Bryan Guner

9/18/14

Half the Sky

Half The Sky is a profound acknowledgment of the fact that the world we live and prosper in is still full of suffering and agony for many whose cries will go unheard. In chapter 4,(Rule by Rape) the atrocities of rape are seen from an unexpected perspective. This section reveals that while in first world countries, rape is an individual crime, in many developing countries this individual act is shared by a community. For example, Ethiopian tradition allows men to rape women they wish to marry. The family of the victim will often comply because the girl will be left to damaged (in the eyes of society) for any other man to ever want. For a long period of time the legislature made it so that once the couple was married the rape was no longer considered a crime. Another instance of communal rape took place in Sierra Leone, where female fighters would lure unsuspecting females into gang rape by their male counterparts as a form of “bonding”. To this day, there are still places where raping a family member of an enemy is an acceptable form of revenge. The real problem lies in a lack of political will to make changes. Most political institutions will only make changes to affect rape culture when the issues are brought to the attention of the general public. That being said, changes have been made under that very condition. A rape survivor from Woinshet and her father reached out for help after she refused to marry a man that raped her. She received funding from Equality, and had the legislature that decriminalized rape before marriage overturned through a grass-roots movement. Another instance of change in the face of public scrutiny was when a Pakistani rape victim pressed charges and used the $8,300 payout to start a girl’s school. These individuals had the fortitude to turn excruciating ordeals into positive changes in the world. The real change that needs to be made is the way governments view rape. Because of today’s media driven political policy , it is on the backs of every day citizens that these changes must be made.

Another pressing brought to light by the book was modern day sex slavery. Unfortunately, because of the vagueness associated with the industry, determining weather or not a crime has been committed is often subjective at best. The best explanation of this enigma is found in chapter two “many prostitutes are neither acting freely nor enslaved, but living in a world etched in ambiguities somewhere between those two extremes.” (39) In other words they are not always physically being forced to live as sex workers, but have no other choice in the matter. It is the fact that these women are enslaved by their needs rather than their lives that makes the abolition of their slavery neigh impossible. Despite the enormity of the problem, certain governments have done what they can to curb it. Take Sweden for example, they have seen a 41% decrease in prostitution since implementing tougher laws and ensuring that they are enforced. The most successful approach entails “holding governments accountable not just to pass laws but also to enforce them, and monitoring how many brothels are raided and pimps are arrested. Jail-like brothels should be closed down, sting operations should be mounted against buyers of virgin girls, and national police chiefs must be under pressure to crack down on corruption as it relates to trafficking. The idea is to reduce the brothel owners’ profits.” (26) These struggles may seem insurmountable nonetheless even when a social problem is so vast as to be insolvable in it’s entirety , it’s still worth mitigating.