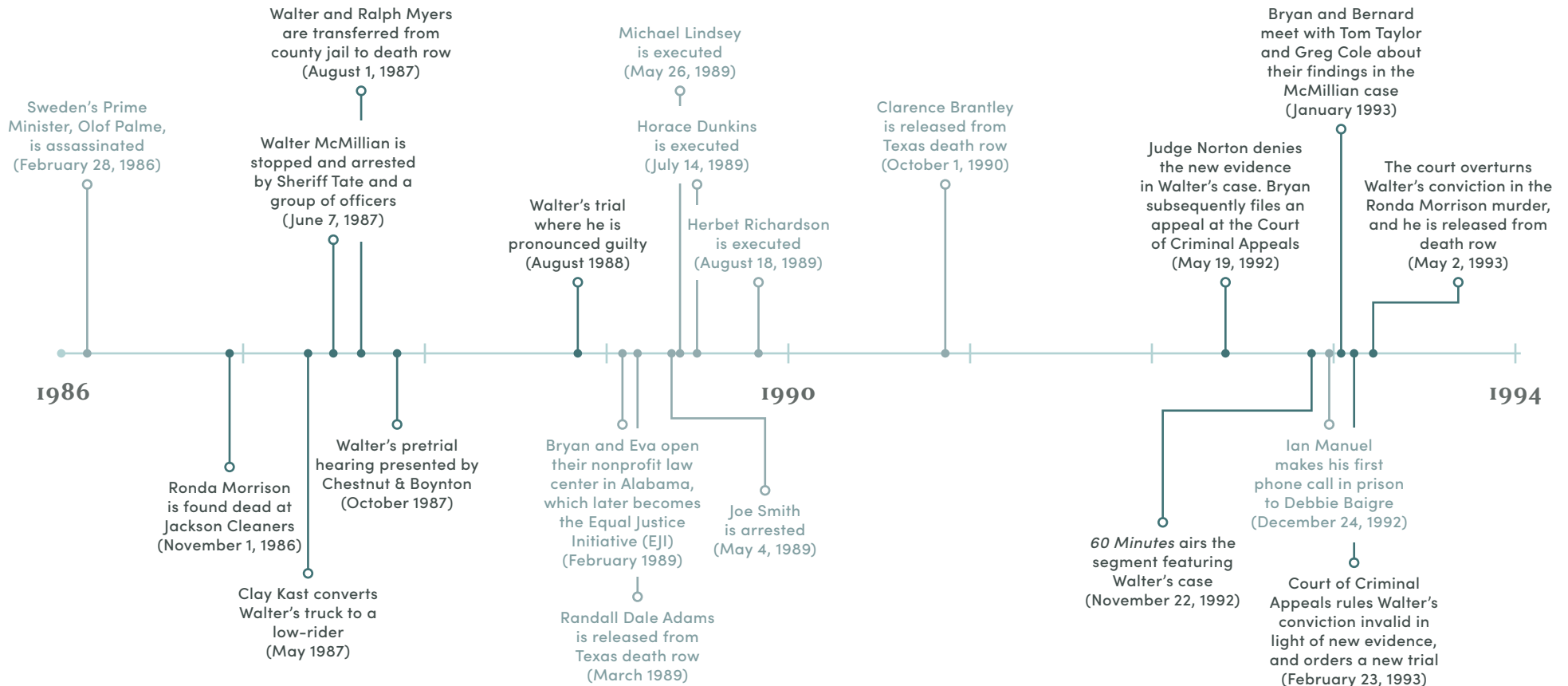
The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that imposing the death penalty for anyone under the age of 18 as unconstitutional. Anyone who had committed a crime when they were a juvenile could no longer be executed for that crime.



Timeline: The events in *Just Mercy*

(1987 - 1993)

Chapter 13-14



Just Mercy | Characters & Events

CHAPTER 15 - CHAPTER 16

My years of struggling against inequality, abusive power, poverty, oppression, and injustice had finally revealed something to me about myself. Being close to suffering, death, executions, and cruel punishments didn't just illuminate the brokenness of others; in a moment of anguish and heartbreak, it also exposed my own brokenness. (p.289)

BRYAN STEVENSON

"Some of the ones grieving the most were the ones whose children or parents were on trial, so I just started letting anybody lean on me who needed it." (p.308)

THE STONECATCHER

CHAPTER 15

Broken

James "Bo" Cochran

A man released from Alabama death row after almost twenty years. His conviction was a result of racial bias during jury selection. He is found not guilty of murder and released after he is awarded a new trial. A film crew from Ireland comes to Alabama to create a documentary featuring Walter's case, and the cases of James "Bo" Cochran and Robert Tarver.

