

# Rebuild Malaysia from within

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Instead of pinning our hopes on elected reps, who have often been disappointing, we ordinary Malaysians should work together to make the changes we want.

WHEN I give talks to Malaysians on society and politics, I always bring up this tagline: Our country, our fault, our responsibility. I then invite Malaysians to rebuild this country ourselves without expecting too much from the elected representatives.

After the miracle of GE14, Malaysians settled into a comfort zone of hoping for change through their elected representatives. There were indeed some changes but not enough serious structural ones.

Racial and religious relations are perhaps in a worse state than before, not because the two biggest Malay parties have combined forces to insist that the Malays and Islam are under threat, but because the Malay middle class accept this mantra lock, stock and barrel.

The Kongress Maruah Melayu (Malay Dignity Congress) was the final nail in the coffin, with hundreds of academics from public universities echoing that assertion.

What made it worse for the efforts towards national harmony was the complete silence of other public universities and academics as well as institutions of religion and state.

To say that our elected represent-

atives are a disappointment in handling issues of race and religion is to make the understatement of the year.

So what now?

In my talks, I have always reminded Malaysians that the blame game is no longer effective and that we ourselves must create a new narrative and change this nation.

In a democracy, every Malaysian individual has the power to make the necessary changes bit by bit, community by community, and stand on our own two feet to give new hope to our future generations.

Enough talk, there needs to be action.

To change this nation, we need to start with a willingness to learn new things and unlearn the old baggage of packaged attitudes and information.

All of us Malaysians should learn more about other ethnic groups and religious beliefs so that we can share our own experiences and humble ourselves in the greater Self that God has prepared for us.

If we humble ourselves by not judging others based on our own narrow understanding of faith and values, then we have defeated the

main enemy of this nation – our ignorance!

No need to let politicians destroy this country; by staying ignorant, we can do that just as well, thank you very much.

I am now striving hard for the first time to learn as much as I can about our brethren in Sabah and Sarawak. I admit that I know next to nothing about the culture, values and belief system of their ethnic groups.

Second, we must unlearn all that our culture, history and faith has taught us.

We have been fed pre-packed information, attitudes, values and beliefs by our “authorities”, that is, teachers, leaders, parents, peers and institutions in the community.

We must deconstruct this “hearsay” and reconstruct a narrative that we are all in it together and that we need each other in order to go through life’s trials and tribulations as one nation. No one can do this but us. We must unlearn and reconstruct.

Third, we can teach our children ourselves what we have learnt from our own new learnings and drastic unlearning experiences. Forget about the issues of our education

system and get down to teaching our young ourselves. But how?

We can organise one-month holiday camps where our children can live, play and work together. This can be followed with parents meeting each other and inviting whole families to visit and “homestay” at each other’s place.

Nowadays, some non-Muslims are reluctant to invite Malays to their homes as there is much consciousness about what is halal or haram.

Ridiculous! I declare that my home is open to any Malaysian guest who wants to stay for the weekend and become part of my extended Malaysian family.

At the community level, mosques, temples and churches can send representatives to form a small inter-religious harmony group that will organise joint social and non-religious programmes as well as sessions to share the histories of the different faiths.

These can be held monthly with the houses of worship taking turns to host. We can do all these without letters of appointment from the Prime Minister.

Each community can honour its local heroes of harmony and inte-

gration without the fanfare associated with the national awards organised by the government.

We do it ourselves. We take charge, organise and make it happen. We will show that we will not fight among ourselves and call each other awful names.

Parliament may be filled with these vulgarities and ill-mannered expressions but we Malaysians will not do that.

Finally, and this is the most important thing of all, we must stand together as a single group of Malaysians.

Whenever any disreputable political party members or *kurang ajar* (disrespectful) Parliamentarians hurl unfounded accusations, call names or insult a minority group, we will answer as One.

Their aim is to divide and rule. We will not let them divide us. We will rule them.

It is actually not too difficult to rebuild this nation. Just decide to do it ourselves. *Senang saja* (It’s simple)!

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