**Socratic Seminar #3: Chapters 18-25 Atonement: From the Personal to the Political**

**Rationale**: The novel begins by issuing a kind of challenge - Rahim Khan's promise to Amir that there is a way to be good again; to recover from his double betrayal of his best friend and half-brother, Hassan, and morally rehabilitate himself. The same question operating at the personal level applies in this book at the social one - how can a society become good again? If the Afghanistan of the early part of the book is peaceful and nurturing for privileged children such as Amir, we have ample opportunities to discern the society's shortcomings. We know that Hassan, for example, was born to be illiterate. Or that Jamila Teheri believes “Every woman needed a husband, even if he did silence the song in her.” (p. 178)

At the conclusion of this novel, a natural question to ask is: has Rahim's promise been redeemed, at either the personal or societal level? What are Amir's prospects for being good again? Or Afghanistan's? Or any of us?

**Preparation:**

1. Prior to the Socratic Seminar, read the text, “Rebuilding the Bamiyan Buddhas.”

**Optional guiding questions:**

Rahim writes to Amir, “...And that, I believe, is what true redemption is, Amirjan, when guilt leads to good.” Pg 304

What are the limits of redemption? How much can you undo?

"Closing Sohrab's door, I wondered if that was how forgiveness budded, not with the fanfare of epiphany, but with pain gathering its things, packing up and slipping away unannounced in the middle of the night.” Pg 360

Here Amir is talking about not feeling upset at the thought that Baba regarded Hassan as his true son, not Amir.

Does time heal all wounds? Or simply leave us all crippled?