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AUC Story Circle Reflection

One of the most interesting parts of the story circle reflection was when one of my group member's participants made a comment about how meeting a Saudi Arabian girl had caused her to think differently about feminism. She said that she had previously seen feminism as, at times, an exaggeration or overreaction, but realizing that women weren't even allowed to drive in Saudi Arabia made her give more weight to feminism. It made me think about how many American feminists direct their gaze towards foreign countries- specifically ones in the Middle East and North Africa- as examples of lesser treatment of women. Americans who might not necessarily define themselves as feminists may argue that American forms of feminism that aim to address social attitudes rather than political rights are less important than feminism in countries where women's legal status is less equal. As Americans, our frame of reference contains certain political and legal rights for women, and when that value is disrupted by hearing about societies in which these rights are compromised, it can draw focus towards prioritizing those issues. While it's important for us to understand how issues affect women in different countries, it also can feel condescending or oversimplifying to generalize all women in Muslim-majority countries as oppressed in every way. It was interesting to see a similar phenomenon in a member of my group, especially one living in Egypt; Egypt is a country that some Americans might look at as an example of a place where feminism is more needed than in the US, but for my groupmate, she was experiencing a similar phenomenon with Suadi Arabia. Her frame as a member of Egyptian society, in which women do receive certain legal and societal privileges, led her to be shocked and galvanized by seeing a member of a society that did not have the same social privileges as her. She shared an experience that I had seen reflected in American culture attitudes, but coming from the frame of a different society.