

I am a Malaysian...
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I share a common heritage, language, and culture with the people of Malaysia; what's more, we even share the same festive celebrations together. Heck, we are in fact pretty much identical with each other, as far as nature permits; except maybe for the negligible differences found in our physical appearance. But why is it so hard for certain quarters to accept this fact?

There were many preposterous news of late; one Malaysian telling some to go back to 'China'; another Malaysian condemning her actions with a rap video. But what is the heart of this failure to accept that we are all of one ethnicity known as 'Malaysian'?

One of my lecturers said that we are all racists to a certain extent. Somehow, deep within us, there is this sense of prejudice towards fellow Malaysians we term as 'other races'. We are all ethnocentric to a certain degree; some believe that their forefathers were the founders of this land and therefore, the rest are just pendatang; some believe that their forefathers helped build Malaysia's economy to what it is today and the rest did not contribute. These thoughts, and so much more, have crossed our minds, at one point or another.

To think about it, nothing really can be done about this racism embedded in our subconscious because from young, we have been taught to be Chinese, Malays, and Indians; not Malaysians. And to remove this thorn in the flesh instantaneously at this point where we have all grown up is nearly impossible. As the proverb goes, Melentur buluh biarlah dari rebungunya.

However, the real problem is not this inert racism which comes to life every now and then when instigated. The real problem is how this racism has been encouraged and bred to be little monsters inside each and every one of us.

Take a look at Barisan Nasional. It was a very appealing concept when it was first formed but it turned out to be nothing but a party that cultivates racism. Why do we need a party with different race-based component parties to attend to the needs of Malaysians? Wouldn't it be better if we had a more generic party which all Malaysians can fully identify with instead of United Malays National Organisation, the Malaysian Chinese Association, or Malaysian Indian Congress? Why do we have to be denominated by our so-called 'race' in our strife for better welfare as Malaysians?

While Umno is obsessed with retaining its Ketuanan Melayu, 30% equity and whatnot, MIC is embattled with internal strife; neglecting the people who voted them in. And I remember not too long ago, someone from MCA proposed an establishment of a Chinese version of Perkasa, to serve as an antithesis to the current Perkasa.

While the idea might appeal to some narrow-minded Malaysians, I see it as a politicised, childish 'you don't friend me, I don't friend you' scenario. Instead, Malaysians should take heed from the infamous line that an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind; which in this case, leaves everybody a racist.

And this disease of racism which stemmed from the government morphed into an epidemic which penetrates all levels of society. A good example would be my university, Universiti Malaya, where each residential college has its own race-based society such as the Chinese

Community Club or Indian Cultural Community.

And it is these frequent meetings that endeared us to our 'race' while further engendered the spirit of racial assabiyyah. If nothing is done to address this subtle but growing racism in universities, I can only envision a dismal outcome of a gloomy Malaysia where these undergraduates would be leaders of the nation.

Sure, we can have appealing national policies such as '1Malaysia' but what happens when the 'feel good' effect fades and the curtain is drawn? '1Malaysia' would be nothing more than a larger epitome of Barisan Nasional and all the racism it propagates; where marginalisation and double standards continue to spread like a malignant cancer.

If our leaders are serious about '1Malaysia', mentalities first have to change; not policies. Any policy can be packaged, re-packaged and sold to the people but what matters most is the substance beneath the façade; the actual implementation of the policies.

Maybe it's time for a political, social, and economical revamp just as the sentiments of the people are a-changing. Malaysians don't need race-based parties to champion for their rights in order to be better off than other 'races'. Malaysians need a party which champions their rights as Malaysians. Everything race-based needs to go; from parties to university-level societies to schools.

Political opportunists who capitalise and thrive on racial issues to rise through the ranks need to go. I believe that Karl Marx's conflict theory aptly explains the current situation in Malaysia. Too long have we been oppressed by racism that we no longer remember the love for our country or the passion of being a Malaysian.

In the spirit of our 53rd Independence Day, let us step up to the challenge and say no to racism.

I am a Malaysian. I believe you are one, too.

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