

**Title:** Mental Malady Behind Bars

**Presenter:** Katherine Wong, Irvine Valley College

**Mentor:** Sarah Gray

Mental health has become a rising concern for the United States. Mental illness in prison, however, is a completely different territory. Inadequate treatment of mentally ill prisoners is a growing problem throughout the United States. Many offenders are incarcerated with some type of mental illness, and those who are not initially diagnosed with such illness may just end up with some form of formal mental illness by the end of their incarceration as prison caused the onset of their mental illness. Mental illness in and of itself has become a sort of pandemic for the correctional system. Mental health is a concern within the court system as well, as lengths of incarceration are greatly affected by the existence of disability. In *Just Mercy*, lawyer, legal advocate, and author Bryan Stevenson chronicles his interactions with marginalized people who have either been harshly sentenced or falsely convicted. Stevenson makes a compelling argument that the United States, in its entirety, should be in favor of empathy and mercy over disapproval and punishment. Stevenson argues that the latter two will only further weaken the prison system. Treatment of the mentally ill in our criminal justice system has been an ongoing issue. Evaluation of cases that involve mental illness must be treated with careful thought. Our criminal justice system emphasizes punishment, and lacks mercy which ought to be afforded to people with mental illness in both court and in prison. This reflects poorly on American values, but also on the improper use of government spending.

## Works Cited

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