



13 MAY, 2025

Learn from the past and unite

The Star, Malaysia



# Learn from the past and unite

FOR the longest time, the race riots that began on this day 56 years ago and shook a still fledgling nation to the core was a taboo subject.

Then it began to be swept under the carpet – except when politicians used it to whip up racial and religious extremism ahead of elections.

And now, it seems the younger generation doesn't really know much about it, and nor do they care.

For me, May 13 should be used as a teacher of and guide to nation-building. I beg of you, dear readers, to consider my suggestions of how we should deal with this moment in history so that it becomes a beacon into the future instead of remaining an ugly scar across the nation's face.

I would like to respectfully suggest to the government that this day be declared a Memorial Day, perhaps even make it a public holiday.

I would also like to ask the government to ensure it is marked in all universities, all schools, and all houses of worship in this country as an important and significant day of sadness, a day of learning, and a day of prayers for the fallen heroes and warriors of those dark times – yes, I have used the words correctly, for to me all of the dead from all of our families, those who were once our children, our

We need to stick together as this is the only way forward.



## Over the top

spouses, our brothers, our sisters, and our friends of any race who died in this tragedy of errors and hatred are fallen heroes.

What lessons can we learn from this tragedy? What must we do to honour the dead and the living who remember?

To begin with, we must learn, all of us, to hold our tongues and to question our hearts each and every time we think of uttering words that may cause fear, hatred, and distress in others.

Even more so because we live now with ubiquitous social media, run by unfeeling artificial intelligence busily using algorithmic logic that so easily spreads hate messages and sows mistrust among the silos we populate.

This responsibility of holding our tongue and staying our anger is yours, mine, it belongs to every single one of us, for I think we can

only blame ourselves for the disharmony we live with nowadays.

Once upon a time we could lay the blame on politicians, but no more. It was us, it is us, and it will always be all of us. Our country, our fault, and so our responsibility. Stop the hate now.

And control our devices as we control our tongues and hearts. There will always be messages of hate and they will never stop. There will be mistrust and slander between the races.

But they will go nowhere if we can only control our own thoughts and hearts and what we say or put in words on our devices. They can go nowhere when we stop.

How do we address this hatred that bubbles up?

We must teach our young – and ourselves – that this country was built with the sweat and tears of all the races, not just one. We must educate ourselves and our young that we all have the same blood that we can exchange among ourselves.

Our survival on this planet does not depend on one race or one type of politics.

We must teach our young and ourselves that we breathe the same air, not divided among the races, among religious faiths, among economic classes.

We all breathe the same air, and we all call this corner of the planet home. Every tree, every bush, every mountain, every river, every rock, and every wild thing belongs to all of us, and they are all our shared responsibility.

Finally, we must teach our young and ourselves that we need each other socially, economically, and spiritually. We need friends for our social health across racial and religious divides. We need all markets for all our employment opportunities to run the machine of resource planning for our own comfort and survival. We need each other.

As we approach our own nirvana or God, we will be asked how have we helped the orphans, the have nots, and the helpless, for this and this alone is the true path to spiritual freedom and strength. Not how we have helped those of our own race and faith only!

Finally, these are my suggestions of how we can acknowledge and honour the dead – the Malays, the Chinese, the Indians and others who died during those dark days of 1969 in a frenzy we created ourselves.

There are reports of at least two burial sites of May 13 victims in Selangor, in Gombak and Sungai Buloh.

I suggest the cemeteries be gazetted as national memorial parks, each with a building that would serve two functions.

One, to house a memorial stone recording the names of all who died (as many names as we can verify) whether they are buried there or not.

Secondly, to serve as a place where all elected representatives at state and federal levels can take their oath of service. Of course, they have to say their oaths in the usual fashion, before the Sultan or the King of Malaysia, but after that they must face the honoured dead to really internalise the sentiment of "Never again".

These reps must also promise never to raise the spectacle of May 13 in their speeches as a form of threat. The day must be spoken of only with remorse, humility and forgiveness – it can never be invoked in a spirit of vengeance and hatred.

We are our nation. All of us, the living and the dead.

**Prof Dr Mohd Tajuddin Mohd Rasdi is Professor of Architecture at the Tan Sri Omar Centre for Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Studies at UCSI University. The views expressed here are entirely the writer's own.**



13 MAY, 2025

## Learn from the past and unite

The Star, Malaysia



### SUMMARIES

FOR the longest time, the race riots that began on this day 56 years ago and shook a still fledgeling nation to the core was a taboo subject. Then it began to be swept under the carpet - except when politicians used it to whip up racial and religious extremism ahead of elections.And now, it seems the younger generation doesn't really know much about it, and nor do they care.