

2019 Schwartz Prize Nomination
Maryland Humanities
IS JUSTICE JUST?



Maryland Humanities is pleased to nominate *IS JUSTICE JUST?* for the 2019 Helen and Martin Schwartz Prize.



The legal system must work. It must be just—it is a pillar of our democracy. When it doesn't work, it undermines our democracy. – Sherrilyn Ifill, president and director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund

We are all implicated when we allow other people to be mistreated. – Bryan Stevenson, founder and executive director, Equal Justice Initiative

OVERVIEW

Reform of the US criminal justice system is arguably one of the most pressing civic issues facing our democracy. Lauded as among the world's most fair and equitable, many deem it broken. *IS JUSTICE JUST?* was developed in response to what we identified as a critical community need based on the state of affairs in Maryland and across the country: deeper understanding of the criminal justice system and the need for reform. Envisioned to engage the formerly incarcerated, scholars, subject experts, and journalists in public discussion to highlight different facets of the criminal justice system, the four-part series focused on the death penalty, mass incarceration, wrongful conviction, and community policing. Our aim was to raise awareness, deepen understanding, broaden perspectives, and inspire action.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The genesis of *IS JUSTICE JUST?* began with a conversation between staff, a legal expert, and with two primary questions in mind: ❶ Does the general public truly understand how the criminal justice system works? We would argue the answer to this is a resounding “no.” ❷ What can be done using the lens of the humanities to engage the general public and instruct the broader Maryland community on the intricate workings of the system? Under this premise, the four-part *IS JUSTICE JUST?* series on reform of the US criminal justice system was developed. It began in October 2018 and concluded in April 2019.

"[The most important thing I learned at this event was] the importance of empathy for people on different side[s] or with different perspectives."

"[The most important thing I learned at this event was] compassion for all viewpoints."

— Survey responses, October event

The fulcrum point for each program was the sharing of personal stories. Our premise in devising the program structure, which was affirmed at each event, was that personal stories can have a critical influence on our understanding of most any subject, and should be centered whenever possible. We paired these stories with historical and legal context from scholars, subject experts, and journalists in a conversation or panel format.

Our focus on criminal justice reform presented the unique opportunity to hold these discussions in Baltimore City. The city has for many years been the focal point when the topic turns to crime statistics and law enforcement (Baltimore Consent Decree, one of the highest murder rates in the country). We did not, however, narrow our content to focus solely on Baltimore. Topical content was planned to be of broad local or even national interest to ensure that individuals who live anywhere in Maryland might be drawn to attend the series. The result was attendees from Baltimore City and Baltimore, Howard, Kent, Montgomery, and Prince George's Counties, as well as Florida, Massachusetts, New York, and Northern Virginia.

A combination of communications channels were used to publicize the series. Each event was included in our institutional e-newsletter, which is distributed monthly to approximately 13,000 subscribers. Postcards were sent to a targeted list of potential attendees in the Baltimore metropolitan region. We find good old-fashioned print pieces are still very effective with our audiences. Advertising for each event took the form of boosted Facebook posts and print ads in *The Baltimore Sun*. *Sun* ads were both paid and in-kind. Our social media platforms were key in spreading the word. Survey responses from attendees indicated that the majority of attendees received event information across multiple platforms.

Together, these programs conveyed the power of the humanities by connecting history, the law, ethics, and much more to the “how” of our legal system and its impacts—both positive and negative.



Event 1

The first event took place on October 27, 2018 at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) with a screening of the documentary *In the Executioner's Shadow: A Story of Justice, Injustice, and the Death Penalty*. The screening was followed by a discussion between one of the filmmakers, Rick Stack, a communications and legal scholar, and E. R. Shipp, Pulitzer Prize winner, professor, and co-founder of the School of Global Communication & Journalism at Morgan State University. *In the*

Executioner's Shadow highlights "the consequences of the death penalty" through the personal stories of a former state executioner, a Boston Marathon bombing victim, and the parents of a murder victim. Through these stories, the viewer is challenged to examine personal beliefs about the death penalty.

