

# MORALITY STORIES



**MORALITY STORIES**  
*Dilemmas in Ethics, Crime & Justice*

FOURTH EDITION

Michael Braswell  
Joycelyn Pollock  
Scott Braswell



CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS  

---

Durham, North Carolina

Copyright © 2017  
Michael Braswell, Joycelyn Pollock, and Scott Braswell  
All Rights Reserved

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Braswell, Michael, author. | Pollock, Joycelyn M., 1956- author. |  
Braswell, Scott, 1971- author.

Title: Morality stories : dilemmas in ethics, crime & justice / Michael  
Braswell, Joycelyn M. Pollock, Scott Braswell.

Description: Fourth edition. | Durham, North Carolina : Carolina Academic  
Press, [2017] | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017013430 | ISBN 9781531005061 (acid-free paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Criminal justice, Administration of--Fiction. | Didactic  
fiction, American.

Classification: LCC PS3602.R388 A6 2017 | DDC 813/.6--dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017013430>

eISBN 978-1-53100-507-8

Carolina Academic Press, LLC  
700 Kent Street  
Durham, North Carolina 27701  
Telephone (919) 489-7486  
Fax (919) 493-5668  
[www.cap-press.com](http://www.cap-press.com)

Printed in the United States of America

*To Richard Quinney  
and the stories he writes with words and photographs*



# CONTENTS

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Acknowledgments   | ix        |
| Foreword  | xi        |
| Preface   | xv        |
| <b>Part One · Stories and Moral Dilemmas: An Introduction</b> | <b>3</b>  |
| A Framework for Ethical Analysis                              | 5         |
| Three Ethical Models  | 7         |
| Duty-Based Ethics   | 7         |
| Utilitarianism  | 8         |
| Peacemaking Ethics  | 9         |
| Three Contexts for Taking Moral Action                        | 9         |
| Back to the Beginning   | 10        |
| <b>Part Two · Loyalty and Personal Relationships</b>          | <b>13</b> |
| 1 · Second Street   | 15        |
| 2 · Sarah Salvation   | 25        |
| 3 · Black and Blue  | 31        |
| 4 · A Difficult Choice  | 43        |
| 5 · Rosy  | 53        |
| 6 · Amnesia of the Heart                                      | 61        |
| 7 · Stray Dogs  | 67        |
| 8 · The End Is Near   | 77        |
| <b>Part Three · Duties to Self and Others</b>                 | <b>83</b> |
| 9 · Invisible Boy   | 85        |
| 10 · Special of the Week                                      | 97        |
| 11 · Rasheed's Ticket   | 105       |
| 12 · Crazy Times  | 113       |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| 13 · The Big Picture                      | 117        |
| 14 · Short-Cut                            | 129        |
| 15 · It's Too Bad about Tommy             | 135        |
| 16 · Truth Teller                         | 141        |
| <b>Part Four · Justice and Redemption</b> | <b>147</b> |
| 17 · The Open Door                        | 149        |
| 18 · Dead Man's Parade                    | 157        |
| 19 · The Clock Maker                      | 165        |
| 20 · Best Intentions                      | 179        |
| 21 · The Price of Justice                 | 191        |
| 22 · The Mercy Seat                       | 203        |
| 23 · The Cracker Jack Gospel              | 217        |
| 24 · As Is                                | 223        |
| References                                | 231        |
| Index                                     | 233        |



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“Dead Man’s Parade” and “The Clock Maker” were previously published in *Remembering Peleliu*. For this edition, we want to thank Beth Hall and the CAP staff for their help. We want to thank Susan Braswell for her help in getting this edition ready for press. We also want to acknowledge that while historical and news events may have inspired aspects of some of the stories, the stories and characters depicted in them are fictional.



# FOREWORD

From the second and third editions:

I read the stories in this collection over the course of several evenings, while sprawled comfortably on my living room couch. I found that I was taking the themes of what I had read to bed with me, staying awake longer than I cared to and wondering about the likely outcomes of this or that story, pondering what I thought might be the “correct” resolution and then imagining what I myself might have done—or not done—had I been faced with the same set of circumstances. I was particularly intrigued by my response to “Rosy,” the portrayal of the border patrol trainee who finds an extraordinarily *simpatico* girl of about his own age in the poor Mexican family that he has been assigned to live with in order to improve his Spanish. I was at first certain that I would have behaved differently than he did, but, thinking about it some more, I wasn’t certain. The stories have that kind of effect; they fuel self-examination.

The events portrayed in *Morality Stories* will fascinate persons concerned with human goodness and human evil. The book’s moral is translucent: “An evil act doesn’t necessarily make a person who committed it evil,” the authors declare in a thematic statement. I found the stories exceptionally interesting and provocative. Often the writers deliberately tease us by raising questions and letting them hover unanswered. In “Stray Dogs,” for instance, we wonder what the preacher has in mind when he doubts Laney’s claim that he threw the bricks at the display window of Cook’s Dimestore Dream because he wanted a warm place to stay on Christmas Eve. What might the “true” reason have been? And why does the preacher say that the Dream deserved that brick and more? What is the

meaning of Sergeant Hollis Rivers' cough? Is it serious and does it influence his actions? And what words were written underneath the picture that Laney tried to read but could not see clearly enough to make them out?

I was intrigued by the fact that in a number of stories it is a throwaway observation of strangers that sets in motion reactions from those who hear the words and then reflect on how they apply to their own situation. A waitress, adept at jollyng customers, suggests that "sometimes you gotta do something risky to make sure you're still alive," and her homeless customer, down and out, makes a move that at least holds some hope for turning his dreary life around.

