

Don't piss in my ear and tell me it's raining
S Thayaparan
MalaysiaKini.com
May 04, 2012

When liberty comes with hands dabbled in blood it is hard to shake hands with her. - Oscar Wilde

COMMENT Abdar Rahman Koya's 'In defence of storming the barricades at Dataran' is nothing more than a bellicose, pro-Anwar Ibrahim polemic that should be rejected by all right-thinking Malaysians interested in non-violent protests, which at this moment is a possible avenue for constructive change in Malaysia.

toh ching hong tigongkia at bersih rally 3.0Abdar Rahman laments the fact that the cause of electoral reform has been sidelined by the violence on April 28, but yet chooses to glorify those who partook in it and mock those who were there for a peaceful non-violent protest and their anger at those (whoever they are and for whatever reason) who may have provoked that violence by storming the barricade.

He assumes these 'law-abiding citizens' have not asked those important questions that he thinks relevant such as 'which law' and 'whose courts' forgetting the fact that there were many protesters who were repeat offenders of previous Bersih marches who obviously disregarded 'unjust laws' imposed by an 'unjust regime' to attend those marches.

What Abdar Rahman does not seem to consider is whoever broke through those barricades did not consider the more important compact between the general public and the Bersih steering committee for a peaceful non-violent protest.

They (and him) did not consider the various other interest groups who were there like the Himpunan Hijau movement and various other NGOs which signed up for a non-violent protest and who agreed with the parameters the Bersih steering committee agreed to.

In other words, what was more important than the state laws were those 'laws' that these various interests groups and the general public made between themselves - 'laws' which those (for whatever reasons) who broke through the barriers had no respect for. This to me is the more egregious offence.

Our answer to the Rio carnival

The writer's sycophantic colours are on proud display when he mocks those who he thinks have "an inborn allergy" to opposition parties like PAS and PKR forgetting (again) that Malaysians are voting across racial and religious lines and some of them (indeed) a good portion were probably marching but who did so under non-partisan banners, much like how PSM's S Arutchelvam and PKR's R Sivarasa reminded those before them that this was a Bersih non-partisan march.

They did this because they want electoral reforms as a safeguard against any political party subverting the will of the rakyat.

And no, being peaceful does not mean abiding to unfair laws. It means abiding to the will of the majority who were there to protest in a peaceful manner those unjust laws that subjugate us.

NONEBersih was indeed our answer to the Rio carnival. It was our carnival of people of different races and creeds marching together under a common banner for the betterment of all, instead of slavish devotees to political parties which make compromises on our behalf which usually benefits only them.

It was a multiracial, multireligious street party which is what this type of regime fears the most. They fear people of all races and religions coming under a common cause, even worse a non-partisan cause of their own free will.

Folks who were outshouting those who screamed 'reformasi', and I know for a fact there were many PKR supporters who did this, did so to remind their fellow protesters that this was bigger than the mere political parties that claim to represent us.

We were not forgetting anything but disregarding our political allegiances for a moment by advocating something which were bigger than our petty political party concerns.

Non-partisan protest

Abdar Rahman's dig at blogger Marina Mahathir's admiration for Bersih co-coordinator S Ambiga's ability to pull in the crowd by reminding her of the numbers Anwar managed to bring during his post-Umno exile is cute but rather misleading.

I was one of the so-called 100.000 who were there in 1998 and I was there (in a symbolic gesture to my PAS comrades) with a mostly Malay crowd who were there looking for their next messiah.

Since then Anwar's fortunes have shifted because of individuals like Ambiga and a changing political and social landscape cognisant that multiracialism is the best antidote to Umno's racist venom.

Of course, there was a strong anti-BN vibe on April 28 but for the most part most people had no problem compartmentalising their political affiliations and the aims of this non-partisan protest.

bersih 3 rally 020512 Ima002And the truth is we did not go there to intentionally break the law. And the most important thing to remember is that breaking the law does not mean engaging in violence. We can break the law, and indeed most of have, but we do this by non-violent means.

And what disgust me about Abdar Rahman's piece are these words: "The barricades blocking our march into Dataran Merdeka are the clearest and most tangible symbol of the government's animosity to the ordinary public."

No. Every day we are greeted by the government's tangible animosity towards ordinary citizens by the racist propaganda Umno members their outsourced thugs and their propaganda organs spew and the unjust manner in which laws are imposed on different ethnic groups.

I despise Utusan Malaysia for instance and if there was a peaceful protest against this 'newspaper' I would never advocate storming this Umno mouthpiece or harming its personnel even though they provoke 'us' every single day.

For the moment, leave the storming of barricades to Umno, like when Umno Youth (supported rather quietly by BN Youth) stormed the Asia Hotel when the East Timor meeting was going on.

Or how about former Anwar stalwart Zulkifli Noordin (with the help of the police) storming the Bar Council interfaith meeting.

Emotional blackmail

We storm the barricades, then what? What does this show except that peaceful demonstrations will always be hijacked by those who think they know better than the majority who were there.

What does this achieve but play into the lies of the Umno regime? What of the citizens who were there, satisfied to protest and later vent their anger in the voting booth? What of the children who could have been hurt because some people have no idea that there are various kinds of tyranny that should be dealt with in different ways depending on the situation?

And let's not forget that sooner or later, confrontations like these will turn into racial ones with Umno coming down on minority groups for the sole purpose of destabilising the opposition.

bersih 3 rally 020512 two protesters in tear gaslf you want to play Tahrir Square heroes, have the decency to inform people that this was the objective of the protest. Have the courage of your convictions and allow others to demonstrate the same commitment by giving them the choice to attend these violent confrontational protests.

Don't hijack a cause and then claim the moral high ground by equating what is happening in Malaysia with the sectarian conflict in Egypt or the CIA/MI6-muddled Iranian revolution.

Gandhi's salt marchers stood by peacefully as they were thrashed by the British-sponsored local battalions. Rosa Parks did not hold up a bus to get in but rather planted her ass on the seat and refused to move.

And when Umno decides to erect a real wall as opposed to the metaphoric ones separating citizens, I'll be there helping to tear it down as I do the metaphoric ones by attending these non-violent meet-ups. Don't piss in my ear and tell me it's raining.

bersih 3 rally 020512 lma003l suspect the Umno regime using agent provocateurs were behind the violence but if Anwar or anyone associated with PKR gave the orders to storm the barricade, it just shows how desperate they are for political mileage at the expense of a worthy cause that most people attended bona fide.

I reject them as I do the excessive police violence inflicted on them... on you who would have been proud to participate in the storming.

But don't you dare try to emotionally blackmail those who disagree with those people who stormed the barricade by alluding to historical events that you misapply to the Malaysian context.

Don't you dare mock those people who attended in goodwill, most probably taking their first tentative steps into publically objecting to this regime in a non-violent manner.

Don't you dare mock the feel-good carnival atmosphere of a multiracial moment in Malaysian history of undeserving of recognition because it falls short of your 'revolución' pose.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/197014>