

**Bersih 3.0 - Breaking through the fear barrier**  
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**By Thomas Fann**

As I write this, we are just four days away from April 28, 2012.

It is the day which the Bersih 2.0 steering committee has chosen to have Bersih 3.0, a sit-down protest called by its BM name - Duduk Bantah.

It is late at night and I am sleepless. As I lay awake, I reminisce of Bersih 2.0 last year on July 9.

However, this time round, Bersih 3.0 is no longer an option for me for I found myself roped into the committee organising it simultaneously with the KL event, in my city (Johor Baru).

The band of us were crazy enough, probably foolish as well, to even consider doing it.

Probably the experiences of July 9, 2011 have hardened our resolve to push for change and we didn't want our beloved city to miss out on it.

But I am realising that it is one thing to risk your own life and another to be in a position where you may also be risking the lives of others.

It is a fear that is multiplied by the number of those who will be coming out to sit-down and protest.

Wait a minute! We are just talking about we, the citizens, wanting to say that we think the present electoral system and roll needs to be improved and cleaned up.

All we are asking is two hours to sit-down in a public space to voice our concerns.

Why should we be afraid? Yet, we are.

Earlier we were out distributing our flyers promoting the event and we could see the fear in the eyes of people.

It is not that they do not support the cause, I mean, who doesn't want a free and fair election, who doesn't want to get rid of corruption and dirty politics? Yet, the question asked by many is, "Polis tangkap tak?" Or "Will the police arrest us?"

We have come to a point where we are even afraid to wear yellow! We are truly a pathetic lot! But this fear of arrest and even brutality is understandable, almost.

Because we have seen it.

Not just at the protest last year, whose image is still fresh in the minds of people, but we have seen it in our country the past 54 years and probably even longer when we were colonised.

I believe there is a stranglehold of fear over our nation, a spirit of intimidation that hovers over all of us.

Fear paralyses us and discourages us from doing what we know is right. It makes us put up with evil even though we abhor it. Evil triumphs.

Edmund Burke's quote comes to mind - "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing."

I believe that there are more good people in Malaysia than there are evil ones.

But they remain paralysed by fear.

We need to break this stranglehold of fear over our society, we need to set ourselves and our people free.

How? One at a time. One person breaking through at a time because we find courage in the courage of others.

When we push through our own fears, we find courage on the other side.

Nelson Mandela said, "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear."

I feel afraid but I know I cannot afford to be. So I push and push through the layers of fear which are like strong cobwebs trying to hold me back. Others are looking to us.

The good people who want to do the right thing are looking to us. We cannot but overcome our fears and step forward on 28th April and do the right thing for this nation.

The spirit of intimidation must be defeated once and forever so that our people can be free.

"Free at last; free at last; thank God Almighty we are free at last." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

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