

It's the people that make up Malaysia

Written by straits-mongrel

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By Esther Wee

When I was younger I used to watch on television disasters striking other nations, war and hunger plaguing their citizens. My Mum used to say, "See how blessed we are. Malaysia is not like that. It's peaceful and you will never go hungry. There is always food everywhere."

I grew up having all kinds of people around me. It was not until primary school, when I was a little older did I realise that your skin colour matters. The older I grew, the more stories I heard, well I don't have to regurgitate that out, everyone knows, it is not a secret.

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My perception of a peaceful and loving multi-racial country soon changed as the years went by. I began to see it in my other friends too. It was not until I went overseas to study did I truly appreciate my roots.

In March 2011 this year, I together with hundreds of Malaysians all over the UK flooded the National Indoor Arena in Birmingham for our all-time favourite sports competition... badminton! Unlike football, where each supports a football team which has no connection to Malaysia whatsoever, here we gathered to support our own country!

The whole stadium roared as the announcer announced, "And a big welcome to the world No.1 seed, Lee...Chong...Wei!!"

I am Chinese, but I'm certainly not from China. There were loads of China supporters there as well. But there were also equally lots of Chinese Malaysians in that stadium. Even our chants were uniquely different from them. Because I'm Chinese, I understood when they shouted "*Chu ng Quo Jia You!*" but I identified better with shouting "*Malaysia...BOLEH!*" and "*Chong Wei....BOLEH!*"

They were waving their China flag up proudly. Although Chinese, we were Malaysians first above anything else, and so we waved proudly our Malaysian flag!

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Malaysia was playing against China's Lin Dan. We Malaysians, the Malays, the Chinese, the Indians and others were shouting our lungs out for Chong Wei, not because he was Chinese, but because he was Malaysian.

Every time he scored, the kompang will resound and fill the entire stadium alongside the cheers. The sound of the kompang felt like home! And when he finally won the game, he kissed the tiny Malaysian flag on his shirt and waved to the crowd as a sign of his victory. We were all so proud of him. You see, we didn't care whether he was Chinese, Indian or Malay, all we cared about is the fact that he is Malaysian, and the victory is for Malaysia, and we were proud to be waving that Malaysian flag!

The younger generation is not really interested in skin colour differences. We're the 21st century Malaysians. We call each other *machas*, we all love nasi lemak, we crave for roti canai, we miss our mamak stalls when we are away from home, we identify well with sambal and durians; we talk and share about the same things.

We are strong when we stand together. The peribahasa that I was taught since primary school, "*Bersatu kita teguh, bercerai kita roboh*" is so relevant to act as a reminder of who we really are as a nation. It's the people that make up Malaysia, not any particular political party, not any particular race. Let's not fight each other, let's do this together. Let's stand for what we believe in. This is our home, our land. Let's work together for a better tomorrow.

**Esther Wee was one of 11 young musicians/bands featured in SABM's [Bangkit](#) album. She will be finishing her law program in the UK this year. She will be coming home.*