At the heart of many social issues that invoke conversations on civil rights in our nation today, lie the differences and similarities between races, genders, and classes, and overall acceptance of these. At a broad social view: the consideration of social norm versus social change, and at a personal level: the consideration of one’s role in the established status quo. These issues are neither easy or light to discuss as a nation, where so many discrepancies are created involving race, class, and gender—nor have they ever been. In the past, such differences have caused war and disorder between various social groups in the Americas, from which results irreconcilable pain—and therefore difference-- between groups. This difference asks us the question: who deserves to be held accountable for the pain caused generations ago, the peoples who initially caused it, or the peoples who, generations later, continue to uphold the pain and therefore hate of their ancestors? Author Victoria Freeman attempts to answer this as she writes, “I don't see myself as personally responsible for the actions of my predecessors, but I recognize that I have inherited their legacy.” ¹ Although Freeman’s approach at the question is practical, it is not with any certainty that this question can be given a definitive answer, but rather, it begs and even deeper question, did these differences always exist between peoples, and if not, how were they formed? I believe I can begin to answer that question using irrefutable proof from sources of the age in question: the inception of the colonization of the Americas. At the turn of the turn of the sixteenth century, there was very little difference seen between most native peoples and European explorers in the Americas, but as the explorers were replaced by colonists in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, who saw no room for any difference between their groups and the natives, peoples became more isolated, defined, and over-all different from each other, especially under the guise of religion, which heightened hostilities between groups.

Starting with the discovery of the “New World” as we know it in 1492, and its colonization thereafter, racial and gender differences between peoples there were virtually non-existent, and distinction of class, rather harmless. Columbus writes of the Native Americans in 1493, “Nor are they (natives) slow or unskilled, but of excellent and acute understanding…”² Before the exploration of the Americas, (as is displayed in artwork from the 1470’s) Europeans assumed that any life forms in the New World would both be barbaric and monstrous, however, Columbus is pleasantly surprised to meet very human, very normal people there.³ He goes on to say “they are of simple manners and trustworthy, and very liberal

¹ Freeman, 2002.
² Columbus, 1493.
³ Lecture Notes, September 2, 2013 (Lecture given on September 4).
with everything they have, refusing no one who asks for anything they may possess.” Priest and traveler to the new world Des Las Casas complements Columbus’s findings in 1552, saying “And of all the infinite universe of humanity, these people are the most guileless, the most devoid of wickedness and duplicity, the most obedient and faithful to their native masters and to the Spanish Christians whom they serve.”

Even Englishman Thomas Harriot, who would have had little knowledge of the Spanish’s experiences in the new world, supports Columbus and Des Las Casas’s character description of the natives by reporting good relationships and “wonderfull admiration” between the natives and colonists in 1590, “There was no towne where we had any subtile devise practised against us, we leaving it unpunished or not revenged (because wee sought by all meanes possible to win them by gentlenesse)”

Few reports from this time point to the natives or colonists and explorers as having a negative relationship, and the ones that do, such as that from Sepulveda, who calls the natives “barbarous and inhumane peoples who have no civil life and peaceful customs”, were often from people who had never traveled to the Americas. Even the Requerimiento of 1513, which required natives to convert to Catholicism, considers the “barbarous nations” to be unified with Spain under the guise that all men are children of God.

It is not until the turn of the seventeenth century that larger discrepancies between peoples are made. These differences appear begin at the end of the Christian peoples in the colonizing nations. It was widely believed that Europeans had a God given “naturall” and “civill” right to land in the New World as said by John Winthrop in 1629, since God owns all, and the Christians are God’s chosen people. To go against this right, according to Winthrop, is to not only go against the Church, but also God himself. He goes on to say that the natives have actually “benifight allreaddy by our Neighbourhood”, implying that they are better off being dictated over by Christian law, something that the natives would of likely denied as false, had they written more documents in this time. This European mindset, as you might call it, is further described by Bradford in 1642, “Satan hath more power in these heathen lands, as some have thought, than in more Christian nations, especially over God's servants in them.” This is precisely the mindset that led to atrocities such as the 1572 of the Incan tribal historian, and the 1577 decree forbidding research in to native Incan culture, both of which occurred because of the Spanish’s intolerance for non-Christian record keeping. In return, the Native Peoples began to look down on the Europeans, such as documented by Guaman Poma in 1615, when he noted that the Incans believed that the Spanish must

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4 Des Las Casas, 1552.
5 Harriot, 1590.
6 Sepulveda, 1547.
7 Rubios, 1513.
8 John Winthrop, 1629.
9 John Winthrop, 1630.
10 Bradford, 1642.
literally eat gold because of their greed for the metal.\textsuperscript{11} At this point in history, the general attitude of Natives toward the Europeans is one of intolerance and misunderstanding, and of Europeans toward Natives, becomes one of fear and rejection of culture. This kind of fear is documented in writings such as Richard Frethorne’s letter home dated 1623, “wee live in feare of the Enimy everie hower”.\textsuperscript{12} Later in his letter, Frethorne complains of the severe hunger and poverty he faces as an indentured servant. The issue of indentured servitude- usually five to seven years of service by poor white males to richer landowners- is not so well documented from the end of servants, but Frethorne’s account opens the perspective eye to yet another social issue: class among peoples.\textsuperscript{13} These two emerging aspects of social difference in the Americas, race and class, can be most concretely established by and examination of the laws in America. By 1643, Virginia law takes note of slaves, but it is not until 1661 and 1667 that Negros and slaves are mentioned, respectively.\textsuperscript{14} This goes to show that although there was an initial discrepancy between classes by law, race and social order did not become matters of severe legal importance until the mid-sixteenth century.

