

Indie produced Bersih song goes viral
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By Andrew Ong

When our newsdesk initially watched a new music video produced in support of Bersih 3.0, some of the staff felt it was rather baffling.

"It is not much of a propaganda video," said one, while another felt that the video was not "anthem-ic" enough advertisement for the rally.

As it turns out, producers of the five minutes, 26 seconds The Bersih Song: Tears of Malaysia released at 8.30pm yesterday - and recorded more than 22,000 views at the time of writing - had intended it to be neither.

bersih music video tears of malaysia 240412 michelle hooLittle known Johor-based music producer Michelle Hoo (left) began composing the song during the second half of last year as a labour of love, long before Bersih 3.0 was conceived.

House-bound because Hoo had to look after her paralysed father, was unable to join the Bersih 2.0 in July last year. Though disappointed, the experience fuelled her composition.

"Everyone can contribute in their own ways. I can compose. I can contribute even if I stay at home," said the first-time music video producer.

"Everyone can make a difference. Just take a small step at a time."

More volunteers join in

Indeed, making a difference is the central theme of Tears of Malaysia, which is juxtaposed against a multi-racial cast of Bersih supporters along with visuals of Bersih 2.0.

NONEOnce a demo for Tears of Malaysia began making its rounds among her friends, more people supportive of Bersih's cause joined in on the effort, including vocalists from Penang and Johor.

By October last year, Hoo and her new-found team spent a day recording the song at a studio - incidently owned by a Bersih supporter who let them use it for free - in Kuala Lumpur.

The next stage involved the video shoot, a process which Hoo said again snowballed on its own.

"More people came in, bringing their families and friends. Before we realised it, we had completed six shoots," said Hoo.

Even the London and Perth chapter of Bersih contributed footage for the video, she added. In all, the project involved more than 50 volunteers.

Though Hoo's video was not officially sanctioned by Bersih, it include shoots with the movement's most recognisable faces, namely Ambiga Sreenevasan, Maria Chin Abdullah, Wong Chin Huat and Subramaniam Pillay.

"They were a friendly and helpful bunch of people... I told them about my ideas and asked them to come up with theirs, along with whatever message they wanted to tell the nation.

'Rojak' language comes naturally

“And it all ties in with my song’s message - you can make a difference,” added Hoo.

Hoo said that she did not intend the song to be mostly in Chinese and the use of other languages - a sprinkling of English, Malay and Tamil - came naturally because Bersih’s cause transcends ethnicity.

“The melody just came from nowhere with the lyrics. Most of my songs are like that. Being Malaysian, speaking ‘rojak’ is very natural for us,” she said.

Subtitles were included in the video clip to ensure that it is universally understood.

On Hoo’s YouTube page, she included short clips from all four of Bersih’s leaders. The most notable clip involves Wong sending his message about Bersih, entirely in Tamil.

Despite the large number of collaborators for the video, it was not always a bed of roses for Hoo as she was forced to abandon her pursuit of a doctorate overseas midway in 2009 to take care of her father.

In fact, Hoo’s music video project came to a standstill between last December and early March this year when she had to dedicate herself full time to caring for her father.

“I have to take care of my paralysed dad, it’s very difficult to leave home. I’ve experienced not stepping out of the house for more than a month before.

“I never thought that this project would grow to this scale. I had only taken a small step, and things just happened,” she said.

With the uncertainties at home, Hoo - who holds a masters degree in marketing from Scotland hopes to be a successful music composer some day - is not sure what will happen next.

But she is certain that her next small step will be to gather with Bersih supporters at Dataran Merdeka this Saturday afternoon.