These are artfully constructed portrayals of people who come across as real folks with real problems and, for some, immediate ethical dilemmas that require resolution. At times, there is a change of pace in the stories with the recital tending toward understatement, such as in the moving description of the prison inmate who receives a gift from a totally unlikely source. The donor is asked why he did what he did; the question puzzles him (as it puzzles us as well) and he can offer only a laconic uninformative response before dropping the subject and moving along.

The prison stories are a sub-group of tales. They are marked by an exceptionally clear-eyed rendition of the aura and the undertones of life on a cell block and the verbal thrusts and jabs of the prisoners. The lesson is that even among some of those who appear to be the worst, there are human beings who are decent, even admirable persons. In several instances, prison guards, who have close contact with inmates, come to understand their humanity and to forgive the awful deeds that brought them to where they are. The "Mercy Seat" demonstrates that the death penalty can catch in its lethal embrace persons who have earned the opportunity to remain alive. The story brings to mind the wisdom of Winston Churchill: "The mood and temper of the public with regard to the treatment of crime and criminals is one of the most unfailing tests of the civilization of any country."

I would be hard-pressed to decide which story I liked best. Each in its own way set me to thinking, but I suspect that it was the riddle of the grandfather who refused to open doors for others or to allow others to open doors for him that made the deepest impression. The tenderness between the old man, the boy grandchild, his namesake, is conveyed with great sensitivity and the moral power of the story leaves indelible memories. Life is made up of choices, and the vital ones that we make will mark us for the remainder of our time on earth.

Science and morality often are said to exist in distinctively different realms. Science seeks objectivity and presents a façade of detachment and neutrality. This façade has been satirized by one writer who wondered whether if her husband and a grizzly bear were locked in mortal combat, she was required to say: “C’mon husband, c’mon bear.”

Many scientists say that the application and the consequences of what they learn is the business of others, perhaps one of those touchy-feely people who deal with concepts such as goodness and decency. Such ideas faded in the wake of construction of atomic weapons. The scientists who had unraveled the mysteries that led to the production of the atomic bomb began to wonder how much responsibility they ought to assume when their invention was dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, producing thousands of civilian deaths. The horrors produced by the atomic bombs were brilliantly brought home not by sterile medical reports or long-term longitudinal studies of the results of exposure to radiation from atomic fusion. The fiction and non-fictional portrayals, such as Nevil Shute’s *On the Beach* and John Hersey’s *Hiroshima* provided much more compelling accounts than those found in the medical and social scientific probes. Similarly, to read the opening pages of Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* is to experience the Italian army’s retreat at Caporetto in a manner that no scientific inquiry could convey.

The stories that follow, written by Michael Braswell, Joycelyn Pollock, and Scott Braswell, are of a kind with these classics. They put you in touch with important life experiences of people, sometimes people like yourself, who are confronted with situations

that require a degree of moral and ethical courage. *Morality Stories* allows you to share their experiences, debate within yourself and with others the issues that are raised as they relate to your life and your hopes, ideals, and expectations.

Gilbert Geis

*University of California, Irvine*

# PREFACE

“Imagination and fiction make up more than three-quarters of our real life.”

Simone Weil

“The Possible’s slow fuse is lit by the imagination.”

Emily Dickinson

Our goal in this edition of *Morality Stories* is to continue the tradition of telling stories about experiences where personal and social justice meet, often in the context of criminal justice. Gandhi wrote, “I have always felt that the true textbook for the pupil is the teacher” (Maggio, 1997: 34). It is the teacher then, who translates the insights and truth found in the big ideas and stories hidden in both fiction and nonfiction writing. The literature of criminal justice, criminology and sociology whether found in academic textbooks, novels or short stories offer fertile ground for unexpected lessons that draw us into the mystery of what justice is and is not—and how it squares with consequences, compassion and redemption on a personal, social and systemic level.

The story is the thing. The lessons that need to be learned are embedded in the byways and tall weeds more often than on the main road. And the truth of the matter often slips in through the back door, sneaking up on us from behind and surprising us with delight, horror or both at once. In the best of circumstances, there is a kind of transparency on the bridge of learning between student and teacher where both contribute insights to the questions and possible solutions a story offers. As Gil Geis alludes to in the “Foreword,” such an experience enables both student and teacher to

become more than the stories they tell, filling them with a conscious sense of wonder—of questions that can never be fully answered, but only lived out through one’s best intentions put into action. Questions like “what is justice?”; “what does it mean to be a just and moral person?”; “what should we do with the ‘least of those’ in our society?”; and “where does justice meet mercy and compassion?” haunt us as we wrestle with the choices we make as individuals and as a society.

We offer six stories new to this edition. One examines how young boys become aware of class and territorial differences at an early age. Armed with air rifles and bicycles, it is a hop, skip and a jump before they are terrorizing a hapless victim they perceive to be a member of the upper crust of their neighborhood. Two of the stories address issues in contemporary policing, one regarding the pressures on marriage and family relationships and the other, challenges in keeping the peace during volatile times of unrest and protest. Another story explores how a clockmaker who was a concentration camp doctor during the holocaust of WWII tries to morally justify his treatment of helpless victims to a young journalist while he awaits deportation to face trial for war crimes. Finally, there is also a story that examines racial prejudice from a historical perspective when two decorated black soldiers return to the Jim Crow South where they are met with derision and disrespect.

Given all the questions and possibilities a meaningful and creative narrative provides, a good story never really ends. More than that, the Student in charge is not just teaching students about criminal justice, criminology and social justice, but about the larger landscape of life itself—about how they can make a difference in the world around them.

Michael Braswell  
Joycelyn Pollock  
Scott Braswell