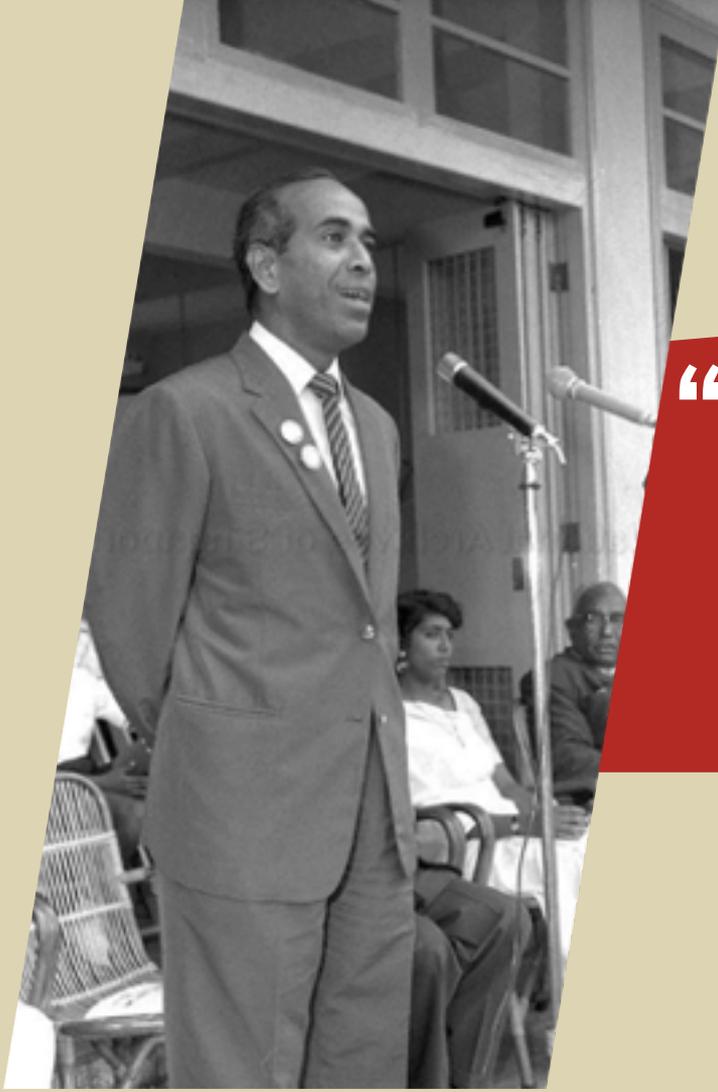




RACIAL HARMONY DAY 2020



“

If you think of yourself as Chinese, Malays, Indians and Sri Lankans, then Singapore will collapse.

You must think of Singapore: 'This is my country.'
I fight and die for Singapore if necessary. ”

— Mr. S Rajaratnam, then-Deputy Prime Minister, 1984

In 1964 & 1969,

we experienced the consequences of life without racial harmony:

40 **KILLED**

640 **INJURED**

during the chaos of the racial riots.

It was clear that we had to keep working hard to build unity and trust among our communities.

