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
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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).