Robert Tarver

An innocent man who was put on death row after the jury was illegally selected. Even after the prosecutor admits this, the claim is not reviewed "because the defense lawyer failed to make an adequate objection" (p.275); Tarver is executed. He is featured in the documentary created by the film crew from Ireland.

Maria Morrison

A social worker on EJI's staff who works with Walter and his family to find a place for him to stay as his dementia progresses. With facilities are hesitant to take him in because of his wrongful conviction, it is a frustrating process.

Randy Susskind

Bryan describes Randy as "one of EJI's best lawyers" (p.280). Bryan is notified that another Alabama death row prisoner's execution had been scheduled, and calls Randy to assist in obtaining a stay.

Jimmy Callahan, Danny Bradley, Max Payne, Jack Trawick, and Willie McNair

In 2009, EJI is actively working to prevent the executions of these five men. Their main argument resides on the questions surrounding "the painlessness and efficacy of lethal injection" (p.281).

David Nelson

A prior drug user earlier in life, David's veins very compromised and difficult to access. It is intended that his execution

will proceed with correctional staff performing the medical procedure of making a two-inch incision in order to find a vein. This brings up the questions of "whether condemned prisoners could file civil rights actions to challenge arguably unconstitutional methods of execution" (p.282). The U.S. Supreme Court ultimately intervenes in his situation.

Jimmy Dill

Jimmy had done nine months in jail for shooting someone during a drug deal. The victim did not die and was recovering well after release from the hospital. Mr. Dill's charges are changed from assault to capital murder after the victim's wife leaves him, he becomes ill and dies. His disabilities should have excluded him from the death penalty, but they were not previously presented in his defense. Mr. Dill also has a speech impediment that makes it difficult for him to speak at times. Bryan has difficulty getting a court to grant a hearing because of how close they are to his execution date. Mr. Dill's execution triggers in Bryan both despair and a realization that we are all broken.

The boy who struggles to speak

When Mr. Dill calls Bryan one last time to thank him for trying to save his life, Bryan is brought to tears and is reminded of a situation from his childhood. As a boy, Bryan had laughed at a boy who had a severe speech impediment. After his mother scolds him and she tells him he must give the boy a hug and "tell him that you love him" (p.286). Bryan obeys out of obligation, but is shocked when the boy sincerely hugs him back and tells Bryan that he loves him too without any hindrance.

Paul Farmer

During Bryan's moment of despair, he is encouraged by a quote that Farmer, a renowned physician, had shared with him from the writer, Thomas Merton:

Our brokenness is also the source of our common humanity, the basis of our shared search for comfort, meaning, and healing. Our shared vulnerability and imperfection nurtures and sustains our capacity for

compassion. (p.289)

The Minister

Bryan is encouraged by something a minister would say during his college years working and a church musician:

The minister would stand, and spread his arms wide, and say, "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou has broken may rejoice." I never full appreciated what he was saying until the night Jimmy Dill was executed. (p.291)

Rosa Parks (Ms. Parks), Johnnie Carr (Ms. Carr), and Virginia Durr (Ms. Durr)

Influential women and major contributors to the civil rights movement. Bryan has the privilege of meeting them and over the years Bryan keeps in touch with these women. He is often invited by Ms. Carr to come "listen" to them.

The Preacher

On his drive home Bryan turns on the radio to hear a preacher quoting 2 Corinthians 12:8-10.

CHAPTER 16

The Stonecatchers' Song of Sorrow

Kuntrell Jackson

The Supreme Court is able to review Kuntrell's case along with Evan Miller's as part of Bryan's argument for banning mandatory life-without-parole sentences imposed on children.

Phillip Shaw, Demarious Banyard, Dante Evans

Individuals whose were all teenage boys when they were improperly convicted and sentenced as adults. Bryan references these individuals as examples of how common wrongful convictions and illegal practices are in cases involve young children.

Anthony Ray Hinton

Another man on Alabama's death row who—like Walter—is clearly innocent.

He is convicted of two robbery-murders when forensic employees wrongly conclude that a gun recovered from Hinton's mother's home as the murder weapon. At the time of the crimes, he was working the night shift at a supermarket warehouse. The media did not help due to "innocence fatigue" and the State persisted in execution. He served almost thirty years on death row as an innocent man.

