



Woven and Written by: Hillary Augustine Vandebos

Half the Sky...My three-part processing: Individually, with the masses, and with a few.

My Reflection: It is days, quickly becoming weeks, after a women's luncheon I hosted in my office suite, located in downtown Seattle. The conference room white board has not been erased. Words and phrases resonate from its surface, producing a post-event essence: hope, currency, economics, discouraging, and history worth repeating, all written in various colors with unique penwomanship. I reflect upon the crafting of this luncheon, how it came together, and why? Questions circle around and through me. Why did this book feel so pressing? Why does the oppression of women lead me to tears and anger?

Individually: Oprah highlighted the contents of this book and interviewed the authors at the beginning of October. I sat mesmerized by images of women worldwide. Streams of tears came at various speeds down my cheeks as Oprah highlighted the oppression of women. In "Oprah-style," the show was artistically and emotionally crafted by focusing on a few women's stories, while simultaneously hearing the contents of the book through the lenses and voices of the co-authors and winners of the Pulitzer prize, Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn. Tears streamed down my face as I felt the abhorrent abuse directed at women. I grieved not only for the plight of women worldwide, their bodies consistently being objects of harm and violence, but also for my own life, my own harm, and my own silence.

Although my harm seems more subtle and indirect, it is harm nonetheless. My silence has occurred in the context of the faith-tradition by men who possess pulpits, but do not invite dialogue and by women who have stood silent because of their own "stuckness" and fear. Although I intentionally keep the details abstract and reserved for face-to-face conversation, I know connecting to my own sense of struggle as a woman has moved me to fight against injustices on behalf of other women. Experiencing deep injustice, bred by power gone awry, has opened my eyes and heart to injustices everywhere. I feel a sense of connection

with women who may reside on the other side of the planet because my internal planet, my soul, has grieved. I feel somewhat connected by tears, perhaps? I don't always have words that feel fitting, but generally, I have tears. A powerful multicultural language when words feel far away, useless, and inaccessible.

With the masses: Post-Oprah, October airing, I received an email from a local Seattle non-profit, informing me that Nicholas Kristof, would be in Seattle for a book and luncheon discussion. I immediately registered, hoping that this might be another place my tears could continue. I knew there was more "something" inside of me. Whether tears, screams, or questions this would be another place to "prime" my inner, soul pump. Somehow, I felt that my "grief in action" process on behalf of women worldwide was just beginning. The downtown Seattle luncheon was packed...making Nicholas and the other presenters look small from the back of the large room. 300ish men and women were invited to enter into the contents and experiences of this book while eating a delicious luncheon at the Women's University Club; an early century building with craftsman style décor, exuding history from every laff and plaster crack. It was beautiful, it was inspiring, and I was not done moving.

With a few:

After hearing Nicholas speak, I emailed three women who were on the top of my mind. I scheduled a panel, luncheon discussion at my office for a maximum of 20 women. I am now in a reflective space as I think back on the luncheon. It is thanksgiving week. I am thankful for women who care, women who think, and women who fight.

Half the Sky is a book which provides a space to wonder and a call to action. The women panelists discussed their own lives, where the book invited them to wonder, and how they felt moved to action. I enjoyed their enthusiasm and their curiosity. And, throughout the luncheon, I became more aware of myself. I am more able to answer who I am in this season of my womanhood. I invite, I gather, and I process both individually, with the masses (300ish), and with a few (20ish). I need many different spaces, many different experiences, and lots of external conversations for injustices to sink into my soul, to simmer in the warm abyss of my body, so that when it's time to act, I will emerge from an integrated place. Sounds like a birth process for me.

I shout out for another opportunity: Nicholas Kristof is coming – AGAIN - to the Seattle Area. He is speaking at Overlake School in Redmond, WA.

Address: 20301 NE 108th St. on Monday, December 7 at 7:30 pm. \$10 suggested donation at the door. Learn more [at overlake.org](http://www.overlake.org).