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Woman at Point Zero Free Write Rewrite

Free Write #1: Feminism

I do not often think about Feminism and the only times I have really ever heard about it formally spoken about are in social studies or history classes. Because of this, I believe I only had a vague understanding of Feminism and what it means before this class. If I had to describe Feminism prior to this unit, my guess would have been that it is a movement supporting the departure from a male-dominant society to more equal grounds between men and women. I thought that it is often thought of as solely a woman's rights movement, which may be its focus, but I also thought that Feminism goes beyond that to more of a fair life for all genders. After this unit in the class, I now know that I was not entirely mistaken. Now I have a better understanding of Feminism, in that it is basically working toward gender equality with benefits for both male and female individuals of the world.

I think that any aspect of society that is stereotypically considered male-dominant is a hinderance to Feminism, because the implication with "male-dominant" is that it is also "female-subordinate" or "female-inferior" which is an inequality between the genders. I also think that stereotypes in general that are perpetuated by film and media also play a large role against Feminism. This is because as the images are repeated before an audience, and that audience buys the products, it is a constant cycle of exposure to gender inequality which

normalizes the gender bias between men and women. Additionally, I also think that there are a few terms or images that people have when they hear "Feminism" that misrepresent what Feminism truly means. For example, the popular negative message associated with Feminists are that they are a group of man-hating female supremacists that want to overturn society, which cannot be further from the truth.

Free Write #2: Emma Watson's Speech

I really appreciated how Emma was able to genuinely and effectively express a call to action that not only included men and women, but also covered the essential points of the discussion surrounding Feminism in a concise speech. A part of her speech that really stood out to me was that in order for gender equality to become a reality, people need to be comfortable having the necessary conversations. A majority of her speech also reminded me of the films "Miss Representation" and "Tough Guise" that I watched in my service learning class, which also highlighted the fact that it is not only a woman's issue but a human issue. Another part of Emma's speech that I really enjoyed was how she plainly said that men are also "imprisoned by gender stereotypes" and will be freed when women and men have equal rights because of the balance between the genders.

I think a premise of gender stereotypes that I am capable of changing is how I use gender specific language. Sometimes, I don't even connect how a word is actually inadvertently including gender bias. For example, I never thought of "bossy" as a biased term. I think if I am aware of the gender biased words that I use, then when I am speaking to others who are learning English as a second language, I can provide a better example of how to speak without gender

bias. I think that even something as simple as calling attention to the words we use could be a step toward eliminating gender bias and moving toward a society of gender equality.

When I first tried to envision a world of true gender equality, I thought, “Why don’t we see gender equality in movies that are set in the not-so-distant future?” I think it is because in the end movies are tailored to their audiences, but it made me think that if it were easier to envision what a gender-equal society would look and sound like, it would be easier for people to earnestly strive toward it. Personally, I think that the world itself would not look so different, but if you saw a single news report or sat for a few hours at a coffee shop people-watching, then it would become obvious. For example, men wouldn’t hold the door open; whoever arrived there first would. I also think that we would see gender equality reflected heavily in entertainment, where character archetypes wouldn’t be defined by gender, but just personality traits. In the end, I think there would still be many global conflicts and problems, but both genders would be a part of the solution, providing a perspective that probably has not been considered previously.

Free Write #3: Arab and Muslim Feminisms

I believe that a key challenge for individuals in the West when addressing Arab and Muslim Feminisms is the separation of culture from the topic. I think that it is easy to get distracted by the unique aspects of Arab and Muslim cultures that are different and novel to the Western perspective. I also think that it is easy for Westerners to try and either place the blame or contextualize Arab and Muslim Feminism due to these cultural differences because the differences mask the similarities. Similarly, I think many Western people find it difficult to see beyond the stereotypes they have been exposed to because they have been perpetuated by society

and accumulated over time. I believe that the most difficult challenge for the West is to not use the “Us versus Them” mentality.

I think some of the stereotypes that prevent our understanding of the genuine complex issues of Arab and Muslim women are that they are all the same, there is no help within their culture, and we as outsiders must provide the assistance. This is a very West-centric perspective, because in our own cultures we do not think “everyone is the same” yet when we turn to other cultures we clump individuals together in a nice manageable group. This makes discussions difficult because we then get distracted by the cultural differences and forget the real issue and the overarching connections between cultures. In order to truly discuss Feminism between the West and Arab and Muslim cultures, we cannot keep highlighting cultural issues and stereotypes because they are not the focus of the conversation.

Before this class, I never thought about or actively learned about Arab and Muslim culture or women, so what really struck me throughout this unit was the amount of facts that I was not aware of. While I was conscious at some level that all I “knew” about Arab and Muslim culture was merely stereotypes, I never pursued true knowledge because of a lack of interest in the topic. However, now that I have a cursory background with actual facts, I realize that I would have never been exposed to this without my own motivation and I would have continued with only the image of the stereotype in my head. Now I understand that, even if I am aware that my only perception of a given topic is a stereotype, without any knowledge of the reality, knowing a stereotype is a stereotype can be just as bad because there is no other information to draw from. Like all stereotypes, I wish that the truth was more widely spread or understood. I really dislike the fact that stereotypes about Arab and Muslim cultures are circulated to promote a political

agenda. However, I also believe it is just as likely that American stereotypes are promoted in other parts of the world for others' political agendas, even if it would be better to circulate the truth rather than the stereotype.