



By [John Lee](#)

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MARCH 31 — There is a famous book in the social sciences called “The Myth of the Lazy Native”; unfortunately, there is no book titled “The Myth of the Lazy Malaysian”.

Too many Malaysians are just plain lazy. We don’t want to take up responsibility for fixing our country. We’d much rather blame someone else.

Look at the comments on my last column, for example. “This is UMNO’s doing, and I put the blame squarely on Mahathir who’s the real racist.” “The change has to start from the leaders of the country.”

I like playing the blame game as much as the next Malaysian, but that's simply not good enough.

The question is, what are you going to do about these things? Where else is change going to start? If not with us, then who?

Blaming your leaders so you can avoid responsibility is a cop-out.

We live in the 21st century, not the feudal middle ages — our leaders work for us. The very fact that they have to ask us for their jobs back every five years makes us their boss — and we're being very bad bosses if all we do is blame people.

If Mahathir was such a horrible Prime Minister, why was he in power for almost 25 years? Why wasn't he thrown out when he tore the judiciary to shreds, rewrote the Constitution, or jailed his political rivals?

If we Malaysians really could not stand Mahathir, why did he leave office on his own terms, rather than ours? Whose fault is it that Mahathir was Prime Minister for so long —why did nobody say anything?

Some people, like Raja Petra Kamarudin, blame the non-Malays for voting for Barisan Nasional in 1999, when Barisan Alternatif could have struck a major blow for freedom and justice.

Very well — let us take the blame on the chin. But please lah, take some responsibility too.

Whose fault is it that so many of us are scared out of our skins that the government might swoop down and jail us for saying a single bad word about those in power?

How many of us have remained silent, allowing bigots and racists to frighten the non-Malays into voting BN, lest another May 13 break out?

Yes, the non-Malays should have had more guts in 1999 — absolutely. But for the 30 years before that, why did so many Malays sit back resignedly as the government used every instrument at its disposal to scare the non-Malays into subservience?

Or take 2008 — when Pakatan Rakyat could well have formed the government if East Malaysians had voted differently.

Here come the West Malaysian PR supporters out of the woodwork, ready to blame East Malaysians for being little fraidy-cats.

Where were we, the West Malaysians, when the federal government toppled the democratically-elected East Malaysian governments who stood up for their rights? Where were we when the federal government abused East Malaysians into silence?

So many of us are happy to let “change start with the leaders.” And we’ve had many leaders — so many political and NGO leaders have done so much for Malaysia, I can’t even begin to list

their names.

From Stephen Kalong Ningkan to Salleh Abas, from Irene Fernandes to Colin Nicholas, there have been so many who stood up for a better Malaysia.

But it's not someone else's job to fight for a better Malaysia — that's our job, damn it! You and I know bloody well what's wrong with this country — but what have you or I done about it? Have you given money to an organisation, political or not, that's making a difference?

Have you volunteered your time and effort to making your community a better place? Have you ever written to your Member of Parliament or state legislator? Have you ever tried to meet with your local councilor? When's the last time you took the initiative, however small, to make something better for your fellow countrymen?

If you think your leaders are bad, they work for you — and as their boss, it's your job to tell them to shape up or ship out.

Leadership in a democracy is not about going to the ballot box every five years. It is not about producing a laundry list of the country's problems, and then concluding "Oh well, what to do? Malaysia's like that lah."

If there's a cause you believe in, then champion it. If there's a leader you don't believe in, tell them why—and give them the boot unless they change. Change does not start with your leaders — it starts with you.

** The views expressed here are the personal opinion of the columnist. - The Malaysian Insider*

P.S. Saya Anak Bangsa Malaysia, on the other hand, is thrilled a young Malaysian would stand up and call a spade a spade. John, if ever you're back in Malaysia, we'd like to book you for a series of talks.