

Merdeka means learning to love others
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Merdeka Day is around the corner but despite the call of unity through the '1Malaysia' slogan being trumpeted by our government, the real meaning of Merdeka seems lost and forgotten by many Malaysians of all races.

Instead, what we have are BN component parties like Umno, MCA and MIC still looking inwards with their racial politicking. To make matters worse, we also have Perkasa harping on racial sentiments and stoking up tension with trivial issues.

All these racial issues seemed to portray that Malaysia has not been truly independent and united after all these years. We are still divided along racial and religious lines with the recent incident of a Johor school principal who described non-Muslim students as penumpang at the school's National Day celebrations.

How meaningful is '1Malaysia' when such racist statements are uttered in public?

To me, the true meaning of Merdeka is when Malaysians finally learn to love our neighbours as ourselves. Isn't this God's command to us? Who then is our neighbour? It is our fellow Malaysian in a multi-racial society like ours.

We can only achieve national unity through loving our fellow Malaysians from other races and religious beliefs. This means we learn to respect our different cultures and beliefs in society. When we practice love, we inevitably learn to accept our rich diversity and seek national unity instead.

We seek dialogues to resolve any misunderstanding on perceived sensitive issues with an open heart of honesty, transparency and love.

Love is about being patient and kind; it does not envy or boast. Love is not self-seeking or proud. Love in this spiritual sense is what Malaysians need to fully realise our destiny as fellow human beings who were created in God's image.

When there is a lack of love, there is a lack of understanding, which indirectly leads to racial tension being manipulated by certain self-seeking politicians in order to perpetuate their political power.

It is only when Malaysians learn to love our neighbours as fellow Malaysians, irrespective of race and religion, can transformation of society really take place. Merdeka Day is not just about remembering our nation's independence from colonial rule. It is about setting our minds free from racial prejudices and discrimination.

Unless we are freed from these shackles of racism, we will forever be stuck with a colonial-like mentality and the meaning of Merdeka will just be lost. This then is what Merdeka really means to me - Learning to love others as oneself.

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