

Why am I attacked by you

Why do you think this is fine

Who do you think you are to judge me in such a way

Who are you to try to overpower my life in this way

You are society

You think but you never know

You see but you never hear

You assume but you never ask

The simple things that can change it all

But you believe what you want

You feed into the fake

And forget about the real

You only see what you want to see

You only see the bad and ignore the good

You see the crime in the streets

You see the stories on the news

You only see what is shown to you

You are society

You have placed this label above my head

You are society

You see me for the color of my skin

But you don't see the innocence underneath

You see a criminal in the streets

You see a thief in the stores

A problem starter wherever he goes

You engraved these labels onto me

You place these above my head

Like a tattoo being shown wherever I go

These labels were placed by you

You are society

I bring fear to another's face

Because of the label that you have placed

Is he this is he that

You will never know because of the fear you have been taught to have

Have you seen the hard work that has been done

From the people with different color skin

We are all different

We bring you many things

We bring you food

We bring you life

We helped your wealth

We build your structure

We have taught you culture

We come from different places you and I

But you still only see what you want to see

You are society

You will only ever see the bad and never the good

But even then we will all stand up and show them the work we put in

When driving down that road ask yourself

Who built this road I ride on

Who worked on these buildings I work in

Who helped this place function

Why do we have so much hate for the people who help us the most

You are society

And you need a change

We are different people

From different places

We come together as one

No judgment or criticism

Everyone seen for who they are

WE ARE EQUALITY

I am proud of where I come from

You place this label I will always live with

But you will never change the heart of a proud one

There will be a day where you will no longer be this way We will make the change

One day these labels will disappear

You will see me as me and not what you've seen on TV

I AM THE CHANGE THAT PROVED YOU WRONG

I am NOT a thief

I am NOT a criminal

I am NOT a dropout

I AM A LEADER I AM EDUCATED I AM THE CHANGE YOU NEEDED TO SEE

By Jiovanni Gutierrez Montano, a student at Health Sciences High & Middle College

This poem is included in the introduction to 'Removing Labels, 40 Techniques to Disrupt Negative Expectations About Students and Schools' by Dominique Smith, Douglas Fisher, and Nancy Frey (Corwin Press 2021).