



Building a Multi-Racial Singapore



Recent incidents of racial discrimination and insensitivity have been making headlines. Our leaders and many Singaporeans have spoken up against such acts. How can we do better to protect racial harmony in Singapore?

Racial Harmony Day presents an opportunity for us to reflect on the importance of multi-racialism, and how we could turn diversity into strength to build a stronger multi-racial Singapore.

Recent Incidents



55-year-old Indian woman called racist slurs and kicked by Chinese man.



Chinese woman accosted commuters on the MRT about race and education.



Chinese man makes racist remarks towards inter-racial couple.



Indian man shouted racist remarks and assaulted Chinese youth at East Coast Park.



How did you feel when you read about these incidents?

If we witness such racist acts or comments, what are some ways in which we can respond?

Singaporeans responded actively to these incidents. Some shared their personal experiences of racial discrimination. Many voiced their disapproval of racist acts. Open and candid discussions on race also took place.



Ash Deen
It's very sad to see this happening in SG. Every week there is something disheartening. I guess we need to go back to the roots of how the nation was build and how we were taught to be united. Where is the respect and humanity!

Like · Reply · 4 w · Edited



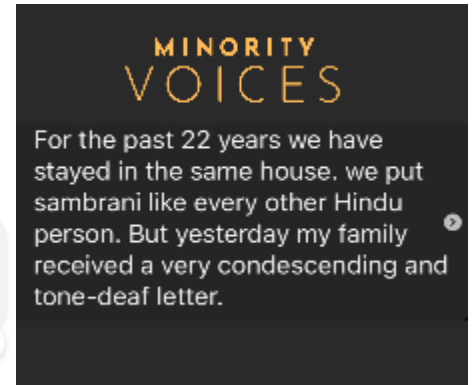
Shanti Ctrn
Why is the skin color an issue? Isn't everyone's blood red in color

Like · Reply · 5 w



Rahmat Sulaiman
What happened to our tolerance and harmonious society.
How can this brazen act conducted by neighbour.

Like · Reply · 4 w



Forum: Yes, condemn racism, but no need to compel people to speak out

“I have been blessed to have some close friends who may be of a different race, but when we are together, it never feels any different. Instead of harbouring stereotypes about me, they got to know me as a person and ultimately, I believe that is what is important [...] **Instead of creating a divide among ourselves, we should learn to see ourselves as Singaporeans first.**”

Chandra Segaran in a letter to
The Straits Times, 14 Jun 2021



Racism in Singapore: How are we doing, really?

Recent events may paint a discouraging picture of racial harmony in Singapore. Research, however, shows that we have some achievements. A recent report by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS)* showed that there is a **low level of perceived racism in Singapore compared to other multicultural societies.** Among the respondents:

65.7%

said that racism occurred **“not at all frequently”**.

28.7%

said that racism occurred **“not frequently”**.

5.7%

said that they encountered racist behaviour **“quite or very frequently”**, compared to

23.5% in the US.

*Source: IPS Report ‘Our Singaporean Values’ with findings from the World Values Survey (2020), based on a sample of 2,012 respondents

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“ We are going to have a **multi-racial nation in Singapore**. We will set the example. This is not a **Malay nation**; this is not a **Chinese nation**; this is not an **Indian nation**. **Everybody will have his place: equal; language, culture, religion.** ”

- Mr Lee Kuan Yew, *Founding Prime Minister of Singapore*, 9 Aug 1965

As explained by Minister of Finance Lawrence Wong at the IPS-RSIS forum on race and racism in Singapore on 25 Jun 2021, the question of race has been a fundamental issue for Singapore right from the beginning:

Against all odds, our founding fathers set out to build a “Singaporean Singapore” and believed a multi-racial nation was vital for success.

While Singapore is home to a harmonious multi-racial society, maintaining this is a constant work-in-progress, and each and every one of us has a part to play.



Click or scan QR code for full video of Minister Lawrence Wong's speech.

“ There is **nothing natural about where we are** - multiracial, multi-religious, tolerant and progressive. We made it happen, and **we have got to protect it, nurture it, preserve it, and never break it.** ”

- Mr. Lee Hsien Loong, *Prime Minister*, 2017

How can we play a part to safeguard racial harmony in Singapore, and live together in peace and harmony?



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Let's work together and build a more understanding, multi-racial Singapore

1

Recognise that it is harder to be a minority than the majority.

Let's be sensitive towards the needs of the different communities.

2

Learn more about one another's culture.

So we can better understand one another, and build stronger bonds.



3

Treat each other with mutual trust, accommodation and compromise.

We should speak out about racial prejudices, but do in a civil way.

4

Participate in constructive discussions on race and religion.

Voice out your concerns and suggestions, and work together to build common ground.

Some examples!



Malay residents put up CNY decorations at Tampines block corridor for elderly neighbours.



Chinese woman passing by HDB corridor clasps hands to pay her respects to Indian resident's deity.



Taking part in online and offline dialogues and discussions.



Sikh group invites influencer to learn more about their traditions after her viral remarks about two men wearing turbans.



Project Co-Knit with Love: Singaporeans knitted mask extensions for tudung-wearing Muslim women.

Some final food for thought...

Singapore's social cohesion did not come about by accident. It takes constant effort by all groups in our society to preserve and strengthen our harmony.

While conversations on race issues may be challenging to manoeuvre, they are necessary to help build important shared values like trust and understanding.

Open dialogue can help better foster principles like empathy, tolerance, and sincerity amongst the different races.

“ Let us each be our brother's keeper, our sister's keeper and let us **move forward with a spirit of mutual respect and fellowship**. Educating each other about what matters to us, helping each other understand our different cultures, and **finding the common stake we all have in one another.**”

- Mr Lawrence Wong, Minister for Finance, 25 Jun 2021

For More Resources:

- [Podcast: Race Issues: Conversation with Minister K Shanmugam \(Plan B, 2021\)](#)
- [Video: "The Fight for Multiculturalism" \(ConnexionSG, 2017\)](#)
- [Social Media Post: Thinking about: Race in Singapore \(ConnexionSG, 2021\)](#)
- [Commentary: "How can Singapore move ahead on race together?" \(TODAY, 7 Jul 2021\)](#)
- [Commentary: The Big Read: High time to talk about racism, but Singapore society ill-equipped after decades of treating it as taboo \(TODAY, 19 Jun 2021\)](#)
- [Full Transcript: Lawrence Wong's speech at the IPS-RSIS forum on race and racism in Singapore \(CNA, 26 Jun 2021\)](#)

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