The Four Institutions:

I believe there are four institutions in American history that have shaped our approach to race and justice but remain poorly understood. (p.299)

Slavery

Reign of terror

"Jim Crow"

Mass incarceration

Joshua Carter and Robert Caston

Due to how young some of the "old timers" at Angola prison were when they were first sentenced, Bryan gives these cases priority. Mr. Carter and Mr. Caston are two "old timers" who had been at Angola since they were juveniles, serving life sentences for almost fifty years. Theirs are the first two Louisiana cases to be addressed by EJI.

Carol Kolinchak

The lawyer for the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana. She agrees to be the local counsel for all of EJI's Louisiana cases. She is assisting Bryan when Mr. Caston and Mr. Carter are pronounced with new sentences and release from Angola.

The Stonecatcher at the courthouse

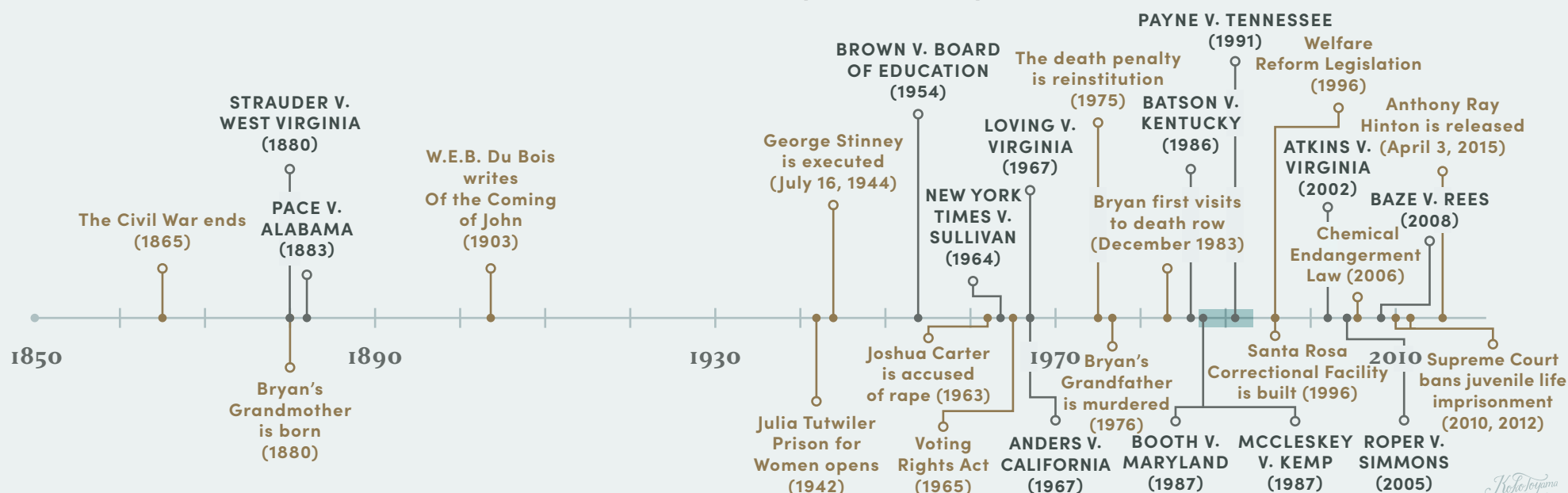
The older woman at the courthouse who Bryan meets after the triumphant resentencing of Mr. Carter and Mr. Caston. She tells him how she felt worse when the boys who were convicted of killing her grandson were sent away forever. Her words about being "here to catch some of the stones people cast at each other" (p.308) are both an encouragement and confirmation to Bryan.

BAZE V. REES - 2008

The case questioned whether the drug combinations used in Kentucky's lethal injections posed to high a risk of cruel and unusual punishment. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld that the drug combinations and execution protocols weren't inherently unconstitutional.

JUVENILE LIFE IMPRISONMENT WITHOUT PAROLE, UNCONSTITUTIONAL - MAY 17, 2010

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that juvenile life imprisonment without parole as unconstitutional for non-homicide crimes. In June 2012, the Supreme Court also ruled that juveniles convicted of murder could no longer be subject to life imprisonment without parole.



“Walter had taught me that mercy is just when it is rooted in hopefulness and freely given. Mercy is most empowering, liberating, and transformative when it is directed at the undeserving. The people who haven’t earned it, who haven’t even sought it, are the most meaningful recipients of our compassion. Walter genuinely forgave the people who unfairly accused him, the people who convicted him, and the people who had judged him unworthy of mercy. And in the end, it was just mercy toward others that allowed him to recover a life worth celebrating, a life that rediscovered the love and freedom that all humans desire, a life that overcame death and condemnation until it was time to die on God’s schedule.” (p.314)

BRYAN STEVENSON