

SPEECH BY MR ZAINUDIN NORDIN MAYOR CENTRAL SINGAPORE DISTRICT AND CHAIRMAN ONEPEOPLE.SG AT THE LAUNCH OF THE NATIONAL ORANGE RIBBON CELEBRATIONS ON 1JULY 2009 AT EVERGREEN SECONDARY SCHOOL

Good Morning

My fellow Mayors

Mr Tan Boon Huat
Chief Executive Director, People's Association

Board Members of OnePeople

Mr Chan Yew Wooi
Principal, Evergreen Secondary

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Boys and Girls

1 I am pleased to join all of you today at Evergreen Secondary for the Launch of the National Orange Ribbon Celebrations. I would like to thank the student volunteers, staff and the Principal, Mr Chan Yew Wooi, for your kind gesture to host this event at your school. Evergreen Secondary is a Centre of Excellence for National Education in the North West District, where students are immersed in our national values, as the walls around the school

demonstrate. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all our community partners, the Community Development Councils, People's Association, Self- Help Groups, Ministry of Community Development Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education and representatives from the Singapore Youth Olympic Games Organising Committee for joining hands with OnePeople to make this meaningful event possible.

2 We have chosen to launch our National Orange Ribbon Celebrations with our youth, as you will be our future flag bearers of racial and religious harmony.

Background of National Orange Ribbon Celebrations

3 The National Orange Ribbon Celebrations was inaugurated last year by OnePeople.sg and its community partners as a signature event to rally the community together each year, to drive nationwide racial and religious harmony celebrations in July. The Orange Ribbon, a symbol of warmth, friendship and kinship among our multi-racial and multi-religious communities, is distributed to schools, grassroots, community and religious organisations to spread the message of harmony.

4 The Celebrations will feature a calendar of racial and religious harmony events organised islandwide at the grassroots and community levels. These events showcase and demonstrate the rich diverse culture of our multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities.

Promoting the Olympic Values

5 This year, the National Orange Ribbon Celebrations has adopted the theme 'Many Races, One Gracious Community' to promote the Olympic values of Excellence, Respect and Friendship in conjunction with the upcoming Singapore Youth Olympic Games. When the time comes in 2010, we must be ready to showcase the Singaporean spirit in all of us as we welcome our visitors, guests and athletes from all over the world. We need to welcome them as gracious hosts and leave a lasting impression on the world stage. We need to carry this spirit right from today.

Driving the Community Spirit

6 The Orange Ribbon Celebrations this year will encourage people from all walks to come forward and pledge their personal commitment to live in harmony as one gracious society. This pledge drive is a movement that will enable all of us to express our thoughts, actions and personal commitments, on what it means to treat each other with respect and dignity, to understand and relate to one another and to care and look out for each other as a dependable friend regardless of race, language or religion.

7 The pledge that you make could range from getting to know someone who is different from you to learning more about another culture. You may also want to express how you hope to be involved in next year's Youth Olympics, as a welcoming host, or an active participant in the supporting fringe activities.

8 Let me relate to you a heartwarming story told to me by good friends at the Singapore Buddhist Lodge during one of my visits there last year. It is about two good friends; Tan Chin Won, a Chinese girl and Abdul Hafiz, a Malay boy who were then classmates in Secondary Four at Yishun Secondary School. These two were in the same class for four years in secondary school. Chin Won was selected for the Endeavour Award by Singapore Buddhist Lodge Education Foundation last year. The Endeavour Award is a monetary merit award of \$650 given to needy students who show excellent academic results. Hafiz too performed well and received the Bursary Award from the Singapore Buddhist Lodge.

9 Hafiiz, was then going through a tough period in his life. His father was suffering from leukemia and was hospitalised. Due to his illness, Hafiiz's father had to stop work. His mother was then a part-time librarian. But when Chin Won heard about the condition of Hafiz's father, she gave up her Endeavour Award to Hafiz so that he could receive the additional monetary incentive. It was a sincere and touching gift from her heart. She knew the monetary award would mean more to Hafiiz's family at that point of time. It was a selfless act of helping a friend in need. Hafiz and Chin Won

are still now good friends. Coincidentally, both of them are now studying in Yishun Junior College. Hafiz's father has since passed away.

10 The story of these two young people is indeed extraordinary, and deeply moving. It shows that compassion, and care for our fellow human beings knows no race, colour, language nor religion.

Youths to Carry the Message

11 Everyone has a part to play in molding a gracious and harmonious society. Our youths must take the lead to spearhead our current harmony initiatives, to ensure that the values that bind us are sustained in future generations when they grow up.

12 This is already happening. For instance, just last week, OnePeople.sg's Youth Wing organised Rafusicul '09. The event was coined from the words "racial", "fusion" and "culture". Essentially, it was a talent competition where youths sang songs conveying the message of harmony. The event was organised by the youth for the youth, and was held at United Square over two days. I was rather encouraged when the youth volunteers told me some

students came forward to compose their own songs to sing about what racial harmony meant to them personally. There was also a Malay contestant, a female, who sang a Chinese song and bands of different ethnic groups performing and sharing their experiences of how they come together through music. It was an upbeat event, filled with dance, hip hop and soulful performances. These youth volunteers stung by this enriching experience are now energised to do more of such initiatives.

13 We need more of our youth to connect in their own unique ways to spread the message of harmony and friendship. It could be through Blogs, You Tube or Facebook. It could be through music, sports, and what makes our youth generally tick. In your own style, through your own connections, you too can spread the message of harmony. You will be surprised with the impact that you can make.

14 We will be launching the National Orange Ribbon e-pledge micro-site in conjunction with today's celebrations. Do urge all your friends and family members to contribute to the cause by making their pledges online. Set the online community abuzz by spreading the word. This is one way in which you can play a significant role to grow the Orange Ribbon movement.

15 The Orange Ribbon Pledge Drive aims to gather a record number of 201,000 pledges in support of SYOG 2010. I am pleased that Evergreen Secondary has signaled its strong support to this pledge drive by getting the entire school and teaching staff to pledge their personal commitment to promote the values of harmony and graciousness. We need more of such schools, grassroots, community and religious organisations and corporates to come forward to pledge and contribute to the cause. Let this National Orange Ribbon Celebration stir the spirit in all of us to come forward, pledge and make a difference. Let these Celebrations bring out the graciousness in all of us.

Thank you.