Step 4:

When thinking about issues related to race, class, gender, disability, and sexuality my thinking has changed so much about these certain issues after taking these classes in college. In high school I was in a complete bubble where none of these issues occurred, well at the time that is what I believed. I went to a private school in Richmond, VA where everyone knew each other and about each other’s families. In my entire grade there were only 4 African American girls, and no other girls from different races. It wasn’t until I came to college and took these courses where I truly realized the major race problem from my high school. It was not that we weren’t an inclusive school, we were not mean people, but I think being a primarily white school was already intimidating enough. It made it seem like we were super exclusive when the school was not trying to be. This caused a major disadvantage in my learning of the topic. When I came to college, I met so many people from different races and family backgrounds and at times it made me feel guilty about where I come from. I felt this way because I wished I had more experiences with meeting different people. When I first started taking these types of classes, I was blind to the reality of the problems in our social world. I did not realize how many racial issues there were until I experienced it right in front of me. Throughout college and now my thinking has changed so much about race. I find myself wanting to know more and be involved in the change because of the many interesting and thought- provoking courses. This semester while taking the inequality and social difference course we did an assignment where we discussed systematic racism. We watched a video all about this topic and examples of it. I was very unaware of what this term meant, but after watching the film and seeing the examples of this issue I was aware. The examples were super upsetting and events that I had not heard about. Two of these included the Mexican themed party at Penn State and the Asian theme party at Duke University. During these events students dressed like these races without thinking this could be wrong. After learning about this I was super upset, now thinking about race this example is just one of the many that had provided me to think differently after taking this course.

Class has been a major topic and theme in a few of my classes this past year. Before taking these courses, I was aware of class and what it meant. I did not think much about it or realize how it is a huge social issue in our society. The past two semesters have broadened my overall understanding of class and its importance in society. Marriage and the family, deviance, and inequality and social difference courses have all impacted my understanding on class. One of the key concepts that first comes to mind was from the deviance class I took. The concept was depending on what level class you are, you are more likely to engage in deviant acts. Most people assume that the lower class is more likely to be more deviant, and this was very accurate. Many people do not realize or accept that people in higher class get away with many deviant acts, an example of this is a white-collar criminal. In the inequality and social difference course, this is where the overall term of class was explained in more depth. There were so many different parts of class explained and the overall concept that stuck with me was that class in our societies usually involves similar status (prestige/admiration for lifestyle) and comparable levels of power and wealth.

Disability is a huge and important issue in our social world. Earlier I discussed growing up where I did and not being exposed to much before of the school I went to, and disability was not around either. I never got exposed to disability until I came to college. I fully understand/ have been able to experience disability in college not just from the courses I took, but in general. In the inequality and social difference course, disability was a huge topic because it is constant in people’s lives and makes up much of their social structure. People with disabilities are often looked down on even when they have just as much combability as others. An important concept and conversation that was discussed in the course was the fact that these people are being declined jobs because of this. Even when these people have the same information on their resumes but have some sort of disability, they are not looked at anymore for certain jobs. It is very unfortunate and upsetting. After taking certain courses, I have a much better understanding on disabilities and will continue to learn more with the path I am on.

In the past year my knowledge on sexuality has changed so much with the certain classes I have taken. Before these courses specifically sex and gender and inequality and social differences, I did not know the true difference between terms sex and gender. My overall perspectives on sexuality and sexual orientation have become so much more knowledgeable than I ever thought. Some people get super uncomfortable with these topics, but I find them fascinating, and I think it is super important as a society to be aware of these things because they are changing so much. A concept about sexuality that I thought was very interesting is that in our society being placed in a category based on sexual orientation usually leads to a sexual identity. Learning this concept in the inequality and social difference class was interesting because if we were not placed in these, we wouldn’t necessarily know. It is all very thought- provoking and that is why I think it is important to be in the know/ aware of these terms.

Lastly, the topic of gender and its issues. There is so much to know and especially in our society today regarding gender. After taking the courses listed above, I have learned so much about gender and all that it means. The first thing that comes to mind about gender is a paper written in the society and gender class about Mexico’s third gender. Before this class I had never heard of anything like this, so it was super fascinating to me. What this third gender means is in Mexico their third-party gender is known as the “muxe”. What they define a muxe as is neither a man nor woman. Third party gender people can be men that have thoughts as a woman or be women and have thoughts like a man. When learning about this I could not believe it was real at first, but I thought it was great that a society could form this. This broadened my understanding about gender in several ways and made me realize how important it is to people. Learning about gender and being able to understand it is super important especially important with careers.