

Dear Team

Many Stories... One Singapore is the theme for this year's National Day Celebrations that highlights our on-going endeavour to build an inclusive society. Last Sunday, we were humbled when a 17 year old boy pointed out an important lesson in being inclusive when he told his family and friends what he thought about their efforts to assist his girlfriend. "All of you are trying to change her but I accept her for who she is," he stated in a matter of fact way. He was not angry but he had noticed how his girlfriend was gradually withdrawing herself from a conversation concerning the care of her infant and her well-being.

This 17 year old was very appreciative that his mother, some neighbours, his girlfriend's volunteer mentor and his friends have come together to render their support even though he was not the father of his girlfriend's child. He knew that the people in the room cared but the pointing out of mistakes and the dishing out of advice are seldom experienced as caring. Anyway, his statement was helpful in getting the meeting to take on a more appreciative and reflective tone. His girlfriend's efforts in caring for her child were acknowledged and people were able to see the funny side that the infant was the best dressed person in the room.

The young mother had spent most of her childhood in an institution and she says she is still "trying not to be so blur." As she shared, people eventually realized that for most of her life she had been cared for by helping professionals and perhaps it was time she could count on her family and friends.

All of us have a story of our lives and whether we choose to tell the story through facts, emotions or experiences, we have no control over how the people listening to it will perceive it. However, I suspect we do hope that our story is at least acknowledged in some way if not appreciated. We do seek to belong and to be included among people and places we have come to love.

Many Stories...One Singapore.

Gerard

*A nation is defined by people who have been unified by a cause and a value system and who are committed to a vision for the type of society they wish to live in and give to the future generations to come."*

– Fela Durotoye