Journal #6

What Is Feminism?

1. The chapter entitled, “What is Feminism” begins by addressing the history of feminism, in a method to address and define the word for new readers. This introduction in the beginning chapters is essential to new feminists who need to know more history or variety about feminism instead of the ‘cookie-cutter’ lens many people view feminism through. The first couple of pages also sheds an interesting light on the history of feminism by highlighting the many times different groups of ‘feminists’ separated themselves from one another. This alone allows everyone to view feminism through a new perspective. By allowing feminists to fight and differ among themselves offers a larger audience to convene.

2. Baumgardner and Richards address political consciousness by saying, “In reality, feminism wants you to be whoever you are—but with a political consciousness. And vice versa: you want to be a feminist because you want to be exactly who you are” (57). I believe they are viewing political consciousness in reality as just consciousness. They describe it as knowing the culture of Americans, for example, the patriarchy or the systemic racism ingrained in our lands. I don’t think this awareness has to be ‘political’ just knowledgeable. Knowing exactly how whatever culture you live in works and using that knowledge to defy stereotypes is being a conscious feminist. Being a feminist, like they address must have some sort of awareness, even if not of all feminist topics.

3. Knowing how to respond to offensive comments about feminism is one of the first realizations of feminism. Backhanded comments about feminism are inevitable, so Baumgardner and Richards direct readers to reply is educating yourselves on the other individuals views and then starting a conversation. Going in with no knowledge of the person’s personal beliefs will lead you nowhere but frustration. After educating yourself, dissect both the comments by the individual and the information about their beliefs, coming from an educated stance will work much more effectively than coming from the stereotypical ‘angry feminist’ point of view.

4. Separatist feminism is a form of feminism that separates men and women in order to solve the problems with gender inequality. The idea behind this theory is that women will never be able to gain equality from the margins, so in order to do so things must change in favor of women while working against men. This radical concept has its ups and downs just like any concept in feminism, but overall it sounds better on paper than in action. Feminism is about creating equality for everyone not oppressing the oppressor. This concept can be hard to understand and difficult to avoid at times but it’s essential to the overall message of equality.