

Dear America,

My middle name is Noor. In Arabic, it means light—light, as in the thing that I came here looking for.

Dear America,

Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that.”

Dear America,

I think that day in September scorched holes in the hearts of your people and the people are still grieving, and they deserve to be, they deserve to point their fingers but I don’t deserve their fingers pointing at me.

Dear America,

On September 11th, 2001 the twin towers were burning, but now? Now the mosques are burning. And the people who set them aflame also brought their fists down on the woman in the hijab, as she was picking up her kids from school, about to take them to their piano lessons.

Dear America,

Jesus said, “love thy neighbor.”

Dear America,

We come to you, like everyone else, looking for something better. We come to learn, we come to prosper. We do not come to plant bombs on your soil.

And those monsters who do—they are not us. We are not them.

Dear America,

Do you remember the white hooded men who hung black people from trees? Did you ever call them radical Christian terrorists?

Dear America,

You say you are of the people, by the people, and for the people, but we too are the people. And you are not of, by, or for us. You are against us.

Dear America,

We are on the same side. We are over 80 percent of ISIS’s victims. We are just as much under attack as you are, but, still, you push us away.

Dear America,

There is a Muslim girl in Aleppo who managed to crawl out from beneath the rubble of her broken home only to find that she no longer had her legs or her parents – she’s knocking on your closed door, will you not let her in?

Dear America,

The Prophet said, “None among you is a true believer unless he loves for others what he loves for himself.”

Dear America,

Are you a true believer?

Dear America,

You are scared. But you are only scared because you do not know us. If you knew us, you might understand that we have hearts and ours too are scarred with holes.

But America,

You did create a nation out of a single declaration—that all men are created equal.

America,

Thank you for marching by and for us outside the New York airport when innocent people had their dreams deferred for no good reason.

America,

Thank you for shielding yourself from the unforgiving waves of ignorance with knowledge – thank you for knowing us.

America,

Thank you for fighting endlessly to make freedom free—for loving for others what you love for yourself.

America,

Thank you.

Dear America,

My middle name is Noor. In Arabic, it means light—light as in the dawn’s early light by which you so proudly hailed your star-spangled banner; light as in the thing Dr. King so fervently fought for; light as in the thing brewing in lady liberty’s torch;

light as in the thing that I came here looking for.

And I have found it in nooks and corners, but we all need light to live and we cannot live forever in nooks and corners.

Dear America,

My middle name is Noor. Show me that yours is too.

By Kiana Rawji