

The Haimesian Anti-Prejudice Argument

Difference, Individual Judgment, and the Limits of Human Ranking

Michael Richard Haimes

Central claim: *Human differences are real, but race and sex are insufficient grounds for determining the worth of the individual. Ultimate comparative value is known by Yahweh; human beings do not possess grounds to claim that knowledge for themselves.*

The Haimesian Anti-Prejudice Argument

1. No two existing objects or beings are exactly alike; therefore, differences necessarily exist between individuals and between groups.
2. If two things are genuinely different, then they cannot be perfectly equal in every respect; under a complete comparison, one must ultimately be better than the other, however slightly.
3. Every race and every sex contains outliers whose traits, abilities, character, and achievements differ greatly from those typical of the group to which they belong.
4. Therefore, the Haimesian System accepts that one race must, in total, be better than another race.
5. Likewise, one sex must, in total, be better than the other sex.
6. However, even though such an ultimate ordering exists, it cannot be reliably applied by human beings to individual members of those groups. Because every group contains enormous variation and exceptional outliers, race or sex alone is insufficient to determine the value, ability, character, or potential of the individual standing before us.
7. Therefore, the Haimesian System does not merely “hold this truth to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.” Instead, it measures individuals as equal in fundamental standing because race and sex have proven insufficient grounds for determining the worth of any particular human being.

Ultimate comparative value is easily known by Yahweh, but we cannot hold the grounds to justly claim that knowledge for ourselves.

Conclusion: The Haimesian System rejects racism and sexism because no person may justly be valued, restricted, rewarded, or condemned according to the presumed overall standing of the race or sex into which that person was born.

“All Men Are Created Equal”

The words “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal” come not from the United States Constitution, but from the **Declaration of Independence**, adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776. Thomas Jefferson was its principal draftsman, although John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, the rest of the drafting committee, and Congress made changes before the final text was adopted. Jefferson’s surviving rough draft is particularly interesting because he originally wrote that these truths were “sacred & undeniable”; during revision, that became the far more famous “self-evident.”

Jefferson was also not creating the idea of human equality out of nothing. Only weeks earlier, **George Mason’s Virginia Declaration of Rights**, adopted June 12, 1776, had presented human freedom and natural rights as belonging to people by nature. Mason’s declaration became one of the important immediate predecessors of the Declaration of Independence. Behind both men stood the broader natural-rights tradition, especially **John Locke**, whose political philosophy argued that human beings possess natural rights that government does not create and therefore cannot legitimately treat merely as gifts to be granted or

withdrawn at will. Jefferson transformed this intellectual inheritance into one of history's most memorable political claims: human equality precedes government rather than being bestowed by government.

There is, however, a distinction between Jefferson's proposition and the Haimesian one. The Declaration calls equality **self-evident**. The Haimesian argument begins by denying that literal sameness or perfect equality between distinct beings is self-evident at all. Human beings plainly differ. The question therefore becomes not whether differences exist, but **what authority those differences give us over another human being**. The Haimesian answer is that race and sex are inadequate instruments for measuring the individual. Even if an ultimate comparative ordering exists before Yahweh, the enormous variation within every human population prevents us from justly taking a judgment about a group and fastening it upon the particular person standing before us.

That tension between proclaimed equality and obvious human difference did not disappear after 1776. In fact, later thinkers repeatedly forced America to explain what its own declaration actually required.

Benjamin Banneker, a Black mathematician and astronomer born free in Maryland, wrote directly to Jefferson in 1791. He invoked the Declaration's equality language while challenging the degrading assumptions then made about people of African ancestry. Banneker grounded his case partly in God: humanity shared one Creator and a common human nature. In other words, the fact that society had categorized Banneker by race could not legitimately settle the question of what Banneker himself was capable of being - and his own intellectual accomplishments dramatically demonstrated the weakness of judging the individual through the presumed characteristics of his group.

Frederick Douglass carried that challenge much further during the nineteenth century. Having escaped slavery and become one of the leading abolitionists and civil-rights thinkers of his age, Douglass attacked racial hierarchy while also supporting women's suffrage. His life itself became evidence against prejudice: a society had assigned him the status of an enslaved Black man, while the individual whom that classification supposedly described became an internationally renowned writer, orator, editor, and political thinker. Douglass consequently provides an especially strong historical parallel to the Haimesian emphasis on the **outlier problem**. A prejudicial judgment says, in effect, "I know what you are because I know what group you belong to." Douglass's existence demonstrated how catastrophically wrong such confidence can be. His newspaper movement captured the broader ideal in the motto that right has no sex, truth has no color, and God is Father of all.

The same logic was extended explicitly to sex by **Elizabeth Cady Stanton** and the women at Seneca Falls in 1848. Stanton deliberately modeled the *Declaration of Sentiments* upon the Declaration of Independence and altered its famous proposition to declare the equality of **"all men and women."** She was not claiming that men and women were physically indistinguishable beings. Her target was the leap from difference to political subordination: because someone had been born female, society had presumed that this fact alone justified restricting her legal and political possibilities. Frederick Douglass himself attended the convention and supported the movement for women's political rights.

Abraham Lincoln then elevated the Declaration's equality proposition into the central moral meaning of the American experiment. "All men are created equal" became a guiding principle in his struggle against the expansion of slavery. At Gettysburg in 1863, he reached back eighty-seven years to 1776 and described the

United States as a nation dedicated to that proposition. For Lincoln, the Declaration was therefore not merely an observation that people possess identical characteristics; it was a principle against turning human differences into a justification for ownership and domination. The individual could differ from another individual in countless respects while remaining outside the legitimate category of human property.

That historical development is important to the Haimesian Anti-Prejudice Argument because it shows that equality has repeatedly meant something deeper than **sameness**. Jefferson, Mason, Banneker, Douglass, Stanton, Lincoln, and later civil-rights thinkers approached the subject differently, but the recurring problem remained recognizable: human beings undeniably differ, yet what follows from that fact? The Haimesian System gives a particularly strict answer. Difference exists. Ultimate comparative value exists. Yahweh possesses the knowledge necessary for that ultimate judgment. **We do not.** And the comparatively crude facts of race and sex are nowhere near sufficient to substitute for knowledge of the individual.

This also explains why the existence of outliers is not merely a statistical curiosity within the argument. The outlier destroys the confidence necessary for prejudice. Even if someone possessed accurate knowledge of the average characteristics of a population, he would still not know whether the particular person before him was typical, slightly atypical, or one of the most extraordinary exceptions ever produced by that population. To restrict that person beforehand is therefore to punish or diminish the individual for a prediction derived from other people. The person has been replaced by a category.

Nearly two centuries after Jefferson, **Martin Luther King Jr.** deliberately returned to the Declaration. On August 28, 1963, speaking at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, King described his dream as rooted in the American dream and explicitly invoked the creed that all men are created equal. He envisioned Black and White children living together without racial barriers and imagined a future in which his own children would be evaluated according to who they actually became rather than according to their skin color.

That is where the Haimesian Anti-Prejudice Argument ultimately arrives as well. It does not require humanity to pretend that differences do not exist. It does not require races, sexes, groups, or individuals to be identical. It instead denies human beings the right to transform limited knowledge of a category into supposed knowledge of the ultimate worth of the individual.

Race tells us something about ancestry. Sex tells us something about biological constitution. Neither tells us the total value of the person.

The individual must therefore be allowed to reveal who the individual is.

More than two centuries of arguments over equality eventually produced one of their clearest expressions when Martin Luther King Jr. dreamed that his children would:

“...not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

— **Martin Luther King Jr.**, *I Have a Dream*, August 28, 1963

Selected Historical Sources

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