Event 2

The second event was an intimate talk and Q&A with Tony Lewis, Jr., an activist, re-entry expert working with formerly incarcerated individuals, and an advocate for children (like himself) with incarcerated parents. Our event with Lewis, author of *Slugg: A Boy's Life in the Age of Mass Incarceration*, was held at Baltimore's Motor House on Saturday, December 8, 2018. His father was arrested for his role in what is still considered by many to be the largest drug-related criminal enterprise in the history of Washington, DC. Lewis spoke about his struggle with the loss of stability, isolation, and the breakdown of his family after his father entered the criminal justice system 30 years ago (with no possibility of parole), and how laws and practices within the system continue to feed the cycle of mass incarceration.



Event 3

The third event was a conversation between Founder and Executive Director of the Maryland Restorative Justice Initiative, Walter Lomax, and the Honorable Gale E. Rasin (Maryland Humanities Board member), moderated by Pulitzer Prize finalist Andrew Green, editorial editor of *The Baltimore Sun*, at the Motor House on Saturday, February 9, 2019. Lomax was arrested in 1967 at age 20 and sentenced to life in prison for

murder. He maintained his innocence from the time of his arrest. After nearly 40 years and repeated petitions for a new trial, review of his case by Judge Rasin and additional investigations led to his release in 2006. Through the deft moderation of Green, a picture was revealed of political influence, discounted witness testimony, skewed suspect line-ups, repeated misfortune, and system failures that led to Lomax's wrongful conviction and decades-long incarceration. Surprisingly, Lomax has emerged from his experience without bitterness and is now an advocate for the incarcerated in Maryland, particularly those seeking release after serving long sentences.

Thank you so much for the outstanding panel on justice. I thought this was one of the best Maryland Humanities programs I've attended. Gale and Mr. Lomax showed exactly what we mean by "the humanities" and their value: two people truly connecting in the midst of extraordinarily difficult circumstances, through their common experience as human beings.

— Silvia Golombek, Maryland Humanities Board

Event 4

The final event was held on Thursday, April 18, 2019 at MICA. Moderated again by Andrew Green, this panel featured a discussion between RaShall Brackney, Chief of Police, Charlottesville Police Department; Pulitzer Prize finalist Justin Fenton, Crime Reporter, *The Baltimore Sun*; Pulitzer Prize winner Wesley Lowery, National Correspondent, *The Washington Post*; and Rebecca Neusteter, Director of Policing, Vera Institute of Justice. The go-minute discussion touched on the recent history of law enforcement, effective models of community policing, power structures within police departments, the challenges of obtaining witness testimony, why many individuals do not feel justice is ever realized, and the role of both the police and the public in this heightened time of mistrust in law enforcement.



PROJECT GOALS

IS JUSTICE JUST? was shaped by the following goals:

- Identification and exploration of the criminal justice system's strengths and weaknesses, particularly areas of the system that are currently at the forefront of discussion in communities in Maryland and nationwide.
- Use of personal stories of the formerly incarcerated, victims' families, scholars, experts, and journalists to convey the impacts of the criminal justice system.

- Imparting historical, ethical, and legal information that illuminates how the criminal justice system works as well as its strengths and failings.
- Exploring the discrepancies between accurate and inaccurate information conveyed by the media—or that is simply left out of reporting—to assist audience members in parsing information that may skew their understanding of how the criminal justice system works.

IMPACT/AUDIENCES

Participants surveyed after each discussion responded very favorably to *IS JUSTICE JUST?* programming. The majority of participants reported that *IS JUSTICE JUST?* improved their understanding about the role journalism and the humanities play in fostering an informed citizenry; taught them something new about the event's topic; and inspired a more critical consumption of media. In terms of overall project satisfaction, survey results showed that at least 85% of participants after every event were either "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" with the program. In response to the question, "What do you think was the most important thing you learned at this event," one participant said: "The personal account was invaluable to aiding in my understanding and recalibrating my compassion." Another reported: "I think hearing stories from a primary source invokes more passion/urgency to action."

