

**The Episcopal Diocese of New York
Anti-Racism Committee's
Speaker Series Presents**



Activist Poet — Ian Manuel



AGAINST ALL ODDS

When Ian Manuel was 13 years old, he was directed by some older juvenile boys to participate in an armed robbery. During the botched robbery attempt, a Tampa, FL woman (Debbie Baigrie) suffered a nonfatal gunshot wound. When Ian later turned himself in, he was tried as an adult for armed robbery and attempted murder, receiving a sentence of life in prison without parole. He was imprisoned for the next 26 years, much of that time spent in solitary confinement. During that period he reached out to his victim, asking her for forgiveness within a year of his sentencing, and started a deep friendship with her. Bryan Stevenson, Director of Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), based in Montgomery, Alabama, became aware of Ian's plight. EJI took on his case in its efforts to represent juvenile offenders tried as adults. Ian became a poet, a writer, and a scholar while in prison. His work and story are featured prominently in chapter 8 of Bryan Stevenson's well-known and award-winning book, Just Mercy. Based on the legal work of EJI and Debbie's advocacy, Ian was released from prison in November 2016. Since that time, Ian has worked for EJI, was featured in Starbucks Upstanders Initiative, spoken at various colleges including the University of Alabama, and is writing a book. He moved to New York City in September 2017, where he is working, studying at NYU, and participating as a fellow at the MacDowell Colony, which nurtures the arts by inviting writers and composers of the highest caliber (including James Baldwin, Leonard Bernstein, and Alice Walker) to an inspiring environment to hone their craft. He will share his powerful testimony, his experience of God's grace, his God given ability of poetry, and his vision and mission for the future, **AND** how he survived—"Against All Odds."

**Sunday, February 25, 2018, 2:00—3:30 p.m.
St. Bartholomew's Church, Manhattan
325 Park Avenue New York, NY 10025**