

## COMMENT

# Skin colour doesn't define humanity

**RETHINK VALUES:**  
Nation building  
a collective  
responsibility



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**T**ANGIBLE and intangible wealth was created and expanded when Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore came together and formed the Federation of Malaysia. Cultural capital, exciting diversity and societal enchantment were boosted when the peoples began to respect each other's cultures.

Political squabbles do not upset people. But when lesser leaders

articulate ideas of state, which were not bargained in the first instance of the federation, the risk of Malaysia becoming a failed state becomes greater. Irresponsible individuals and their groups do not speak for the whole nation because the sum of the nation is greater than its destructive parts. To push the agenda of non-consensus in a multiracial society would be to risk civil strife, breakdown of law and order, and widespread injustice in all domains.

The establishment of Malaysia created beauty, stability, hope and imagination. There was the expansion of land and sea mass, and airspace, as well as the expansion of unique and diverse human capital and talent.

Malaysia has beautiful locations — landscapes of hills and mountains, rivers and lakes, and seas and islands — and not to mention its people and cultures, which are among the most beautiful in the world. Malaysia is, indeed, truly Asia and blessed.

Nation-destroying elements do not pay heed to religious messages. In the Quran, God commands thus: "O Mankind, We created you from a single pair of a male and a female,

and made you into nations and tribes, so that you may know one another. Verily, the most honoured of you in the sight of God is he who is the most righteous of you" (Quran, 49:13).

God asserts that He created all peoples as one people, but human beings are the ones who create divisions within themselves.

In the farewell sermon before his death, Prophet Muhammad reminded followers: "An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor (does) a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; also, a white has no superiority over a black, nor (does) a black have any superiority over a white, except by piety and good deeds. Indeed, the noblest among you is the one with the best character."

Those who are racist focus on the "colour" of their race — white, yellow, black, brown — and such people must learn to rediscover that they belong to the human race. The races have been so mixed over the historical periods, that there is no "pure" Aryan or other races. Extremists argue about their "pure" languages and beliefs. When carried to the extreme of "purity", United Nations Educa-

tional, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) world sites must, then, be of only certain cultures and religions, and all other sites must be destroyed.

Does outer space belong only to China, America and Russia, or to the human species? If planet Earth is doomed by pestilence, natural disaster or a meteor explosion, will humankind allow people from only one race, religion or nation to be settled onto other liveable planets, or is that the right of humankind?

Those who believe in hegemony or their own superiority have to rethink their values and find clarity of thought by projecting their thinking on the "what ifs" pertaining to Unesco sites of human cultures and civilisations or the "what ifs" in the selection for re-settlement in outer space for the survival of the species.

Mankind needs leaders who are able to think beyond their microscopic self-interest. Societies need leaders inspired by divine beneficence, magnanimity and virtues. Virtues are not race- or religion-specific. The only true measure of greatness among human beings, based on the characteristic called *taqwa*, or God consciousness, is at

the individual level, not the national or group level.

As we learn from history, we have to be inspired by universal truths and ideals, such as former United States president Abraham Lincoln's ideals, contained in his speech on the Battle of Gettysburg in November 1863, during the American Civil War: "That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom — and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the Earth."

The task before the people is to rebuild the nation, not destroy it. The task is to learn from history that we can have peace and do our entrusted duties without having civil war. At the end of wars, there are no winners, for all carry the burden of the sins of injustice during the excesses of war.

We cannot allow those with self-interest to turn the nation-building politics of "belongingness", trust, hope and aspirations into the politics of alienation, separation and destruction.

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