

Limited to US citizens

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I am not a citizen. My blue passport from a so-called developing country states it. The booklet is thick. Witness of several visa stamps. Pointless hours spent at consulates. Immigration forms with no punctuation marks missing lest be denied. Bank statements. *No sir, I do not intend to remain in the country.* Customs scrutiny. Reminder of my subpar status whenever I go through an airport. I wasn't lucky in the "Choose your parents and your birth place" lotto; however, I hit jackpot every time customs "randomly" chooses passengers for secondary inspection. The officer then goes through my booklet one, two, three times, drug test One, Two, Three times, interrogated ONE, TWO, THREE times.

Reminder of my lack of citizenship. The colors of my passport booklet are fading: bad printing quality due to corrupt negotiations in the fragile democracy back home.

Home.

The suitcase is too heavy with fragile democratic dreams to actually dwell on the home issue. The airport is frenzied. People coming back home, and a few of us leaving it behind. Escaping. Forgetting. Move on.

New country but no blank slate. "Limited to US citizens". Small letters at the bottom of an internship offer. Stop. No need to read any further. Another opportunity missed. Networking connections never made. Experience not acquired even though the job description matches my skills like a glove. *Love the globe. Globalization is here to stay. Opportunities are everywhere you look for.* Bullshit from trite so-called leadership coaches. Birth place matters. Citizenship matters. The-lack-of-utter-despair-whenever-I-think-about-future-career-options matters.

Simply put, I do not belong. I cannot belong. It cannot be long before my visa permit expires.

I am expendable as expected. Soon I'll be replaced by another inexperienced non-citizen fool equally deluded. I was deluded. I am deluged with immigration paperwork and left with one more year of joyful, right-off the bat rejections due to the wrong citizenship status. Self-slap. Move on.

If your resumé is brilliant, they'll take you in. You are already working more than enough in your office. Naïve, warm-hearted parental encouragement. Daily homily. Family. It is not enough, as people first see my passport and dismiss the rest. Child born and raised in a developing-country yielded from parents born and raised in a developing-country whose entire families have all been born and raised in the same developing-country. The curse runs in our veins. Tribe of the damned. Damnation. Damn nation rubber-stamped in my ID produced by a damn notion of geography. Boundaries. Bound. Dear soon-to-retire parents, I am bound to help you financially quite soon, as indicated by cultural norms back home. Back home, back to that uncomfortably back-breaking backward point of origin, back to my office. Cave. Shelter. Refuge. Go back to your country, refugee.

My work output is all I have. Numerous papers and contributions must be written and edited to pad the CV. And you also need to showcase teamwork, and prove extensive experience and out-of-the-box thinking. I should work 60 hours a week instead. Every moment not spent in the office is spent in other activities to sustain my grueling schedule. According to an article in *USA Today*, the human body needs regular physical and social activity so that it can remain healthy. Friends and exercise as commodities, as simple means to punch 65 hours in my office-cave while only being paid for the first 20. Do 70 hours instead to ignore my absolute lack of control over border politics. Every single week competition and immigration restrictions for non-citizens grow even more stringent. I've to agree to a string of limitations. Every work opportunity comes with strings attached. Sanity is on the string, cord, fiber, muscle and brain fibers always taut, waiting for the imminent snap. Tightrope. A lurid circus act with no safety net.

Non-citizenship is akin to non-personality.

Grave picture. Everything must gravitate around professional development unavailable in a developing country. Room for personal expression is cautiously administered, the dosage of personal feelings is carefully reduced so that numbness ensues. Numbness ensures a self-defense mechanism, a chasm of indifference to throw away everyday issues: anxiety, fury, frustration, memories, gastronomy, family, friends, climate, language, tradition, everything behind blazing in a glorious pyre.

Sacrifice.

I chose to be a second-class worker rather than a citizen back home. Moronic. Exiled in the country that produced the torturous exiling conditions in my country in the first place. Ironic. Laced scheme that eschews historic responsibilities and skew decisions.

Choices.

Coming to this country was a carefully pondered choice that pounds relentlessly my head. *Head north, dear son, here you won't be able to carry out your dreams.* Carried away by carrots dangling to no avail. Turns out it is difficult to find opportunities here either, dear parents: deep, perverse irony that irons my disappointment so you see a perfectly content individual.

In any case.

My weekly hour of personal expression is up. I need to re-focus and go back to my usual work routine. Personal antics won't take us, non-citizens, too far. According to *The New York Times*, social coping is vital to keep a healthy mind and soul. I do apologize for the previous rant, I get distracted once in a while. I'll restrain myself better next time we meet. If you are still interested in the origins of the idea of citizenship, I already did an extensive literature search. *As proposed by a number of different sources, like Smith (1998), Jones (2002), and West (2003), the origin of citizenship can be traced back to multiple places including [...]*