



## DAY OF PEACE, REASON, FREEDOM

*A coalition of NGOs will hold a press conference at 1pm tomorrow (May13) at the KL-Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall with the message Make May 13 A Day for Peace, Reason and Freedom. A number of citizen initiatives have emerged on Facebook (see [here](#) and [here](#)) to address this episode in history.*

[Blogswarm](#)

*is another such idea; it asks that people talk and reflect, rather than hide from the topic.*

**FARIDA JIVAMALA IBRAHIM**

*takes that first step and shares her story*

Some of you were not born **yet** when May 13 happened. I was 21.

My Dad was on his way to drop an Indian family friend back at her house behind MGS late evening when, near Jalan Loke Yew, a Chinese guy shouted to my Dad to turn back. "The Chinese and the Malays are killing each other," he said.

We will forever be grateful to that gentleman because it could have been the end of my Dad, for along the major roads, cars were being stopped, people were being dragged out and slashed and cars also set on fire.

That Indian friend stayed at my house for days in terrible fear - her two young children were with her Malay maid, her husband was in England. Would anything happen to her children?

I often saw her kneeling at the foot of the bed, praying for the safety of her children. She had managed to talk to them once, to her husband in England once, and then the phones in our area went dead.

I heard the gunfire, I saw the flames from my home up the hill from KLSCAH. I lived next to the inspectors' mess and all night long the police sirens and ambulances and fire engines screeched their presence and told of trouble and fights and death.

I saw Tunku, a broken man, weeping for the nation on national TV - his dreams destroyed in the raging fire of hate.

My Dad's Scouting friend came around 11pm, shouting for Dad to open the door. The friend was Indian and happened to be in Pudu that night. He had seen some Malays stranded at a bus stop, he had opened his car door, bundled them in and told them to crouch on the floor. His car was stopped by the crowd carrying parangs, as were other cars. They did only a cursory check and thought he was alone.

Our guests stayed at our home for a few days and we were soon running out of food. My Mum cooked whatever could be cooked to feed all of us - and we managed somehow.

Some days later, one of the inspectors from the mess agreed to escort all our guests to their homes.

When the police lifted the curfew for a few hours, I walked down with my sister to Kampung

Attap to buy groceries from a shop. I was jumpy, fearful and the minute I heard the sound of a siren, I was ready to run back but the nice Chinese grocer told me kindly, "Jangan takut."

No, I did not see for myself the dead bodies, the blood on the road, the severed arms and legs and heads. But I know they are a stark reality because my uncle was on vigilante duty and he saw it all.

My aunt and others in the NCWO went about trying their best to heal a hurting nation with food and blankets and love.

Me? I was a coward and stayed home.

When normalcy was finally restored, we knew the official body count was not a true number. We knew mass graves had been dug and they had got Sungei Buloh lepers to do the horrifying job.

I know the horror experienced by those who had lost their loved ones and those who had managed to escape death.

Down the road, in Jalan Kampung Attap, a friend and her family waited for her brother's return. They waited for months with diminishing hope. They never ever heard his footsteps come again.

Tomorrow, I wonder, when people get together for their fun-time, amidst the laughter, the food and the wine, will there be a passing thought of the massacre of the innocent in May 1969?

Because, you see, it was not just May 13. There was also May 14 and May 15 and May 16 and May....