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**Half the Sky Seminar Prep**

*Half The Sky* is a book that contains multiple stories of women in developing counties. The stories are ones of the hardships that women and girls face every day. Most of the stories consist of rape, sex trafficking, murder, torture, bride burnings, malnourishment, and oppression towards women. Although the stories are sad, many of them show powerful women escaping from the grip of oppression and finding their voice. Women who are given help in forms of microloans or jobs are able to grow economically and gain power in their lives. The book also discusses that educating girls will not only improve their lives but also the economy, production, and innovation across the world. Giving women power can also decrease violence and terrorism.

Over all, I found this book incredibly educating. I was aware that women were being oppressed and sex trafficked, but I never understood how ubiquitous it was. People are not commonly educated about how much women living in developing countries could be oppressed. Living in a first world country, you many hear about the brief tragedies that occur daily. You almost never hear about the horrid things that happen everyday. We were able to hear about only Ebola for three weeks straight, but the only times I have heard about sex trafficking is when it involved the super bowl. People need to be more educated on these issues and I think that the book did a nice job of doing so. It was very educational and made me care about women’s issues.

For me, reading this book was fairly difficult. Not only was the writing style incredibly dry, but also the stories were horrible to hear. I enjoyed reading about when they got free of their oppression and gained self-power, but the experiences that they had were so horrid. The book contained stories of women getting their breast cut off, and being raped with guns of sticks. They even had a story of a three year old being raped, and then shot in the vagina. It was so hard to hear about all of the terrible things that the women had to go though. Reading this book made me feel so privileged and petty. I feel bad that I am worrying about being grounded while these girls are worried about getting rapped on their way to school. Reading this book makes me feel incredibly blessed and makes me want to help other girls who aren’t as lucky. Reading this book was a good experience and over all a good honors project.

**Seminar Reflection**

The Half the Sky seminar was actually quite interesting. There were a few things that I agreed with that I wished I had commented on. One of the most interesting conversations of the seminar was if prostitution should be legalized and regulated or not. I liked this discussion because I am split with it. My personal opinion wants to lean towards the libertarian perspective and allow prostitution to be legal. The other part is look at the fact that when the Netherlands made prostitution legal, there was an increase of STDs and the amount of prostitution went up. Even though I thought that legalizing prostitution would be beneficial, the facts show that it is the opposite.

Another topic that Ali brought up was the sexualization of men. I know that it wasn’t necessarily connected to the information in the book but I found it very interesting. I have never thought about the sexual roles that society puts on men. Even when the women in the story were innocently alone with men, they were accused of adultery. We need to stop building the sexual tension between the sexes if we want there to be equality. I liked Ali’s comment because it prompted me to gain a new opinion on the topic.

Women often absorb and transmit misogynistic values even if they are derogatory towards women. Women who are treated in certain ways when they are growing up, are socialized to think that, that is the norm. When people are taught that women are inferior, then do not believe differently. One example of the book acknowledging this is, “ Yet it is women who routinely manage brothels in poor countries, who ensure that their daughters genitals are cut, who feed sons before daughters…”(67). This quote shows how women have been socialized to treat their own sex in terrible ways. They are not taught the value and beauty of women, and therefore, not appreciate them. Women then transmit those opinions onto their children, and the oppressive rain continues. People need to be taught that it is not okay to oppress women. Our socializing effects us in incredible ways and teaching children that the sexes are equal will end the transmitting of misogynistic values.