

'Give me the rich tapestry any day'

Written by straits-mongrel

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Gertak chose THAT day, of all days in Malaysian history, for their rally at Gong Badak, Terengganu. A rally to raise 'issues affecting the Malays', they said. Odd, and so very mischievous. It raised tensions and fears among the community and was eventually pressured to be called off by the PM. Clearly, some sectors in society believe in perpetuating ethnic differences. Enter the wonders of Facebook and some creative heads. One cheeky idea was 'May 13 Interracial Hook-up Day'. U-JEAN, who came up with the initiative, recounts her thoughts and shares her perspective.



DAY OF PEACE, REASON, FREEDOM

TWO days before May 13 2010, I read about the Gong Badak rally. For those not acquainted with what was supposed to happen, there was a rally themed "Malays Arise". Organised by Gerakan Kebangkitan Rakyat (GERTAK) and the Terengganu Integrity Institute with the aim to unite Malays, it expected 10,000 attendees from 45 Malay non-governmental organizations but was cancelled later on after being advised by Prime Minister Najib.

I was upset to learn about the event. After more than 50 years of independence, we are still talking about unity issues. We are still arguing about who should have more rights. And 41 years after the May 13 incident, people still want to use the incident to silence us and scare us into cowardice.

Here's my personal view on May 13: I am of a generation born many, many years after May 13 1969. I did not go through May 13 and I have been denied of my right to know about the history of my country. In school, we learn that the Chinese and Malays were fighting. There were burning of cars and houses and people died. Some people told me that the Chinese community had a celebration and the Malays weren't happy about it and started throwing stones. Some

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said it was a planned plot to knock down Tunku Abdul Rahman as Prime Minister. Some said it didn't happen in Penang (my hometown) but was more of a KL thing.

Whichever it is, I don't really care.

There are many views on how we should we should view May 13 and mine might differ from those who have experienced May 13 incident first-hand and/or have more knowledge about what really happened. Some think it should be a lesson learnt so that we may not repeat it, some think we should have a reconciliation day, but to me, May 13 isn't relevant anymore. I have lived without the knowledge of what happened during May 13 1969 and it has not bothered me. All I know is that I have lived happily with my friends of different colours and beliefs and I want it to be that way.

There is a quote I found on the net by Maya Angelou. She said, "We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color."

This is what I see for our country.

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It really doesn't matter where our ancestors came from because we are here in Malaysia and we will be here for Malaysia because Malaysia is OUR country. My friend, Gabrielle Chong, aptly describes what I too feel about Malaysia on her Facebook status, "Malaysia, to me, is like a crazy mother who embarrasses me in public way too often. She gives me way too many "Mum! What the hell??" moments and on most days, I really don't want to recognise her. But you know at the end of the day I'm never going to leave her anyway."

This May 13 Interracial Hook-up Day was started to make parody of the May 13 rally at Gong Badak. It was also to show that we Malaysians can do better than have mono-ethnic gatherings to incite hate and prejudice among all of us. It was to reclaim May 13 from these old goons who always want to use that "holy date" against us.

Hook-up, in the non-sexual sense, means 'to meet or associate'. Use May 13 to throw away prejudice and hook-up with someone from a different ethnic group or religion or culture or colour, I thought. Of course we shouldn't be doing it for one day in a year only - a lot of us do it every day - but it is symbolic to rejecting racism, fear, and intimidation.

Like hooking up with people of different backgrounds, we should also be rejecting racism, inequality, and intimidation every day.

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NOTE:

Melayu Bangkit has been rescheduled for [June 14](#) . The Star reports: 'Non-Malays could join the event but they had to send a letter to the organiser.'