

THOMAS ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE SERIES

The Thomas Academic Excellence Series is a program established by alumna and loyal supporter of Otterbein, Mary B. Thomas '28 (1907-1999). Her endowment was presented in honor of her parents, Fred N. and Emma B. Thomas.

The Thomas Academic Excellence Series is intended to create intellectual excitement and strengthen bonds on campus by providing a shared academic experience for many. The series starts with summer orientation and First Flight and continues with First Year Seminar courses and programs throughout the year. All these events create a conversation about the year's academic theme.

Mary B. Thomas graduated cum laude from Otterbein University in 1928 and had a lasting love of literature. An English major, Thomas won the Bames Short Story Award and several other literary prizes. She entered Otterbein after spending one year at Denison University. She studied journalism at the University of Wisconsin and received her master's degree in English literature from The Ohio State University in 1933.

While an undergraduate at Otterbein Thomas belonged to the Philalethean Literary Society, Sigma Alpha Tau sorority and Quiz and Quill.

She was a member of the Church of the Master, Phi Delta Gamma and the New Century Club. She served as an officer at the local, state and regional levels of the American Association of University Women, was a life member of the National Federation of Music Clubs and was a member of the Westerville Memorial Library Board. Her service to the library board included holding the offices of treasurer, vice-president and president.

Formerly employed in the Otterbein treasurer's office of the University, Thomas was an active member of the Otterbein board of trustees from 1960-1979. During that time, she served as secretary of the board and as a member of the Executive Committee. In 1979, the board passed a resolution citing her leadership and the generosity, diversity and magnitude of her service. The resolution also named her an honorary trustee.

In 1977, Thomas was named the Westerville Otterbein Women's Club Woman of the Year. The award was presented to her in recognition of her "unselfish dedication and loyalty to Otterbein."

Thomas was a donor to the University from the formation of the Development Board in 1948 until her death in November 1999. A member of the President's Club, she participated in many capital campaigns over the years. She donated her house to Otterbein when she moved to Friendship Village in 1979.

Her hobbies included photography, stamp collecting and travel; she visited five continents. She also owned an impressive collection of postcards depicting scenes of Westerville and Otterbein.

Our thanks to Beth and Gary Daugherty for their gift to the Thomas Endowment, and to Alan Goff '75 and Coral Harris for their support of programming for *Just Mercy*.

The Thomas Academic Excellence Series *presents*

Bryan
Stevenson

author of the
2017 Common Book,
Just Mercy



Wednesday, October 25 • 3 p.m.
Fritsche Theatre at Cowan Hall

About Bryan Stevenson • Author of *Just Mercy*

Bryan Stevenson is one of the country's most visionary legal thinkers and social justice advocates. A MacArthur fellow and founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, Stevenson is a founding leader of the movement against mass incarceration in the U.S. He recently served on President Obama's task force on 21st century policing.

Bryan Stevenson is the founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative and one of the most acclaimed and respected lawyers in the nation. His memoir, *Just Mercy*, is the story of a young lawyer fighting on the frontlines of a country in thrall to extreme punishments and careless justice. It is an inspiring story of unbreakable humanity in the most desperate circumstances, and a powerful indictment of our broken justice system and the twisted values that allow it to continue.

After graduating from Harvard Law School in 1985, Stevenson moved to the South, a region on the verge of a crisis: the states were speeding up executions, but many of the condemned lacked anyone to represent them. On a shoestring budget he started the Equal Justice Initiative, a law practice dedicated to defending some of America's most rejected and marginalized people. The cases he took on would change Stevenson's life and transform his understanding of justice and mercy forever.

Stevenson is the recipient of numerous awards, including the MacArthur Foundation "Genius" Grant and the NAACP Image Award for Best Non-Fiction, and was named one of *Time's* 100 Most Influential People for 2015. Stevenson is a tenured law professor at New York University School of Law. Recently, he was named in *Fortune's* 2016 World's Greatest Leaders list.

Past Common Books

1995: <i>Fires in the Mirror</i> Anna Deavere Smith	2007 <i>Under the Feet of Jesus</i> Helena María Viramontes
1996 <i>China Boy</i> Gus Lee	2008 <i>A Long Way Gone: Memories of a Boy Soldier</i> Ishmael Beah
1997 <i>The Paradise of Bombs</i> Scott Russell Sanders	2009 <i>Strange as this Weather has Been</i> Ann Pancake
1998 <i>She Walks These Hills</i> Sharyn McCrumb	2010 <i>Outcasts United</i> Warren St. John
1999 <i>There Are No Children Here</i> Alex Kotlowitz	2011 <i>City of Refuge</i> Tom Piazza
2000 <i>After Long Silence</i> Helen Fremont	2012 <i>The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks</i> Rebecca Skloot
2001 <i>The Sparrow</i> Mary Doria Russell	2013 <i>Little Princes</i> Conor Grennan
2002 <i>My Year of Meats</i> Ruth Ozeki	2014 <i>Running the Rift</i> Naomi Benaron
2003 <i>Bombingham</i> Anthony Grooms	2015 <i>Hidden America</i> Jean Marie Laskas
2004 <i>The Eagle's Shadow</i> Mark Hertsgaard	2016 <i>Full Body Burden</i> Kristen Iversen
2005 <i>Mountains Beyond Mountains</i> Tracy Kidder	
2006 <i>The Inextinguishable Symphony</i> Martin Goldsmith	

The Thomas Academic Excellence Series presents

Bryan Stevenson

Welcome	Dr. Wendy Sherman Heckler
Recognition of Miss Mary B. Thomas, Class of '28.....	Dr. Wendy Sherman Heckler
Introduction of Mr. Stevenson.....	Sarah Carnes '18
Keynote Address.....	Bryan Stevenson
Concluding Remarks	Dr. Wendy Sherman Heckler

A complimentary reception and book signing will be held following the lecture in Roush Hall, Fisher Gallery.

The reception is sponsored by the Friends of the Library and the Common Book Committee on behalf of the Thomas Academic Excellence Series.

The taking of photographs during the lecture is strictly prohibited.

Convocation Etiquette

- Silence your cell phone and refrain from any cell phone use (web surfing, text messaging, etc.)
- Do not talk or whisper during the program.
- Stay until the end of the program. (If you absolutely must leave, wait until a break in the program, or a time when everyone is standing to minimize the disruption.)