

OPENING ADDRESS BY MR GERALD SINGHAM, VICE-CHAIRMAN, ONEPEOPLE.SG AT HARMONYWORKS! CONFERENCE 2014 ON SATURDAY 5 JULY AT NANYANG POLYTECHNIC

Good Morning

Educators

Facilitators

Students

I would like to warmly welcome you to today's Conference. I am glad to see so many of you rise early in the morning to join us at today's event. Your interest is what keeps us organising this Conference every year.

2 The HarmonyWorks! Conference is held yearly to engage youths on critical issues concerning race relations in our country. This Conference is about you. We want to hear your views. You are our next generation who will carry Singapore into the future and your opinions matters. In this spirit, we introduced this Conference and called it HarmonyWorks! - to send a simple, but very important message; Harmony does Work!

3 Today's Conference is held in conjunction with the Orange Ribbon Celebrations. The Orange Ribbon is a movement to uphold values of respect and trust in our community. The colour Orange was chosen as it represents harmony and brotherhood. Each year, during the month of July, we encourage as many people to wear the Orange Ribbon to show our unwavering support to racial and religious harmony. I am proud to say that the Orange Ribbon Celebrations which started off as a district level project has now grown to a national movement.

4 Now, I know many of our boys and even girls may have sleepless nights watching the World Cup. And even if you do not watch the World Cup, it is hard not to miss Jennifer Lopez rocking to the World Cup theme song. Do you know what the title of the theme song is? Yes, "We Are One".

5 The World Cup is an excellent example of diversity. If you had noticed, something really interesting happened in the match between Ghana and Germany. Two brothers were playing for opposite sides. How is this possible? They both hold dual passports having born to a Ghanaian father and German mother. Brothers, Jereme Boateng and

Kevin Prince Boateng were born in West Germany. But Kevin Boateng chose to play for Ghana and Jeremy remained to play for Germany.

6 Well, the reality is, in a globalized world, you will have people migrating from one country to another in search of better opportunities and a better life. Increasingly, nations all over the world are becoming more multicultural. We are no different with now more new citizens and foreigners in our country. But we should not become diverse and distinct. We should treasure the common space where we live, study and play together. This common space is what makes Singapore unique. As we become more multicultural, we must always fall back on something common amongst all of us. Singapore is our home.

7 Today's Conference theme – Keep Calm and Make A Friend; is adapted from a popular British slogan – Keep Calm and Carry On which served to bring people together in difficult times. In a new norm, there will be many differences that would pull us apart. I am sure you would have comes across a recent incident where Google took down a blog from Singapore which instigated hatred towards

Filipinos. I am glad many Singaporeans came to condemn this action. Now, the matter is investigated by the authorities. Hate speech corrodes our society. I hope through this Conference, you will come to challenge stereotypes, and become advocates to stand against hate speech, be it in real life or the online space.

8 The best way to overcome differences is by being a friend. When we are friends, we see no barriers. And all it takes to make a friend is to turn around to someone whom you have never met before and say “Hi”. It is as simple as that.

9 Do you know that the Human Genome project, an international research which studies DNA sequence in humans, discovered that 99.9 percent by DNA, we are all the same? So when you break down the colour of the skin, the way we look, the religion we profess, to what lies inside; there is very little that separates us.

10 Today, you will gain deep insights on how peace can never be taken for granted. Our guest speaker, Dr Gill Hicks, a survivor of the London Bombings, and who lost both of her legs in that tragedy, will

share with us her inspiring story. Having overcome a near death experience, she went on to promote peace among people of different races and religions with a single message – Every Life Matters. It is a privilege to have her here to speak to us. We have arranged a special forum theatre where you will get an opportunity to pit your acting skills tackling some thorny issues. And there will be breakout discussions for you to speak your mind. Later in the day, you will also have the opportunity to engage our Guest of Honour, Mr Lawrence Wong, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth. There will also be rich performances and an array of multicultural food. A rich and dynamic Conference awaits you. I hope you will take this opportunity to express your thoughts and take back home something valuable from the Conference proceedings.

11 Before I end, I would like to challenge you, to make as many friends here as you can. A recent study by OnePeople.sg and Institute of Policy Studies showed that while we value harmony, only 45% of us have close cross-cultural friends. Let's challenge this statistic today. Let's show the World - 'WE ARE ONE'

12 I would like to take this opportunity to thank our partners Nanyang Polytechnic and Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth as well as National Integration Council for their staunch support towards the Conference. I would also like to thank our facilitators who have come forward in full force to make the breakout sessions meaningful for our youths. I would also like to show my appreciation to all volunteers from Nanyang Polytechnic who have come forward to support the event. Last but not least, I would like to thank each and everyone of you for coming on board this Conference.

I wish you a meaningful day ahead.

Thank you.