

**SPEECH BY MR ZAINUDIN NORDIN, CHAIRMAN, ONEPEOPLE.SG
AT CAMPTEEN: YOUTH RACIAL HARMONY AMBASSADORS
PROGRAMME FINALE ON 21 NOVEMBER 2013 AT ONEPEOPLE.SG**

Good Afternoon

Fellow Board Members

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Camp Teen Ambassadors

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to the Finale of CampTeen, OnePeople.sg's flagship Youth Racial Harmony Ambassadors Programme. I would like to congratulate each and every one of you for successfully completing the Camp. I trust all of you had a meaningful learning journey.

2 OnePeople.sg over the years, has been steadily building CampTeen as a cross-cultural leadership programme. This signature Camp gives youths, an opportunity, at least once in their lives, to live side by side, learn and interact with fellow youths from different races. By giving an all-round multicultural experience, we hope to build inter-cultural understanding among our youths beyond surface levels. At the heart of the matter, CampTeen provides youths the platform to understand deeper issues concerning race relations contribute thoughts

and play a leading role as ambassadors. I am encouraged by the diversity in our Camp each year. This year, we have youths from over 30 schools as well as international students from countries like Germany, China, India, Korea, Armenia and Tanzania participating in the Camp. I am confident, living together over 4 days, has brought about a rich cultural exchange between our local and international students.

3 This year's Camp leverages on the recent findings from the Indicators of Racial and Religious Harmony, a joint study by OnePeople.sg and Institute of Policy Studies, to address gaps. As you may be aware, the survey revealed that only about half of us have a close friend of a different race. This gap concerning inter-racial friendships is not unique to Singapore. Interestingly, recent results of an online poll released by Reuters showed that many Americans do not have a friend of another race. The poll conducted among slightly over 4,000 Americans showed that 40% of white Americans and 25% of non-white Americans only surrounded themselves with friends of their own race. However, both Reuters poll and our study shared one similarity - the younger generation is more open to making friendships across races.

4 We felt this Camp would be a good start in probing the issue of cross cultural friendships and see how best we can work with our youths in addressing this area. In fact, I had a dialogue with our youths together with some of my fellow Board members on this topic. I am heartened by the maturity shown by our youths. I must say, they were actually thinking very far ahead. Inter-racial marriages instantly became a hot topic for discussion.

5 On a serious note, our youths raised thought provoking questions such as the difference between racism and attitudes towards inter-racial

messages and discussed ways to overcome inter-racial bias. I feel this is certainly a good start. I hope these discussions have helped our youths frame their thoughts on larger concerns and inspire them to look at racial harmony beyond tolerance.

6 I strongly believe youth can take the lead in building cross-cultural friendships. The greatest opportunity to build friendships is in school. This is where we have the widest circle of like-minded youths from different origins, each with a different outlook and experience but who share a common journey. There is so much to share, and learn from each other; it will be a wasted opportunity if our youths leave school without knowing someone from a different culture. It all starts with breaking out from our comfort zones. All we need to do is to “STEP UP”.

7 I am encouraged that as ambassadors you have stepped up to our call by taking lead in making new friends during this Camp. I am told each one of you has made the move to get to know someone different from you at a more personal level. And I understand you have gone one step further by coming together to pen your experiences in the form of a scrapbook. This is a great way to pass on the message of “friendship”. I am really looking forward to reading your stories. These are precious experiences which I hope you would continue to treasure long after this Camp.

8 Our Camp Teen co-facilitators lead by example here. Just to name a few, Frank Nathaniel, Nur Izzati, and Jacelyn Low, knew each other when they first joined CampTeen in 2011. They have since become very good friends regularly catching up with each other and have gone on to organise projects to foster racial harmony. Their story demonstrates that

when we are friends, our skin tones, race, nationality or religion is irrelevant.

9 These youths are just an example of the group of co-facilitators who have been with you throughout the Camp. As past members of CampTeen they now stand out as advocates of racial harmony. Inspired by CampTeen, they have made it a point to give back what they have learnt. Soon after Camp Teen, they joined OnePeople.sg's Youth Wing and have contributed towards the cause by championing community projects and returning as co-facilitators of CampTeen each year. A number of them have been with us for more than 3 years. These youths are indeed making a difference as ambassadors. Please do give them a round of applause.

10 I hope to see as many of you follow their footsteps. I understand you have very interesting advocacy projects in mind. I urge you to join our Youth Wing and translate these ideas into reality. OnePeople.sg will certainly lend its support to a worthy cause.

11 As Racial Harmony Ambassadors, I would like to see you live up to what you have learnt. First, help spread the message. Share your knowledge and experiences to others; be it your school mates, back home or through online media such as Facebook and Twitter. Second, do not stop your inter-racial friendships here; grow this circle. Friendships need not be limited to your class or school it could extend right to your neighbours and flat mates. All it takes is to make the first move to say "hi or hello". And third, when you witness racist comments do step up and make a stand. Make it known to all that racism has no place in society.

12 On this note, I wish to thank all donors, partners and volunteers for making this Camp possible. I would like to thank National Integration Council, Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and Lee Foundation for their kind support. I would also like to thank all our Youth Wing members, facilitators and participating schools and organisations for taking time to be with us. Last but not least, I would like to thank all of you for contributing to yet another meaningful CampTeen.

I wish you a pleasant afternoon ahead.

Thank you.