"[The most important thing I learned at this event was] the trauma created by mass incarceration impacts families and the community at large."

— Survey response, December event

Overall, the series attracted a large percentage of audience members who were new to Maryland Humanities programs. In total, 277 people attended one or more *IS JUSTICE JUST?* event. Of them, approximately 40% were first-time Maryland Humanities program participants. Another 40% responded either "Few Times" or "Often" when answering the question, "How often have you attended a Maryland Humanities sponsored program before?" We are pleased that this type of programming engaged and appealed to both newcomers to Maryland Humanities as well as our existing audiences.

Furthermore, participation among youth/young adults was surprisingly high when compared to the audiences of other Maryland Humanities programs. Audiences for our programs overall vary in age from elementary school to elders in their 90s. Outside of programs specifically targeting youth, our audiences trend toward age 50 or older. Fourteen percent of all *IS JUSTICE JUST?* participants were age 24 or younger.

PARTNERS/SPONSORS

IS JUSTICE JUST? was developed as part of the national programming effort, Democracy and the Informed Citizen, funded by The Mellon Foundation in partnership with the Pulitzer Prizes and administered by the Federation of State Humanities Councils. Local sponsorship was provided by Venable Foundation and Baltimore Bar Foundation. Principal partners for the series were *The Baltimore Sun*, the Curatorial Practice MFA at Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), and Choose

Civility Howard County, led by Howard County Library System. Grants from these sponsors and in-kind donations of space from partners underwrote the series.

Our partnership with *The Baltimore Sun* began with our 2016 Pulitzer Centennial celebration programming and has grown over the past four years. Following the Pulitzer Centennial, Maryland Humanities partnered with *Sun* staff to develop large public programs on school re-segregation and housing to deepen public engagement with and dialogue about a number of their long-form investigative reporting series. The *IS JUSTICE JUST?* event on Community Policing dovetailed with *The Sun's* publishing of Justin Fenton's reporting on Baltimore City's Gun Trace Task Force.

The partnerships created with MICA and the Howard County Library System were a synergistic opportunity, allowing us to connect audiences through cross-promotion of similar interests and programming. We promoted each other's programming, drawing attention to similarity in themes and content. These partnerships were helpful in drawing interest in the series from communities beyond Baltimore.

MICA MFA students spent the 2018-2019 academic year engaged, in part, in work related to freedom and democracy via a separate partnership between MICA and For Freedoms, an artistic "platform for creative civic engagement, discourse, and direct action." Students produced a visual representation of the number of Maryland's death row inmates, and curated a selection of prison zines to display at our October 27th program. In conjunction with our February event, MICA students curated and opened an exhibition called *Everyday, Everyday, Everyday Freedoms* "an exhibition that reimagine[d] civic engagement beyond voting in elections," which was on view through mid-March.



Choose Civility, led by Howard County Public Library System, hosted *Undesign the Redline*, "an interactive exhibit connecting the intentional and systematic racial housing segregation of the 1930s to political and social issues of today," on display at the library's Central Branch from August 2018 through February 2019. The library offered programming and docent-led tours of the exhibition, which included local elements on redlining.

"[The most important thing I learned at this event was] there is hope that policing can be directed in a new way toward problem solving, not arrests. That arrests are considered failure by some in the world gives me hope it can someday happen here. At least we are hearing about it."

— Survey response, April event

CHALLENGES/SUSTAINABILITY

IS JUSTICE JUST? engaged the public in conversation with numerous respected journalists and scholars, including two Pulitzer Prize winners and two Pulitzer Prize finalists, and individuals with first-hand experience of the criminal justice system. In all cases, the discussions highlighted the value of personal stories with the bonus insight of the media's role in shaping and presenting those narratives.

