

**WELCOME REMARKS BY MR ZAINUDIN NORDIN CHAIRMAN,
ONEPEOPLE.SG AT THE FINALE OF ORANGE RIBBON
CELEBRATIONS - HARMONYWORKS! CONFERENCE 2012
“REGARDLESS OF FACEBOOK, TWITTER OR YOUTUBE” ON
SATURDAY, 28 JULY AT TEMASEK CONVENTION CENTRE**

Good Morning

Guest Speaker, Mr Kelly Choo, Co – founder, Brantology

Teachers

Facilitators

Ladies and Gentlemen and

Students

I would like to warmly welcome you to today’s Conference. I am glad to see such a strong turnout. I believe your presence here today signals your interest on things that matter.

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 are important.

3 Today’s Conference marks the Finale of the Orange Ribbon Celebrations. Every year, OnePeople.sg and its partners, organise

island wide racial harmony activities in the month of July called the Orange Ribbon Celebrations. We encourage as many people to wear the Orange Ribbon to make a stand against racism, and show respect and understanding towards our friends from different races and religions. I am proud to say that the Orange Ribbon Celebrations is now an important event in our national calendar, and I hope to see as many of our youths, being a part of this movement.

4 The theme of today's Conference; "Regardless, of Facebook, Twitter or YouTube" is a very relevant topic, especially to our young ones. Nowadays, we cannot spend a day without looking at our Facebook, tweeting or fiddling with our smartphones. We have gotten better at multi-tasking. We have learnt how to eat, SMS, surf the net and talk to someone on the phone, all at the same time. People are switching from SMS to WhatsApp in sending messages. Facebook has become our public diary, where our friends online get to know where we are, what we are doing at any time of the day, simply by us checking in. And somehow, we have also gone back to childhood days, by either friending or not friending people who wish to be our online friends or 'like' and 'unlike' posts on the internet. This is the era

of the social media, a medium which has greatly changed the way we communicate.

5 Let me share with you some interesting facts about social media. Recent studies have shown Facebook has 2.7 billion 'likes' a day. There are 900 million active users. If Facebook was a country, it would be the 3rd largest country in the world. As for Twitter, there are over 450 million Tweeter accounts all over the world. 750 tweets are shared per second. If Tweeter was a country it will be the 12th largest in the World. You Tube has 2 billion views per day and 900,000 videos are uploaded daily.

6 We live in highly connected global society. In fact, Singapore is one of the world's most connected cities. According to a recent global survey by Ericsson Consumer Lab, a research firm which tracks mobile lifestyles, Singapore has the highest penetration of smartphones in the world. Among 58 Countries polled, we came out tops for ownership of smartphones, and among the top 3 in the world for owning tablet PCs. Singaporeans are also one of the world's

highest users of social media with over 2.6 million Facebook accounts.

7 Social media has given rise to a powerful voice called citizen journalism. Now with a tablet or mobile device, we can create, comment and share news on the move. Within minutes, this information can be viral. We are conveying and consuming information in cyberspace more than ever. The phenomenon of social media can create a wealth of connectivity, but by the same measure if misused, can pose a threat to our social fabric, as we have witnessed lately.

8 I am rather troubled by recent incidents of racism online. Despite being cautioned, we see our young making the same mistakes. Soon after a foreign scholar was taken to task for making insensitive remarks online, a Singaporean youth sparked furor with racist comments via her Twitter account. More recently, two errant youths were arrested for tweeting derogatory remarks about another the race. I grapple with myself, if these incidents are a reflection of a moment of rashness or just deep seated prejudice.

9 While I can take heart that the majority of Singaporeans value our multicultural society, I am concerned about the vocal minority who use online media to incite hate speech. What can we do to correct this? We need to speak up. Let not our silence be taken for weakness. If we encounter acts of racism on the internet or in our daily lives, make a stand. Don't wait for someone else to respond. For that person may be waiting for you. In the end, each keeps waiting for another and the cyber bully gets away, and becomes stronger when he returns. We must not let that happen.

10 I am not sure how many of you watched Spiderman. There is a quote in that movie that struck me, "With great power, comes great responsibility". The new media is a powerful tool. It allows you to express what you feel without any inhibitions. But freedom of speech on the internet must come with a certain responsibility. Thinking social media gives you a cloak of anonymity is false. Some of the youths who were caught posting offensive remarks online, actually tweeted privately to their friends. But in the end, screenshots of their posts were taken and circulated to thousands via social media. The

lesson here is simple. Do not do something rash, which you may regret later. Think before you post. Ask yourself, if I am going to tweet this message or post this message on Facebook, is it going to hurt others. If the answer is yes, do not click “send”.

11 Today’s Conference will challenge you to think deeply about issues concerning social media. For example, values that we can cultivate in social media. Do we need an online code of ethics by the government to regulate our actions or can we come up with our own set of norms to check ourselves? How can we use new media positively? We often hear about the bad things going on in social media, but what about the good things, can social media be used to champion civic causes? These are interesting questions that you will be discussing and debating at this Conference and I am eager to hear your views.

12 Our guest speaker for today, Mr Kelly Choo, co-founder of Brantology, a reputable local firm which does vast research on the potential of social media, will enlighten you on the impact social media has on community cohesion. Following his address, you will

have breakout discussions, where you will get to network with students from various schools, and exchange views on the Conference theme.

13 In the afternoon, you have an opportunity to engage our Guest of Honour, Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts along with our distinguished panelists, in a dialogue session. So make full use of the opportunity to ask all your burning questions. If you have a brilliant idea, that is the time to share. You would also get to feast on multi-ethnic delicacies and enjoy rich multicultural performances. Get ready. An enriching Conference awaits you.

14 In closing, I would like to reiterate that social media is a double edged sword. We should blunt the end that hurts and sharpen the end that opens new positive experiences. Do remember, while social media increases your networks, nothing substitutes face to face interaction. The barometer of harmony is the circle of friends you have outside your own race, not just online but offline as well. So do

take this opportunity to mingle, make new friends and take home something valuable.

15 I would like to take this opportunity to thank the National Education Committee and student volunteers from Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore Polytechnic Business School, Innova JC, Crescent Girls' School and Jurong Junior College for their support. I would also like to thank our passionate volunteer facilitators who have made time to partake in this Conference. My appreciation also goes out to National Integration Council and Lee Foundation for their kind contributions. Last but not least, I would like to thank all of you for your active participation.

16 I wish you a meaningful day ahead.

Thank you.