



Hope Unraveled

The People's Retreat and Our Way Back

Community Discussion Guide

Richard C. Harwood believes that as individuals and as a nation, we can do better. In conversations spanning almost 15 years in dozens of communities across America, Harwood has found a nation struggling with growing consumerism, distorted realities, and false divisions that cut across cultural, political and media landscapes. In *Hope Unraveled*, Harwood calls on people – including leaders, news media, and citizens – to step forward and act. There is a way back, but not on our current path.

This discussion guide does more than provide a collection of questions to ask about *Hope Unraveled*, it allows you to become part of the story it tells. A conversation about the topics in *Hope Unraveled* opens the door to a discussion about how to create the conditions necessary to move your community forward. Even if not everyone who participates has yet read the book, their voices still can still have a place in the discussion.

Use this guide to engage with others and discover your own way back to public life. If you want more information on what you can do in your community, visit www.theharwoodinstitute.org.

Starting the Conversation

Welcome/Introductions

- Talk about why you invited the participants.
- If everyone is not already acquainted, go around the room and ask people to introduce themselves. Have each person give their name, and some personal piece of information like a hobby or personal interest.

Lay out the expectations/hopes for the discussion.

- To discuss the themes and implications of *Hope Unraveled*
- To start a discussion about how to find a path toward a stronger and more vibrant public life and politics.
- To learn from each other and hear each other's voices and stories.
- To figure out how we can move forward.

Set the ground rules.

- Cover the ground rules for the discussion. Review these ground rules and ask if people want to add any others. If you wish, you can post this sheet and refer back to the rules during the discussion as needed.
 - **Have a “kitchen table” conversation. Everyone participates; no one dominates.**
 - **There are no “right” answers. Draw on your own experiences, views and beliefs – you do not need to be an expert.**
 - **It’s okay to disagree. Everyone has a right to his or her own views.**
 - **Keep an open mind. Listen carefully and try to understand the viewpoints of those who disagree with you**
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 - **Help keep the discussion on track. Stick to the topic at hand. Try not to ramble.**
 - **Focus on constructive ideas and solutions. Don’t complain or place blame.**
 - **Have fun!**

Use these questions to guide your conversation

1. *Hope Unraveled* is written around the voices of citizens. What does it mean to be a citizen?
 - What responsibilities and/or obligations do citizens have?
 - Is there any difference between a consumer and a citizen? If so, what are the differences?

2. Many people now claim that we live in a nation divided – between red and blue, secular and religious, or urban and rural. Do you think we are a fundamentally divided nation?
 - Do you believe that people on either side of the divide have fundamentally different aspirations, for example, for their children receiving a quality education, for building stronger communities?

3. In *Hope Unraveled*, Richard Harwood argues that retreat into close knit circles, not division is the primary challenge facing our country. Do you see others in your community retreating?
 - Do you see this retreat in your own life?
 - What do we lose as a society if we all choose to retreat into close-knit circles?

4. Can you think of a time when people saw themselves as something larger than themselves? What was the result?
 - What are the issues in your community, or in the nation that will require people to see themselves as more than just an individual?

5. Who do you look to for leadership in your community?
 - In the nation?
 - What characteristics do those people have?

6. Many of the people in *Hope Unraveled* talk about “everyday heroes” as people they look to for leadership. These heroes are men and women who, when facing a challenge, have found ways to summon the enduring qualities of honesty, perseverance, and helping others. Where do you find “everyday heroes” in your life?
 - What does it take for someone to be an everyday hero?
 - Do you see yourself as an everyday hero?
 - How can we find and support more everyday heroes?

7. Rich Harwood often says that he believes that people are innately good. Do you agree?
 - What would it take to tap and activate people’s innate goodness?
 - Can you point to an example where this is happening?

Don’t let the discussion end here. Take some of these questions and ask other people, at home, at work, or just in your neighborhood, what they think. To find an alternate path for public life, we must keep the conversation going.