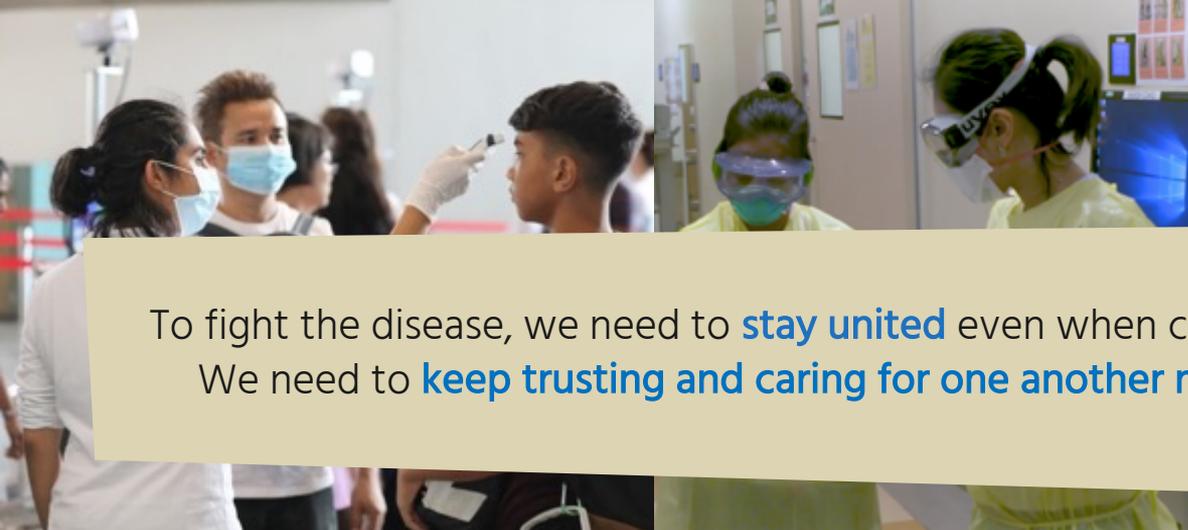


News article during 1964 racial riots



Today, we continue to face
great uncertainty
– just as we did 55 years ago as a newly-independent nation.

termed
THE CRISIS OF A GENERATION



by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted almost every facet of our lives:

Our health, jobs and social lives

To fight the disease, we need to **stay united** even when challenges threaten to divide us.
We need to **keep trusting and caring for one another regardless of our differences.**

APR 18, 2020

Police investigating man for not wearing mask in grocery store, making racist remarks

JUL 2, 2020

Malay man suspected to be behind 'Sharon Liew' racist tweets charged in court

APR 18, 2020

Zaobao Forum letter on foreign worker dormitory cases reveals 'underlying racism', says Shanmugam

1

FEAR AND ANXIETY CAN BE A POWERFUL WEAPON

Especially when there is widespread concern about COVID-19, it is tempting to lay blame on others for its spread.

Overseas and in Singapore, there have been cases of casual racism related to the virus. Some online commentators are emboldened by the anonymity afforded by fake digital personas.

These cases threaten to increase tensions along racial lines.

Reflection Question:

Have you witnessed any racist incidents? How do such incidents impact our social fabric?



EXTRACTS FROM THE ZAO BAO FORUM LETTER

They like to gather and have poor personal hygiene. Surely that should be a factor?

The number of Covid-19 cases involving migrant workers have increased greatly. Aren't migrant workers themselves responsible for this state they are in now?

but, it's not all negative...

OTHER OPINIONS PUBLISHED IN ZAO BAO

Lan Yun Zhou: "Don't take the workers (and their living situation) for granted"

Perhaps because of this, they are invisible to most of the public, becoming what we have "taken for granted" -- the public takes for granted that the workers have to be packed like sardines in the dormitories, that they have to only eat simple meals. The public assumes that the workers will definitely not take hygiene seriously, and the public also assumes that there will be transmission of disease in their community.

2

AN OPEN SOCIETY NEEDS CONSTRUCTIVE DISCUSSIONS

Some of these incidents, like the ZaoBao forum letter, have sparked **thoughtful and challenging conversations**.

Such discussions show that our society needs to continue having constructive conversations about issues of race – to **better build understanding across communities**.

"This letter is based on the racism that this writer and many Singaporeans have. It serves to **promote discrimination against other races.**"

Very triggering. It appalls me that this got published, but does not surprise that the writer is classist. There are many who think like her, and I absolutely abhor this type of thinking. It's also **absurd to blame un-cleanliness on foreign workers**, because I have witnessed Singaporeans littering so many times, but that's somehow excusable?

"Maybe when the author was expressing her opinion, she did not consider if the workers had a choice to begin with. **Many people have negative stereotypes** of the workers, such as being low-class, not observing personal hygiene, and sleeping on the ground," she wrote.

Reflection Question:

Have you ever spoken to your friends (from a different race) about their experiences with racism? How was their experience different from yours?

