

***No Visible Bruises: What We Don't Know About Domestic Violence Can Kill Us***  
**by Rachel Louise Snyder**

These discussion questions are designed to enhance your group's discussion about *No Visible Bruises: What We Don't Know About Domestic Violence Can Kill Us*, an award-winning journalist's intimate investigation of the abuse that happens behind closed doors.

**About this book**

We call it domestic violence. We call it private violence. Sometimes we call it intimate terrorism. But whatever we call it, we generally do not believe it has anything at all to do with us, despite the World Health Organization deeming it a “global epidemic.” In America, domestic violence accounts for 15 percent of all violent crime, and yet it remains locked in silence, even as its tendrils reach unseen into so many of our most pressing national issues, from our economy to our education system, from mass shootings to mass incarceration to #MeToo. We still have not taken the true measure of this problem.

In *No Visible Bruises*, journalist Rachel Louise Snyder gives context for what we don't know we're seeing. She frames this urgent and immersive account of the scale of domestic violence in our country around key stories that explode the common myths—that if things were bad enough, victims would just leave; that a violent person cannot become nonviolent; that shelter is an adequate response; and most insidiously, that violence inside the home is a private matter, sealed from the public sphere and disconnected from other forms of violence. Through the stories of victims, perpetrators, law enforcement, and reform movements from across the country, Snyder explores the real roots of private violence, its far-reaching consequences for society, and what it will take to truly address it.

**For discussion**

1. Do you know anyone personally who has experienced domestic violence? If so, did you notice parallels between their story and the narratives that Snyder explores in *No Visible Bruises*?
2. Did the book change your mind or alter any preconceived notions you may have had about domestic violence? Which ones and how?
3. Snyder mentions that there is no law against “psychological abuse” in the United States. Do you believe such a law needs to exist? Why or why not?
4. Consider Snyder's recounting of Rocky and Michelle's story. Discuss your feelings toward the friends and relatives that surrounded the couple. What is your response to their interactions with Rocky and Michelle?
5. Snyder examines how domestic violence is linked to other issues like poverty, education, health care, and others. Discuss how this correlation plays out in *No Visible Bruises*, as well

as any personal experiences you may have had or observations you have made that illustrate how these issues are connected.

6. Snyder frequently inserts her own emotions and thought process into her narrative. Did you appreciate this as a journalistic technique? Why or why not?

7. Were there any statistics or anecdotes in the book that you found particularly surprising or upsetting, or any personal stories that you found particularly moving or relatable? If so, which ones and why?

8. Snyder discusses cultural and societal norms, especially around gender, that may reinforce or even encourage the dynamics that lead to domestic violence. Do you think this is a fair assessment? Why or why not? Discuss the ways you believe societal mores do or do not contribute to a broader culture of violence and misogyny.

9. Snyder raises the question, "Can a violent man learn to be nonviolent?" Considering the "redemption arcs" of Jimmy and Donte in *No Visible Bruises*, how would you answer this question?

10. Do you think the title *No Visible Bruises* refers solely to the victims of domestic violence, or could it also apply to the perpetrators and/or others?

11. Snyder mentions that critics of batterer intervention programs view them as "a waste of time and money." Do you think this characterization is justified? Why or why not?

12. Of all the interventions and techniques Snyder investigates as possible ways to slow or halt the cycle of domestic violence, which one(s) do you think are the most crucial and why?

13. Were there any aspects of domestic violence not discussed in *No Visible Bruises* that you wish had been? If so, which?

14. Snyder writes, "Whatever we envision when we envision a victim . . . none of us ever picture ourselves." Did this statement resonate with you? Do you think that is an accurate assertion? Why or why not?

15. Did the book leave you feeling hopeful or pessimistic about the future in terms of domestic violence rates and justice for the victims of domestic violence? Explain the reasoning behind your answer.

### **Suggested reading**

*What We've Lost Is Nothing* and *Fugitive Denim: A Moving Story of People and Pants in the Borderless World of Global Trade* by Rachel Louise Snyder; *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* by Mathew Desmond; *In the Dream House: A Memoir* by Carmen Maria Machado; *The Other Side: A Memoir* by Lacy M. Johnson; *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander; *Memorial Drive: A*

*Daughter's Memoir* by Natasha Trethewey (forthcoming); *If I Am Missing or Dead: A Sister's Story of Love, Murder, and Liberation* by Janine Latus; *See What You Made Me Do: The Dangers of Domestic Abuse That We Ignore, Explain Away, or Refuse to See* by Jess Hill (forthcoming); *Random Family: Love, Drugs, Trouble, and Coming of Age in the Bronx* by Adrian Nicole LeBlanc; *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Bryan Stevenson; *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn; *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood* by Trevor Noah; *Educated: A Memoir* by Tara Westover; *Dreams from the Monster Factory: A Tale of Prison, Redemption, and One Woman's Fight to Restore Justice to All* by Sunny Schwartz; *Assessing Dangerousness: Domestic Violence Offenders and Child Abusers* by Jacquelyn Campbell; *Why Does He Do That?: Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men* by Lundy Bancroft; *I Am Not Your Victim: Anatomy of Domestic Violence* by Beth M. Sipe and Evelyn J. Hall; *Abused Men: The Hidden Side of Domestic Violence* by Philip W. Cook

**Rachel Louise Snyder** is the author of *Fugitive Denim: A Moving Story of People and Pants in the Borderless World of Global Trade*, the novel *What We've Lost is Nothing*, and *No Visible Bruises: What We Don't Know About Domestic Violence Can Kill Us*. Her work has appeared in the *New Yorker*, the *New York Times Magazine*, the *Washington Post*, and on NPR. *No Visible Bruises* was awarded the Lukas Work-in-Progress Award, the Hillman Prize for Book Journalism, and the New York Public Library's Bernstein Award for Excellence in Journalism. It was a finalist for the Kirkus Prize, the National Book Critics Circle Award, the LA Times Book Award, and the American Bar Association Silver Gavel Award, and was named one of the top ten books of the year by the *New York Times*. Snyder is currently an Associate Professor of Creative Writing and Journalism at American University, and in 2020–2021 she will be a Guggenheim Fellow.