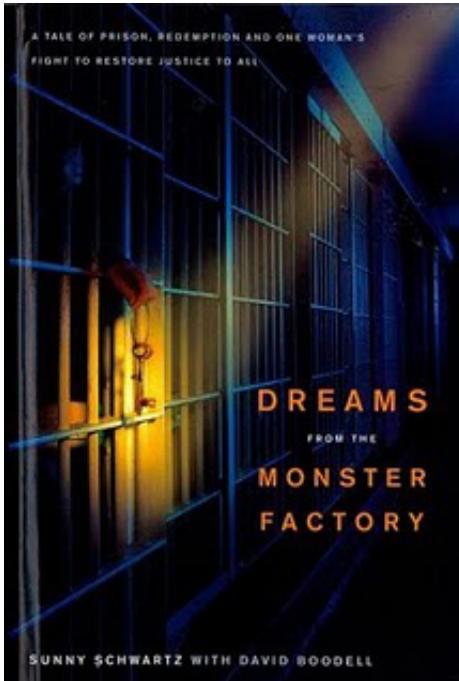


Sunny Schwartz

author + advocate + change maker

The following are discussion questions for general readers, students, and people working in law; criminal justice; colleges and universities, and book clubs.



1. Discuss the many ways that crime affects a community? Why is it important for community members to care about how our criminal justice system works? The Resolve to Stop the Violence Project (RSVP) is based on the principals of restorative justice. Discuss this philosophy and the ways the principals sp? of restorative justice are applied in the RSVP program? Can these same principles be applied in your life? What's the difference between rehabilitation and restorative justice? What are the benefits and pitfalls of each? How can a restorative justice approach work within our current system?
2. The RSVP program operates on the belief that people can change. Do you believe that violence is a learned behavior that can be corrected? Do you think people can really change? Why do you think people are resistant to change?
3. What happens when criminals return to their communities? How can we change the system to make the transition back to our society more successful? Do you think the current way of incarcerating people keeps us safe, if so how? If not, why not? Discuss the benefits and liabilities of RSVP. How are different people in the criminal justice system affected by the program? The staff, the wardens, the prisoners, the victims, the outside community? How do you think defense attorneys and prosecutors are reacting to the program? Is there a cost advantage to this program? Are there creative ways to integrate these programs in to our criminal justice system without costing the community too much?
4. An integral part of the RSVP program is restoration to the community. Discuss the importance of this. What are some ways offenders can give back to communities and people they have harmed?

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5. Often times people do not want criminals released into their communities. For example, “Not in my backyard” is heard often when there is a move to have a residential drug treatment homes in different neighborhoods. What is the fear of such facility treatments in your community, how can we make this happen while ensuring safety?
6. Many of the ideas behind RSVP—accountability, forgiveness, restoration —can be applied in the lives of everyday people. Sunny herself struggled with anger for many years and the program helped her have healthier relationships. Did anything in the book resonate for you on a personal level? What is forgiveness? Have you done something you want to be forgiven for? What stops you from asking for forgiveness? Conversely, have you ever had to forgive someone for something?
7. When Sunny Schwartz was a young law student, she was faced with a man who was about to get out who said he would molest again, she tried to stop the release of this pedophile, Fred Johnson, into the community. What does that story tell you about how our criminal justice system works? How do you think the system can be improved? What would you have done had you been in that situation?
8. Have you ever had an experience where you wanted to defend someone who was unjustifiably picked on by the professor —as Sunny did in the law school class?. Did you stand up for that person? Why or why not?
9. If you or your loved ones have been the victims of a crime what was most helpful or difficult about the criminal justice process? How would you change the process to benefit victims and their loved ones and to create a more humane and just system?

Contact Sunny if you would like to find out more about having Sunny consult with your organization or at your event.