Identity crisis.

Being a black, immigrant Muslim and living in America. I was known just by my name and my gender, not by the color of my skin or dress or immigrant status. But now I’m known as a black immigrant and a Muslim in America. Following my arrival in the U.S., many identities came to define me. Just on the first day at JFK Airport in New York, I had to take practice identifying myself as black, immigrant, or refugee. You’re stripped of your identity and wrapped up in a categorizing system that tries to define and determine your destiny.

Color is a big deal in America. It determines how people see you and generalize about you and your life. Religion is a big deal in America. If you are Muslim in America, your loyalty is questionable. When Obama was running for president, he repeatedly said, “I am not a Muslim, I am not a Muslim, and I am not a Muslim.” Being a Muslim in America raises a question of loyalty, “Are you with us or with them?” Like Bush said, “You are either with us or against us.” Your blackness grants you almost a ticket to hell, known as American jail, where many young blacks reside in a small cell that builds invisible walls around you that scares the hell out of people and raises the question, where you fit in America society, like Indian caste system.

Wait a minute, the story’s not over. Your blackness defies discrimination and reinforces invisible segregation that runs along racial boundaries, which plays significant role in your life and raises self-consciousness. Being a black is not a crime, being an immigrant is not a crime, being a Muslim is not a crime. But these
identities are misunderstood and misinterpreted, and I am trapped in these identities forever. When I was volunteering for Obama’s election, I knocked on a stranger’s door and was confronted by a man who said that America is not ready for a black president. I was shocked. I never thought the color of skin becomes a problem, but I’m wrong. I never thought my religion is a problem, but I’m wrong. I never thought my immigrant status is a problem, but I’m wrong. The combination of invisible and visible identities constrict my life in America. I am who I am, leave me alone or love me as I am.