3

WE ARE ALL RESPONSIBLE FOR STANDING UP AGAINST RACIAL INSENSITIVITIES

We must stand up against racial insensitivity and racism.

Racism can be encountered everywhere: online, at home, and even in our schools.

This is worrying, as schools are places for students from different backgrounds to learn together and build friendships regardless of their differences.

Reflection Question:

How can we be more aware of racial insensitivity?
How can you help forge constructive discussions around racism?

MAR 11, 2020

Bullying incident at Mee Toh School 'cannot be tolerated': Ong Ye Kung

JUN 5, 2020

10 former RI students behind blackface group photo issue apology; school condemns their actions

JUN 8, 2020

Youth arrested for inciting violence and posting religious hateful comments on social media



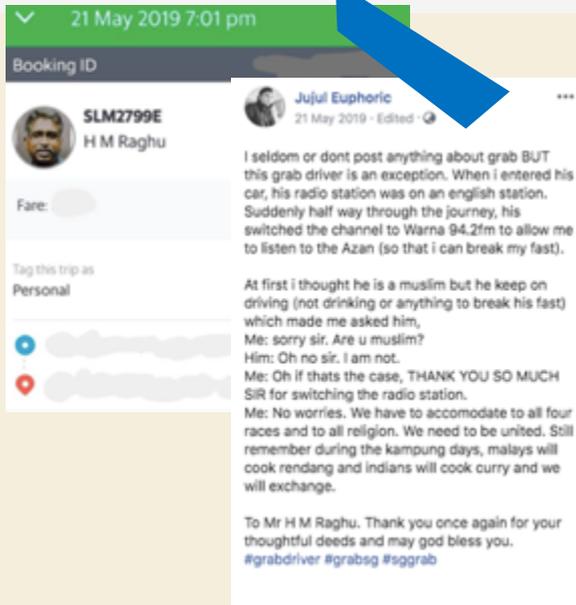
We need to work together and make the effort to recognise racism, stand up to it, and empathise with those who are different from us



MANY SINGAPOREANS ARE HELPING ONE ANOTHER

During the Ramadan and Hari Raya period in the middle of circuit breaker, we saw many Singaporeans being more considerate to those who were fasting.

Old Chang Kee customers queue patiently at 7:20pm so that makciks can break fast



Heroes Unmasked: She knits extensions for face-mask straps for her tudung-wearing colleagues, front-line workers



Noticing her Malay colleagues struggle with wearing and taking off their masks with their tudungs on, the founder of Project Co-Knit with Love thought of a way to modify their mask straps to make mask-wearing more comfortable for them.

Many Singaporeans also joined in to help knit mask extensions for others.

Our students too have been doing their part for Singapore. NUS students volunteered as translators to support medical workers working at the Community Recovery Facility (CRF) in NUS' Prince George's Park Residences.

Some ran a clothing donation drive, obtaining 2,000 shirts for those staying at the CRF.



'Your website will save lives': NUS graduate builds translation portal for medical teams treating migrant workers



An NUS graduate also built a website to help medical teams communicate with Bengali-speaking migrant workers in Singapore.

This prompted other Singaporean linguists to create more COVID-19 medical translations, to help medical workers around the world.

Such examples are reminders that at the core of it, instead of viewing each other through racial boundaries,

WE ARE ALL SINGAPOREANS,

LOOKING OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER.





Reflection Question:

What everyday effort could you take to build trust across different racial communities?

THE IMPORTANCE OF RACIAL HARMONY

Racial and religious diversity and differences are potential fault lines that can be exploited and used to weaken our social cohesion and cause our communities to turn against one another.

Singapore's social cohesion did not come about by accident, but through **constant effort and communication**.

Especially in the face of adversity, we must continue to

stay united.



CONCLUSION

"No society remains cohesive simply because it used to be... it is about how we draw closer to each other, regardless of race, religion or social background.

It is how we journey together. A forward-looking, spirited and more cohesive society."

— Mr. Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Senior Minister of Singapore, 17 Jun 2020