Staff and board have repeatedly expressed interest in recent years in tying more programming to the most current of current events, particularly those of concern to Marylanders. With *IS JUSTICE JUST?* this goal was achieved. Feedback on the series was overwhelmingly positive. This was an important new endeavor for Maryland Humanities. However, we feel more work must be done before forging ahead to continue this (i.e. same topic) or a similar programmatic effort. The experience confirmed that a series such as this resonates well with Marylanders and can be executed at a reasonable cost, though it was at times taxing for staff from the perspective of workload and given the need to navigate public concerns about topics and who should be presenting them in a public space.

With this program, we established the umbrella brand of "Let's Talk Maryland," under which we will continue similar programming as it conveys our wish to open/encourage dialogue and could apply to various programming formats. One key element we feel is critical to the future of such programming is to continue building partnerships with grassroots, community, nonprofit, and governmental organizations. The partnerships created for *IS JUSTICE JUST?* were indeed valuable. However, we learned that we need time to build more trust from organizations that operate in the spaces where we would like our work to continue. Stronger partnerships will lead, we hope, to input on program content/planning, outreach to potential audiences and, ultimately, larger audiences for these programs.

Though we have not yet determined when this programming will continue, we are committed to its continuation in the future as this programming sits squarely at the core of what we believe to be the role of humanities institutions—using the lens of the humanities to deepen understanding of pressing and complex contemporary issues with and for the public.

APPENDIX

VIDEO: <https://bit.ly/343g8ah>

Links to Maryland Humanities YouTube Channel Playlist that includes the full video from the April 18, 2019 program on Community Policing and brief excerpts from each speaker.



SERIES WEBSITE: <https://bit.ly/2UagzuE>

Is Justice Just?

Maryland Humanities presented a series of justice-focused discussions from October 2018 through April 2019. Reform of the US criminal justice system is arguably one of the most pressing civic issues facing our democracy. Lauded as among the world's most fair and equitable, many deem it "broken." How informed are we? What can we do to fix it? In speaking about the inequities of our system, public interest lawyer Bryan Stevenson has stated, "We are all implicated when we allow other people to be mistreated."

The logo consists of a large, stylized bracket. The left side of the bracket is green and the right side is blue. Inside the bracket, the text "LET'S TALK," is in a light blue, sans-serif font, and "MARYLAND" is in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font.

SOCIAL MEDIA – SAMPLES (FOR MORE, SEARCH #HUMCITIZEN, #ISJUSTICEJUST)



Maryland Humanities @MDhumanities

Tomorrow, we welcome Walter Lomax to the @motorhousebalt to share his experience being wrongfully convicted and incarcerated for nearly 40 years. We'll live-tweet the event using the hashtags #IsJusticeJust and #HumCitizen. Learn more: bit.ly/2QdghnC



**Wrongfully Convicted
Walter Lomax
In Conversation
with The Honorable Gale E. Rasin**

Moderated by Andrew Green of The Baltimore Sun

**Saturday, February 9
2:00 p.m.**

The Baltimore Sun and 6 others

10:12 AM · Feb 8, 2019 · Twitter Web Client

Maryland Humanities @MDhumanities · Feb 8

Replying to @MDhumanities

Today, we'll be dedicating our Twitter to articles and other content about Mr. Lomax before tomorrow's #IsJusticeJust event @motorhousebalt.

