

**Stand up against prejudice, racism**  
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We face an omnicide as our natural resources are being depleted, climate change causing devastating disasters, economy confronted by many challenges and increasing human suffering. But instead of addressing these issues that threaten our physical existence, political leaders are intensifying conflicts through policies of racism and prejudice.

football racism 161105 fan with bannerWe are headed for demise as a peaceful nation if we allow prejudice and racism to be used by politicians. History has enough examples of how prejudice and its related issues of racism, genocide, ethnocentrism, monoculturalism, etc have resulted in wars and destruction of nations.

Collective prejudice has many manifestations - it creates oppression, conflicts, violence against individuals and gender, religious intolerance etc, destroys pluralistic aspirations and harms national unity. We have seen the horrors of prejudice, racism and genocide in two World Wars, in Hitler's Nazi Germany, genocide inflicted on Africans by European and American slave traders, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina , Ku Klux Klan...

The economic, political and psychological effects of prejudice and racism from these wars, genocides and conflicts are well documented.

The bogus science of the Nazi "eugenics" and works of social scientists on race and ethnicity have always been used by politicians to stay in power in many countries.

In the 1940s, American civil rights activist Dr W.E.B. Du Bois coined the term "race fiction" to dispel issues related to racism that were fuelling wars. In the 1950s and 1960s, Unesco scholars reached an agreement in recognising humankind as one species, Homo sapiens. Variables like colour of skin tone, facial features and types of hair have nothing to do with race.

'Biological differences have no relevance'

The variables of humankind are culture, nationality, religion, linguistics and geographical location. Unesco scholars concluded, "All normal human beings are capable of learning to share in a common life, to understand the nature of mutual services and reciprocity, and to respect social obligations and contracts.

NONE"Such biological differences as exist between members of different ethnic groups have no relevance to problems of social and political organisation, moral life, and communication between human beings.

"Biological studies lend support to the ethic of universal brotherhood [and sisterhood]. [Humankind] is a social being who can reach his [or her] fullest potential only through interaction. Every person is, in effect, his [or her] brother's [sister's] keeper for all are a part of humankind."

Strengthening the Unesco declaration is anthropologist Ruth Benedict who declared there is only one race, and that race is "human race." All else are mere "patterns of culture."

Ignorance of these facts has resulted in "antisocial economic reactions." It is well-known that "racial and ethnic" tensions increase when economic situations falter. The fights

between haves and have-nots, the powerful and the powerless have nothing to do with race. The tensions and conflicts in many countries are about sustenance, hunger, access to basic needs like land, food, water, shelter, education and healthcare.

In the 1980s, many small family farms were wiped out in the US as government policies favoured corporate farming. Poor starving families moved to urban centres for work but they could not find employment and lived in ghettos.

The mainly white farming communities who remained in the rural areas created rural ghettos with jobless and disenfranchised workers who easily became sucked into neo-Nazi right-wing mentality. They blamed the societal problems in the urban and rural ghettos on the Blacks. Sounds similar? We blame our 'social ills' on migrants, demonstrating our prejudice towards migrants.

### Collective scapegoating

Organisations and individuals who propagate policies and politics on the dynamics of race and prejudice in Malaysia threaten our democratic ideals, nationhood and the human rights of all in this country.

Race-based policies scapegoat people creating prejudice, racism and even xenophobia. Throughout history, political leaders have used prejudice and xenophobia to remain in power.

Collective scapegoating has been used to exploit countries and people. For example, western colonisers had declared Africa had no history before the Europeans arrived to grab lands in Africa and pillage its resources. The scapegoating of have-nots is useful for politicians to remain in power. Gerrymandering or constituency delimitation is a form of scapegoating based on race .

Race-based political decisions will stifle the development of a pluralistic and modern Malaysia. Such policies will pit us against each other and as Neil Khor said in his recent commentary, "We are all racists" as a result of race-based affirmative action policies.

Proponents of race based policies fail to realise that biological diversity is essential for the survival of the human species. There is no primary physical or biological difference whether we are Malays, Chinese, Indians, Penans, Kadazans, Germans, Americans, Ethiopians or Eskimos. We stem from the same genetic pool originating thousands of years ago in the heart of Africa.

Standing up against prejudice and racism will help us build a society that respects the equality and dignity of all Malaysians. Such a society will embrace integrity, truth, unselfishness, love and compassion that will create a sense of obligation to stand on the side of the poor and the underprivileged, irrespective of ethnicity and religious orientations.

We do not need race-based policies in a humane community. We are only one race, the human race. Stand up against racism and prejudice.

In the famous words of Pastor Martin Niemoller, about how the Nazis were able to take over an entire society: "In Germany the Nazis came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left

to speak up.”

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