

The Combat Zone

Book Club Discussion Questions

- 1) If you were on the jury, how would you have voted in the verdicts? Would you have convicted all three defendants, and if so, of what: first degree murder, second-degree murder, manslaughter, assault and battery? Or would you have found them innocent?
- 2) If you were charged with murder, or someone you loved was murdered in a highly-publicized murder trial—if you were allowed to make the decision—would you want a jury to decide, or would you give it a judge?
- 3) Do you think the initial belief that the miracle of combat medicine had saved Andy Puopolo's life, along with the subsequent month-long coma, added to public sympathy for the family's trauma? Do you think the publicity contributed to the verdict? Do you think publicity about the Darryl William's shooting, and sympathy for his family, impacted the decision of the jury in the second trial?
- 4) Should the defense and prosecution be able to strike potential jurors using their peremptory challenges? Did the Soares-Wheeler decision and other court reforms improve the criminal justice system in Massachusetts and other states? Did the decision solve the problem of discrimination in the court system?
- 5) Prior to the first trial, rumors that the Mafia was going to whack the three defendants while they were held in custody were so rife that the press had to ask the jail warden to address it. Do you think the Mafia had reason to seek revenge, and if so, what were those reasons?
- 6) Why did Danny feel responsible for his brother's murder? Do you understand his quest for revenge? If you look at that quest as a form of suffering, do you think the criminal justice system compounded it? Could it have been averted if all three first degree murder convictions had been upheld?
- 7) Do you think the city of Boston's mixed feelings about the Combat Zone, its failure at upkeep and the corruption of the Police Department, were, as Debra Beckerman, spokeswoman for BAD, the strip club association, charged, responsible for the murder of Andy Puopolo?
- 8) If young, adolescent murder victim survivors, like Danny, received more immediate and aggressive therapy, would it reduce the amount of gang violence in inner cities? What stopped Danny, who never had therapy, from acting on his urge for revenge?