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Maryland Humanities @MDhumanities · Feb 8

"Despite being wrongly imprisoned, Lomax says his time behind bars taught him the lessons he needed to fulfill his destiny of helping others." (2014, in @wjz) #IsJusticeJust #HumCitizen

Free At Last! Baltimore Man Exonerated Of 1968 Mur...
He spent 40 years behind bars for a crime he didn't commit. Now a judge has overturned the guilty verdi...
@baltimore.cbslocal.com

1 1 1 1

Maryland Humanities @MDhumanities · Feb 8

Listen to Mr. Lomax talk about "his decades behind bars" and his criminal justice reform advocacy on the @kojoshow. (2018, @wamu855) #IsJusticeJust #HumCitizen

After 39 Years Behind Bars, A Wrongly Imprisoned M...
Of the 33 people who've been exonerated in the state of Maryland, only five have received compensation ...
@thekojonandshow.org

1 1 1 1

Maryland Humanities @MDhumanities · Feb 8

Mr. Lomax taught himself to read and write in prison. Read @frednewspos's detailed exploration of his story (2017). There's also a mention a Kirk Bloodsworth, the subject of our #1MD18K last year. #IsJusticeJust #HumCitizen

How a wrongly imprisoned Maryland man got his life...
BALTIMORE — They called him Mandela.
@fredericknewspos.com

PUBLICITY – POSTCARDS

Baltimore Premiere!

IN THE EXECUTIONER'S SHADOW

A STORY OF JUSTICE, INJUSTICE, AND THE DEATH PENALTY

Saturday, October 27, 2018 from 2–4 p.m. at Maryland Institute College of Art
Brown Center, Balley Hall, 130 West Vt. Road, Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21207

A provocative documentary film, *In the Executioner's Shadow*, looks at the consequences of the death penalty through three powerful stories: a former state executioner, a Boston Marathon bombing victim and the parents of a murder victim – and challenges viewers to question their deepest beliefs about the meaning of justice. This screening will be followed by a discussion with filmmaker Rick Slack and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and Associate Professor at Morgan State University, ER. Shipp.

LET'S TALK MARYLAND

Is Justice Just?

Reform of America's criminal justice system is one of the most pressing civic issues facing our democracy today. But how informed are we? Lauded as among the world's most fair and equitable, many deem it "broken." What can we do to fix it? In speaking about the inequities of our system, public interest lawyer Bryan Stevenson has stated, "We are all implicated when we allow other people to be mistreated."

In partnership with The Baltimore Sun, the Maryland Institute College of Art's MFA in Curatorial Practice program, and Choose Civility Howard County, Maryland Humanities is embarking on a series of discussions that will focus a lens on the US criminal justice system. We invite you to join us for this free event; reservations required.

For more information or to register: mdhumanities.org

MARYLAND HUMANITIES

*Bryan Stevenson is the Director and Executive Officer of the Equal Justice Initiative, a non-profit organization that works to end mass incarceration and the death penalty. He is also the author of the book *Just Mercy*, which was a New York Times bestseller. He is also the recipient of the MacArthur Fellowship, the Robert F. Kennedy Award for Public Service, and the American Bar Association's Award for Distinguished Service to the Profession.

For more information about Maryland Humanities, visit www.mdhumanities.org or call 410-526-2095.

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SLUG

A BOY'S LIFE IN THE AGE OF MASS INCARCERATION

TONY LEWIS, JR.

Saturday, December 8, 2018 at 2 p.m.
Motor House Baltimore, T.O. Theater, 120 West North Avenue, Baltimore, 21201

Whether or not society chooses to acknowledge it, mass incarceration has traumatic effects that span generations. Tony Lewis, Jr. is a community leader, workforce development specialist, no-nonsense expert, author, and champion for children with incarcerated parents. He is also the son of one of Washington, D.C.'s most infamous drug Kingpins, who suddenly had to navigate the dramatic turn his life took following his father's incarceration in 1989. Join us as Mr. Lewis speaks about his struggle with the loss of stability, isolation, the breakdown of his family after his father entered federal prison, his personal path to success, and how laws and practices within the criminal justice system continue to feed the cycle of mass incarceration.

