

Shannon's life saver: restorative justice



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The quotation, " the best feeling in the world is watching things fall into place after watching them fall apart for so long" (Glassman), best describes the effects of restorative justice on Shannon Moroney's life in the memoir *Through the Glass*. She finds out she is married to a man who commits horrific crimes, and uses restorative justice instead of retributive justice for his case. Restorative justice is a much more beneficial way to look at a case. It helps everyone understand what is happening, it benefits the offender, and allows the offender the chance to have a place in rehabilitation. As well, restorative justice gives Shannon a better opportunity to overcome the obstacles that she endures. It is faster than retributive justice, it can help with Jason's dark past, and it helps the PTSD of crime victims. Also, restorative justice helps Shannon start her life over again. It helps her realize it is time to move on, makes her want to share her personal story to help others, and leave everything behind her. With the help of restorative justice, Shannon is able to stop always thinking about Jason, and is able to restart her life on the right track. If it is not used in Shannon's case she will not be where she is today.

To start off with, a restorative approach is a much better way to handle a crime than to use the retributive criminal justice system. For example, compared to the retributive system, the restorative system does not only put the criminal behind bars and move on to the next case. As Shannon learns more about the retributive system, she realises that, " Incarceration only provides victims with the knowledge that the offender won't hurt them again, at least for as long as he or she is in prison" (Moroney 250). The retributive justice system, only makes the victim or victims aware that they

will not get hurt by the same person again. Restorative justice on the other hand, takes a different approach on the crime. Everyone affected by the crime benefits from this form of justice. Not only the victim, but surprisingly the offender as well. Furthermore, the restorative justice system helps the offender more than the retributive justice system. Howard Zehr explains that there are three questions asked in both situations. In a retributive system the questions are, "What law was broken? Who did it? What punishment does he or she deserve?" (250). However, in the restorative justice system, the three questions are, "Who was hurt? What are their needs? Whose obligation is it to address those needs?" (250). The retributive system, only makes it worse for the offender. The offender is put into incarceration for their actions, and is never able to talk to anyone about what happened. In a restorative justice case, the offender is able to open up. This system offers many healing processes such as, "victim-offender encounters, group conferencing, and circle meetings aimed at offering support and encouraging accountability" (251). Not only does it include healing processes for both the victim and offender, but it places the offender into rehabilitation. Thus allows the offender to find out the reason behind his or her actions, and to learn from them. Another example that restorative justice is a better option is that it has been proven to work. This is shown when, Molly Rowan Leach of the Huffington Post questioned Colorado's Restorative Justice State Counsel, District Attorney Stan Garnett. He said that it, "saves time, saves judicial processing money, is not just another program alternative, and is fair to all involved" (Leach). Restorative justice is not a way of letting an offender off the hook or excusing their crime. It is a more efficient way of dealing with

the crimes, and is on the rise in many countries. In Shannon's case, by choosing restorative justice over retributive justice, everyone benefits.

Secondly, by choosing restorative justice, it is easier for Shannon to try and overcome what has happened to her. The crimes Jason commits take a big toll on her psychologically. As a result, she needs to seek medical attention for her mental health. When she gets her medical diagnosis back, the doctor tells her the unfortunate news that, " she is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder" (Moroney 150). This being a condition that should be treated as soon as possible. So by choosing restorative justice, Jason will be sentenced much sooner as it is a quicker system. This means less time that Shannon will have to suffer and worsen her condition. A faster attempt for recovery is what she needs. Another example, that proves the benefit of restorative justice is that it will help Shannon to overcome Jason's crimes easier. Shannon knows that Jason is going to get the help that he needs. This being the psychological help he is in desperate need of. As a child Jason endured, " sexual abuse by his mother, and by his mother and her boyfriend; and physical abuse by his late grandfather" (189). With the restorative system, Jason will be able to open up about his dark past. This could possibly lead to an explanation as to why he commits these horrific crimes. Lastly, by choosing restorative justice, one of its great benefits is that, " It reduces crime victims' post-traumatic stress symptoms" (Sherman & Strang). Shannon is always sympathetic towards the victims. She realizes how much the victims have gone through, and how much Jason's actions affect their lives. She says, " I could do only what anyone else could: imagine what those women would be going through and hope that somehow they would find a

way to cope" (Moroney 76). With restorative justice, there will be group discussions between Jason and the victims. He will be able to apologize for what he has done to them. This will help with both victims recoveries.

Therefore, Shannon is able to attempt to overcome the obstacles of Jason's crimes.

Finally, restorative justice not only helps with completing Jason's sentence, but helps Shannon move on, and start her life over again. For example, Shannon realises it is time that she moves on. She says, I remembered Una's advice from her deathbed: Try not to take on other people's burdens. And so there I was: I could fret and worry about Jason, or I could try to trust that he could look after himself" (328). Shannon knows that Jason is going to get the help he needs. She no longer needs to worry about him on all time. She must put all the bad things behind her. As well, by being more knowledgeable about restorative justice, Shannon is no longer afraid to speak about her personal experience. This leads to her getting an invite to " a conference called; Restorative Justice: Humanizing the Criminal Justice Process" (325). By telling her story, she is going to help many people who are going through something similar to what she experienced. She is becoming a new person. As of a couple of years ago, she never wanted to talk about what had happened. Now she is in front of hundreds of people telling how she manages to survive. Another example that shows Shannon is able to move on is that she finds love again. She meets a guy named Mike, and immediately feels a connection between the two of them. A few months later, Mike asks her to marry him, and she expresses her feelings as " overwhelmed with happiness and the promise of a new beginning" (341).

Shannon is on the right track in her life. She is able to put the past behind her and start over a much happier person. Without restorative justice, she will still be dealing with Jason's case and suffering for the rest of her life.

Restorative justice, indeed, is what saves Shannon. Without it, Shannon will not be where she is today; instead, she will would be worrying about Jason's case, and would not be able to move along in her life. By using restorative justice, she demonstrates its benefits. For example, everyone involved gets their say, it helps the offender, and gives any psychological attention needed to the offender. Also, restorative justice gives the chance to Shannon to overcome the obstacles in her case. It is more efficient than retributive justice, it will aid in the healing of Jason's dark past, and it will help lower the PTSD of the crime victims. Another thing is that it enables Shannon to start her life over again. She is able to realize the time to move on has come, share her story so she can help others in her situation, and leave everything behind her. In the end, Shannon does the right thing, and she is happy again. With the use of restorative justice in this case, it shows the potential for future cases that will be able to benefit from it.