By the mid-1600’s and in to the 1700’s, differences of race and class were clearly established in the Americas, with the English and Natives existing as equally intolerant of each other, and as Christian officials and landowners being “more worthy” to God’s land than slaves, servants, and colored people. This continued to intensify over the centuries with the rise of puritanism. Historian Elizabeth Reis, documents the puritans as a people with “misanthropy with which they interpreted the doctrine of predestination, and on their practical devaluation of women. All humans, they believed, were either doomed or saved”\textsuperscript{15} Words from Increase Mather, a prominent puritan holy man, support this claim. “Who were the Inventors of Petulant Dancings? They had not their original amongst the People of God, but amongst the Heathen”\textsuperscript{16} he writes of dancing, meaning he believes the natives (Heathen) dance because they do not know that God damns those who dance with the opposite sex to hell for being promiscuous. Years earlier he writes of rebellion the natives took against the English: “treacherous and bloody Indians who had lately submitted themselves, and promised Fidelity to the English, killed and took captive above thirty Souls”\textsuperscript{17} Which goes to show the native’s intolerance of strict Christian and English rules. But in great sadness he continues, saying of the Natives, “…many of them withdrawn themselves, (…) others that have been in hostility against us, remain unconquered, we cannot enjoy such

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{11}] Lecture Notes, September 4, 2013
\item[\textsuperscript{12}] Frethorne, 1623.
\item[\textsuperscript{13}] Frethorne, 1623.
\item[\textsuperscript{14}] Lecture Notes, September 9, 2013.
\item[\textsuperscript{15}] Reis, 2001
\item[\textsuperscript{16}] Increase Mather, 1684.
\item[\textsuperscript{17}] Increase Mather, 1676, pg. 73.
\end{itemize}
perfect peace as in the years which are past.”\(^\text{18}\), showing that he regrets that the two peoples can no longer be peaceful, as a result of either party’s willingness to accept their differences. Differences in race begin to expand beyond Natives and Europeans to Africans in 1680’s and 1690’s, when African enslavement spread from the Caribbean to places such as Virginia and South Carolina.\(^\text{19}\) However the puritan rise not only emphasized the discrepancies of race, but also that of class here again, and newly, that of gender. Differences in Class now range notably from the educated to the uneducated and the Godly to ungodlike, as noted by Thomas Shephard in his 1672 letter to his fourteen year old son\(^\text{20}\), as well as from servants to slaves, as noted by Beverly in 1705; “Their Servants, they distinguish by the Names of Slaves for Life, and Servants for a time”. Beverly goes on to introduce race and gender difference, by writing that “white Women (are) to be absolutely exempted: Whereas on the other hand, it is a common thing to work a Woman Slave out of Doors” and by writing that it is the job of the man, free or otherwise, to labor.\(^\text{21}\) Noyes supports this idea of separation of gender in 1703, “The Words in Deut. 22. 5 are very plain, and very terrible: The Woman shall not wear that which pertaineth to a Man; neither shall a Man put on a Womans Garment: for all that doe so are abomination to the Lord thy God.”\(^\text{22}\) Again, all of these differences between peoples and established by past relationships of their generations past, in the 1500’s through 1600’s, and are heightened by the rise of Christian ideals in the late 1600’s and 1700’s. This leads to a final rejection of all things and people in binary opposition of Christian beliefs by the European peoples in the 1700’s,\(^\text{23}\) whether it be Native peoples or their ideas or even those who were Christian and dared to question authority, such as Anne Hutcherson boldly did in 1683\(^\text{24}\). (Which was quite taboo, since she was puritan woman, who was expected to be subservient.) However, just as in any social establishment, there are a few acceptations, and since not all people in the Americas were Christian, white, or rich. Two of such exceptions are Bacon’s rebellion, where white servants and African slaves teamed up to overthrown their masters, and Anthony Johnson’s story, that of a black man who comes to own generous amounts of land and slaves after his servitude expires\(^\text{25}\). These stories create dimension in the bleak realm of social difference and acceptance we find at the end of the 1700’s, which still, predominantly remains to be, a tale of great difference and little acceptance.

\(^{18}\) Increase Mather, 1676, pg. 75.  
\(^{19}\) Lecture Notes, September 11, 2013  
\(^{20}\) Shephard, 1672.  
\(^{21}\) Beverly, 1705.  
\(^{22}\) Noyes, 1703  
\(^{23}\) Lecture Notes, September 16, 2013  
\(^{24}\) Lecture Notes, September 18, 2013.  
\(^{25}\) Lecture Notes, September 11, 2013.
Interpreter Karin Sutton once wrote: “The challenge of representing eighteenth-century black chattel slavery is to strike a balance between being truthful and being tasteful.”26 I think this can be said for much of early American history. And beyond the challenge of tastefulness and truth, is the challenge of how to represent events accurately without appealing to any crowd, not the winners or the losers of the battle, as Cheryl Finley writes of the Door of No Return27. The key to both of these lies in the art of using evidence from direct sources, as well as an acknowledgement of their bias, to draw a bigger picture. I have done such in this paper as to draw the similarities and differences between class, religion, and gender in Early American History. Overall, through evaluation, it is clear that difference is not something the preexists people, but is created by man over time, starting in American between races in the sixteen century, and intensifying with classes and gender thereafter. And perhaps as long as we can acknowledge these created differences as just that—created, we personally, as well as our nation, can provide ourselves self with a healthy slate to form relationships with social cultures, inside and outside of our boarders.