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WALTER LOMAX in conversation with THE HONORABLE GALE E. RASIN

Saturday, February 9, 2019 at 2 p.m.
Motor House Baltimore, The Theater, 20 West North Avenue, Baltimore, 21201

Walter Lomax was arrested in 1967 at the age of 20 and sentenced to life in prison for the murder of Robert Brewer, the proprietor of Giles Food Market. Mr. Lomax maintained his innocence from the time of his arrest. After nearly 40 years and repeated petitions for a new trial, a review of his case by Judge Gale Rasin and additional investigations led to Mr. Lomax's release in 2006. Join us for this conversation about Mr. Lomax's experiences navigating the justice system following his incarceration for a crime he did not commit, and his work since his release with the Maryland Restorative Justice Initiative, an organization founded to fight for the rights of incarcerated individuals with parole-eligible life sentences. Moderated by Andrew Green of *The Baltimore Sun*.

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LET'S TALK, MARYLAND




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For more information or to register: mdhumanities.org



This program is part of the "Democracy and the Informed Citizen" Initiative, administered by the Federation of State Humanities Councils. We thank The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for their generous support of this initiative and the Public Affairs for their partnership. We also thank Veritable Foundation and Baltimore Bar Foundation for their support.

For more information about Maryland Humanities, visit us at www.mdhumanities.org or call (410) 488-5005.

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Final Event!

PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNITY POLICING



Thursday, April 18, 2019 at 7 p.m. at Maryland Institute College of Art
Brown Center, Falvey Hall, 1301 West Mt. Royal Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21217

Whether your community is urban, suburban, or rural, headlines abound with stories of anxious, dangerous or even deadly encounters between law enforcement and civilians. While there remains much respect for police officers and the difficulty of their work, tensions with communities across the country have been on the rise. Join us for a conversation between Justin Fenton, Crime Reporter, *The Baltimore Sun*; Wesley Lowery, National Correspondent, *The Washington Post*; Rebecca Neustetter, Director of Policing, The Vera Institute of Justice; and Veeja Weaver, Bloomberg Distinguished Associate Professor, Johns Hopkins University that will touch on the history of law enforcement, effective models of community policing, and the role of both police and the public in this heightened time of mistrust in law enforcement. A member of the law enforcement community will also join the panel. Moderated by Andrew Green of *The Baltimore Sun*.

For more information or to register: mdhumanities.org

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PUBLICITY – PRINT ADS

IN THE EXECUTIONER'S SHADOW


A STORY OF JUSTICE, INJUSTICE, AND THE DEATH PENALTY

Is Justice Just? Join Maryland Humanities for a FREE screening of this provocative documentary film exploring the consequences of the death penalty through three powerful stories that challenge viewers to question their deepest beliefs about the meaning of justice.

Saturday, October 27, 2018, 2–4 p.m.
Maryland Institute College of Art, Brown Center

Screening will be followed by a discussion with filmmaker Rick Stack and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist E.R. Shipp.

Reserve seats at mdhumanities.org

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Saturday, December 8, 2018 at 2 p.m.
Motor House Baltimore

Reserve seats at mdhumanities.org

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WALTER LOMAX and THE HONORABLE GALE E. RASIN

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PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNITY POLICING



ReShall Brinkley, Chief
Charlotteville Police Dept.

Justin Fenton
The Baltimore Sun

Wesley Lowery
The Washington Post

Rebecca Neusteter
The Vera Institute of Justice

Whether your community is urban, suburban, or rural, headlines abound with stories of anxious, dangerous or even deadly encounters between law enforcement and civilians. While there remains much respect for police officers and the difficulty of their work, tensions with communities across the country have been on the rise.

Thursday, April 18, 2019, 7 p.m.
Maryland Institute College of Art, Brown Center

Join us for a conversation that will touch on the recent history of law enforcement, effective models of community policing, and the role of both police and the public in this neighborhood rife of mistrust in law enforcement. Moderated by Andrew Green of *The Baltimore Sun*.

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