

**The trouble with our race relations**  
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COMMENT Blogger Hussein Abdul Hamid aka Steadyaku47 made waves when he wrote in a posting asking the Chinese not to blame the Malays for being treated as 'second-class citizens'.

Civil society activist Haris Ibrahim felt "troubled". He was equally disturbed by what Raja Petra Kamarudin (RPK) had written about the Malays having become "kecik hati" (disappointed) because they feel the Chinese are not real friends to them.

Haris asked a senior journalist friend about what RPK had expressed, and the friend said it was true. He said the Umno-controlled media had been influencing the Malays by spinning that the DAP, "which is painted as a Chinese party, would be the principal benefactor if Pakatan Rakyat came to power".

As I see it, this is ironic. The media says that the DAP is riding high in Pakatan and Umno leaders drum it in that PAS has become a puppet of the DAP, but look at what the MCA, Umno's partner, is saying.

Repeating his theme for the umpteenth time, MCA president Dr Chua Soi Lek (centre in photo) has just called the DAP, in relation to PAS, a "political eunuch". He insists, as he has insisted many times before, that the DAP will have no guts and ability to stop PAS from bossing Pakatan and getting its way, including implementing hudud and establishing an Islamic state.

What a contradiction between what Umno says and what the MCA says! Umno says the DAP will be the principal benefactor, the MCA says PAS will be the one and the DAP will be the loser. So whom do we believe?

Of course, it's plain to see that the BN strategy adheres to the archaic mould - Umno says one thing to its Malay audience, the MCA says another thing to its Chinese audience. Never mind if they are contradictory.

Perhaps that could have worked in the old days, when mass communication technology was not so sophisticated, but today anyone with brains and knowledge would say, "Whom are Umno and the MCA trying to deceive?"

The truth must be somewhere in the middle - if Pakatan wins, both the DAP and PAS will be winners, and both will likely see each other as equal partners. On hudud and the Islamic state, they have already agreed to disagree. So if Pakatan takes Putrajaya, there cannot be an Islamic state unless the DAP agrees.

Not all Malays are Umnoputras

Coming back to Steadyaku47's proposition, I have to say that although some Chinese might have been resentful of the Malays in the past, they have since realised that the people responsible are actually Umno - and, by extension, the MCA as well.

This explains why the Chinese have largely rejected the MCA. Even former finance minister Daim Zainuddin (right) has recently said that at the next general election, he expects only 20 percent of the Chinese to vote for BN. And that these would mostly be rural Chinese.

Nowadays, the majority of the Chinese blame Umno - and therefore BN - for making them "second-class citizens".

In fact, a Chinese friend of mine asserts, "The Chinese have never blamed the Malays. Ask any Chinese

person and they will tell you that. They do not blame; instead, they will compromise and look around for a solution. If they cannot find a solution, they will move away.”

He's mostly right. It explains why Chinese businessmen still do all right settling for sub-contract work from bumiputeras who get government contracts (unless they are cronies of the government, like some of the big towkays, who get contracts directly); why until March 8, 2008, they rarely spoke out against the system even though it discriminated against them; and why so many Chinese have emigrated since the New Economic Policy came into force.

Those who stay back work doubly hard to make sure they fulfil certain dreams, and if they can't get into the civil service, they go to the private sector. They do grumble and sometimes target certain Malays who have beaten them to certain opportunities, but they rarely malign the entire race.

Gov't has poisoned ethnic ties

But to be fair to Steadyaku47, his blog posting does not accuse the Chinese of blaming the Malays as a whole. It is most unfortunate that his blaring headline, 'The Chinese Must Stop Blaming the Malays!' (with exclamation mark, to boot), gives that wrong impression.

After reading his article carefully, one would realise that Steadyaku47's real intention is to urge the Chinese to blame the BN government, Umno, the MCA and "the lack of education to make our young understand the need to celebrate our differences".

In fact, a large part of the article shows understanding and sympathy for the plight of the Chinese. And it also expresses the embarrassment Malays feel for having "a Malay-led government that is corrupt, arrogant and totally without compassion for its own race".

Steadyaku47 asks, "Do you want to be a Malay whose private life ... is under the control of ... government-appointed religious bodies that think that it is their duty to raid houses of ill-repute to save Malay girls from ... depravity while the same politicians that appointed them have lives that would rival Hugh Hefner's?"

I think Steadyaku47's intent is honest and sincere, and his meaning is clear.

We should be more concerned about Haris's (right) concern, i.e. that the Malays are "kecik hati" regarding the Chinese, thanks to the spin of the Umno-controlled media.

This idea that the Chinese are not friendly needs to be debunked, but it's going to be very difficult because the government has done such an excellent job over the last few decades of polarising the races and sowing suspicion between them.

It will take decades more to undo the damage. It will take re-education. It will take new government policies that radically change the racial paradigm, beginning with the dismantling of race-based political parties. It will take the organising of countless programmes to foster goodwill among the various races.

Will it happen under the current BN government? Or will it stand a better chance under a Pakatan government? This is something Malaysians will need to think about when they cast their votes at the next general election.

The day when the Chinese and the Malays feel they are real friends will still be a long time coming, but the outcome of the next elections could decide if it can be somewhat shortened.