

1. Why did you choose to come to the US?

I came to the US to go to college. It was a tough choice, to leave my family behind, and go away by myself for the first time, but I was also very excited at the prospect of going to a college that I'd only ever read about in my books.

2. What were some culture shocks that you experienced when you arrived? How did you adapt?

There were several instances of culture shock, many of which now seem minor in hindsight. Everything from differences in eating habits to the ways in which people seemed to interact, which seemed then to be very superficial. I found myself retreating into myself, which only served to alienate me further.

I was fortunate to make some friends, and over time they helped me get better integrated into the social environment.

3. When you have homesickness, how do you cope with it?

I would be homesick sometimes, without being able to put the right name to it. In retrospect, it's clear that that is what I was. I found comfort in hanging out with fellow Indian students, of which there were a dozen or so, and in calling home whenever I could.

4. What words, definitions, or ideas do you associate with the word "citizen"? How do these associations line up with your experience as an immigrant?

Citizenship (especially US citizenship) carries a certain sense of privilege, perhaps because it is so hard-earned and because it is denied to so many, even those who have lived here all their lives. It also comes with a burden of responsibility to the ideals of participation in democracy.

The day I became a US citizen was a proud moment, and one I had looked forward to over the several years it took to become eligible for it, starting 25 years earlier when I first arrived here. It was also a moment that was soured for me by the concomitant ascension of Trump, and the perversion of his administration, which were already starting to become evident in the first months of his presidency.

5. Between you and other Indian-American immigrants, are there differences in thinking on how to be a citizen?

Not sure.

6. According to Claude M. Steele, author of *Whistling Vivaldi*, "identity contingencies" are "the things you have to deal with in a situation because you have a given social identity" such as being old, gay, white, politically conservative or liberal, etc. "Generally speaking, contingencies are circumstances you have to deal with in order to get what you want or need in a situation." Has your social identity been a source of conflict in this way? If so,

tell the story of a particular situation you had to navigate to get what you wanted or needed.

I don't really understand or identify with the premise of this question. I don't think of my social identity as given, for example, as much as it is actively constructed by my actions. My politics, for example, are the product of my own evolution.

7. Can you tell me a story about a time you felt pre-judged, discriminated against, or experienced a microaggression for being Indian-American? How has this affected you over time

I can't think of one offhand, but I think there have been a couple of minor incidents. Not something I've particularly had to deal with it, since I've mostly lived in inclusive and cosmopolitan coastal cities.

8. What kinds of images and stories in the media about Indian-Americans concern you the most or cause you to react emotionally? Why?

It's been remarkable to me how well Indian-Americans have integrated into the American mainstream, while also retaining their own unique cultural differentiation. There is a certain pride of association from the achievements of my fellow Indian Americans - from Kamala Harris in today's Democratic debate to Abhijit Bannerjee who just won the Nobel prize in economics.

9. Has your outward appearance ever caused you to feel invisible, hyper-visible, or both? Silicon Valley is pretty cosmopolitan, and, if anything, Indians are quite over-represented. The only times I feel visible or sensitized to difference are when I encounter other (more under-represented) minorities and am reminded how atypical this environment is.

10. In which specific areas of American life/culture do you feel the most included or represented? In which areas do you feel the least included or represented? Why?

Most included/represented: technology, academics, popular culture

Least included/represented: sports

11. In *Citizen*, Claudia Rankine uses many different visual images that serve as metaphors for the experience of being Black in America. What do you think could be a metaphor for your experience?

Can't say, haven't read the book.