

People's positive affirmations

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01 Oktober 2019

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MALAYSIANS have to seriously decide how they wish to develop as a society and as a people. They can choose to become an enlightened society which is far-sighted and mature, or one that is retrogressive and emotional. They can match the country's rapid infrastructural development with a dynamic mind-set, or remain within the narrow confines of parochial insecurities. They can persist in circular political negativism, or opt to build a fresh optimism to face new challenges with positive affirmations.

One measure of a progressive and stable nation is the economic inroads it makes towards becoming fully industrialised. The civilization it aspires to build will be defined and described by the great feats of human endeavour in planning and executing a successful economic model. Visibly outstanding will be its industries, technology and innovations. The people will enjoy a high standard of living with up-to-date amenities that ensure ease of living. Disparities in socio-economic levels will be significantly reduced with effective affirmative action policies to uplift the lives of the underprivileged and marginalized at all levels of society. The standard of education will be comparable with that of the most advanced nations.

Another measure of a progressive society is the socio-cultural and political wisdom of the people. They are respected at international platforms and at home by their moral and intellectual development, that is by the principles and values they uphold and the ability to think wisely. They are able to manage their own and the country's challenges in rational and far-sighted ways.

In other words, while Malaysians present themselves as enthusiastic and capable business partners at negotiating tables abroad, they must be able to demonstrate the same positivity in their socio-political engagements at home. As they chart upward trends in work efforts they must be able to project an attitude that is commensurate with this dynamic thinking capacity.

It is ironic that while we are positioning ourselves as a progressive people internationally we remain in the backwaters of socio-cultural and political developments at home. While we demonstrate anti-war and humanitarian concerns on world platforms, on the local front we are still squabbling about our ethnic differences. While we welcome the idea of an inclusive, all-encompassing global village we are still mentally confined within the narrow walls of our ethnic silos and tempurung.

It is sad that having achieved tremendous physical development in the first six decades as a nation, we should allow our old insecurities to overwhelm us. When we should be consolidating our numerous strengths as a people, we continue to guard and promote selfish interests. A new, more humane Malaysia must emerge with Malaysians who are really caring and concerned about one another.

It is time for Malaysians to take stock of their priorities. We must be prepared to put aside our differences for the common good. Sacrifices are inevitable for change to happen as individuals and groups accommodate one another's needs. Obviously the nation's leaders and role models must take the initiative and be the examples people will follow. In this nothing sticks out more than the language and communication strategies they use.

In their statements, press releases, comments, speeches, political rhetoric and formal discourses they must make positive affirmations and give concrete suggestions rather than dwell on the problems. While the public has the right to know what went wrong

and who were responsible, no solutions will be effective if the strategy is to be continuously defensive and apportion blame (to others). What effective leaders must do is to reassure the people as to how these issues are going to be solved and what policies are in place to govern their rights, within the most reasonable time frame.

Instead of opening old wounds and harping on the past mismanagement and abuses of their predecessors, the present leadership of the government, corporations, agencies, political parties and other partisan groupings must map out their policies and programmes on how to repair damages and move their achievements several notches higher. There is no need to decry the efforts of others if we are confident that we are providing the best for our organisation. There is no need to explain every failure, perceived or real, with a finger pointing at the previous government. Just get on with your new plans and policies.

Simply translated, what this means in the political arena is that the politician and party bashing must stop and be replaced by rational, well thought-out arguments that the people can accept. Politicians must stop decrying one another's efforts just to be popular and win votes. They must adopt the more positive stance of acknowledging good work albeit by their opponents. They must give credit where credit is due. Where discrepancies are noticed, proper rules and regulations must be established in order to prevent office and management abuses. Leaders must be exemplary in their principles and values and uphold the highest ethical standards.

There is no point blaming the people for their corruption and negative attitudes when those they look up to are displaying bad behaviour and spewing unsavoury rhetoric in their talks and speeches. The destructive trends that are emerging in the conduct and behaviour of Malaysians including their use of language on the internet can no longer be blamed on western influences. It is we ourselves who are creating the "ugly Malaysian" led by irresponsible and irrational leaders and role models.

It is time for the people's positive affirmations to ring loud and clear for change to happen. Only then can we claim to be a progressive society.

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Source: http://english.astroawani.com/malaysia-news/peoples-positive-affirmations-218886?_ga=2.182107360.63335243.1569809152-131037088.1567204039