

Malaysians 'boleh kah'?
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"Change we can," said Barrack Obama. Change they can, and, I believe, change they will. He also said, "We are the change we want." And change they did, for only the second time in more than 200 years, Americans have taken the risk again in electing a young and unfamiliar non-pedigree for a president.

The first was John F Kennedy. But, my real question is can we, Malaysians who root for the American system to change, can we change? The US of A is truly a land of opportunities and a land of immigrants and therefore a melting pot of ethnicities and cultures.

It is also the land where the brilliance of individual freedom of expression and the audacity of hope is allowed, promoted and encouraged. But, what about us? Our mainstream says Malaysia boleh, but I ask, "Malaysians boleh kah?" Can we find the same audacity of hope?

Our land was also the land of many opportunities but this is today coloured by a policy of unequal opportunities. We are all migrants in one form or another, but too many of us deny our past.

As Lat's cartoon in the New Straits Times on Nov 11 November illustrated, America will only be truly democratic and free if and when an American Indian Tribal leader becomes the president.

What about us then, when Umno still screams about Ketuanan Melayu?

We have much individual freedom but too much is still resident on the state defining the freedom of both individuals and groups. Therefore, when it is inconvenient, a journalist, a politician, and a blogger are thrown into jail for all the wrong motives and political reasons.

Now, even the court has agreed with this. But, appeal we must because Malaysia Boleh! Because, we think we can still 'fix' the judiciary! Too late, I say, too late! Change has begun in the world, and we will not be spared.

New faces bring hope

But, Malaysians, we first need real freedom in our hearts at an individual and personal level. We need the true freedoms of a real democracy without fear of a 'father-figure' overseeing our political citizenship and defining our Malaysian-ness.

Therefore we all have to learn from the American experience of the march for freedom. Someone said, "Because Rosetta Parks refused to get up from her seat in the bus, Martin Luther King started walking the march to freedom and emancipation of the blacks.

"And because Martin Luther King walked for freedom, today Barack Obama could run for the President."

There is always individual freedom given by God but the limits are too often defined by the state and power systems and we, the people, collude with fear in our hearts. But what these

power-brokers do not understand is that the world has changed.

The Berlin Wall has collapsed, the international trade system does not work anymore, the military complex is not supreme anymore after 911, and even the financial markets are no more secure after the current financial tsunami.

The state therefore cannot dictate what is and what is not. Neither does the market govern. The information and technology revolution is what enabled Barack Obama to win.

His entire campaign was based on the network organisation structure of the whole world and not the traditional pyramidal structure of the older world order of either parties; whether Democratic or Republican.

In Malaysia, we adopted the internet reality almost more than 12 years ago with the launch of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) but even then, with Mahathir Mohamad at the helm, we did not find the political will to recognise and address the real issues connected with it.

malaysia vote ballot box undi voting March 8 was, therefore, a hint of the political tsunami heading our way. This was expanded and repeated at Permatang Pauh. But, even after seven months, our so-called leaders of government, are still in denial as their 'has-beens' are fighting to run their respective parties.

I am saddened by the state of the nation today, if Umno elections are anything to go by. Fortunately they are not. Just look at Parliament and see the quality of dialogue provided by the opposition. There I see hope. But we need more of such people.

They said the Internet will never be censored when the MSC was launched, but then such freedom is curtailed when the truth becomes inconvenient. They say one thing but often do the other.

Listen up, fellow Malaysians!

Politicians promote integrity but do not understand that it involves the gap between one's talk and walk. Therefore, can we really change?

President Elect Barack Obama said, "I'm asking you to believe. Not just in my ability to bring about real change in Washington ... I'm asking you to believe in yours."

Are Malaysians listening to these sage words? "You must be the change you want", said Mahatma Gandhi. Can Malaysians listen and hear? I am not addressing or talking about the older and failed model of Malaysia boleh.

Malaysia boleh meant the public and co-operating private sectors closing one eye to wrongdoings and breaking laws at their whims and fancies and it meant lawyers writing judgments for corrupt judges.

But, back to Malaysians, can we change? Can we say enough is enough; we are tired of such corrupt leadership which lacks integrity and we can change? Can we say this? Why not? Fear in our hearts?

Was it fear which drove Martin Luther King? Or, Rosetta Parks, or even President Elect Barack Obama? No, it was courage of their own and personal convictions. We do have our

own Martin Luther Kings, but what we need really need are the Rosetta Parks who simply decide enough is enough, "I aint gonna move!"

What will it take, Malaysia? Does Raja Petra Kamarudin have to go back to jail? Must more journalists who write the truth go to jail before you find the courage to say enough is enough?

Come on Malaysians! We can only change when each of us say that change we can, and change we must. Only then will change come to Malaysia. May God help us change.

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