

**SPEECH BY MR ZAINUDIN NORDIN, CHAIRMAN, ONEPEOPLE.SG AT  
CAMPTEEN: YOUTH RACIAL HARMONY AMBASSADORS  
PROGRAMME FINALE ON 9 NOVEMBER 2012 AT ONEPEOPLE.SG**

Good Afternoon,

Fellow Board Members

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Students

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 you for successfully completing the camp. I hope it has been a thrilling adventure for you over the past 4 days, with rich cultural experiences and new found friendships. And I hope you had a great time bonding with one another.

2 Let me share with you some background on CampTeen. CampTeen was started way back in 1994. The idea of starting this annual Camp was to create a platform for youths from different races to come together, live side by side and build greater cross cultural understanding, and lasting friendships. Over the last five years, we have been steadily building CampTeen as a leadership programme. So besides giving you a cross cultural experience, you are also provided with opportunities to learn about

deeper issues facing race relations, come up with ideas and contribute as ambassadors.

3 This year's theme plays a twist on the common slang that we often use, '*LAUGH OUT LOUD*' to '*LOVE OUT LOUD*'. Both terms share the same abbreviation (LOL) but hold totally different meanings. To show care, compassion and empathy starts with love in our hearts. When we truly love and care for each other, race does not matter. We all belong to one race - The Human Race. And it is our love for one another regardless of differences which makes us ONE. I hope this is a valuable lesson you take back with you after this Camp.

4 I understand that some of you had the privilege to dialogue with former Member of Parliament, Mr Joe Conceicao and member of the Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circle, Mr Lionel de Souza who both lived through the 1964 riots. I hope the hearing of first-hand accounts of the riots gave you a better understanding of how racial harmony in Singapore is not a given. The riots demonstrate how fragile race and religious relations can be. It also shows when we have weak ties among our people, we become more vulnerable to external threats and influences. While we have come a long way since the riots, we must never take hard won peace for granted.

5 As you may be aware, there has been a spate of incidents concerning online racism over the past year. Most recently, Amy Cheong, a former employee of NTUC was dismissed from her job for her racist postings on Facebook. Amy Cheong is just one example of how some people have used the anonymity of social media as an outlet for hate

speech. The question I ask myself is why? Why do people insult one's race or religion? Is it because of ignorance? Is it because of some deep held prejudice or just to seek attention? It is worthwhile for us to reflect on this.

6 While I strongly believe the majority of Singaporeans do not harbor ill feelings, the spark of some of these racist comments especially online is of concern. What we really need to think about is, what can we do about it? Do we make a stand or just let things pass? As racial harmony ambassadors you play an important role as advocates, to stand up for the cause when it matters. When you come across messages of hate, make a stand. If you see friends being ridiculed, speak up against such behavior. The more we stay silent, the bolder bigots will be. You must exercise the voice that you carry as an ambassador. Let it be known, loud and clear, that racism has no place in our society.

7 I would like to share with you a quote from the famous Italian actress, Sophia Loren which reads, "There is a fountain of youth: It is your mind, your talents, the creativity you bring in your life and the lives of people you love". Some of you might think that you are too young to make a difference. Age is never a barrier. You are never too young to make great change. All you need is a willing heart.

8 I will give you an example. The anti –smoking ad by the Thai Health Promotion Board which went viral on You Tube proved to be one of the best anti-smoking ads ever done. It demonstrates how young children can be powerful messengers of change. The ad showed a real life experiment,

which featured young children holding a cigarette going up to people smoking in public places asking for a light. The smokers get a rude shock. They start advising the children that smoking is bad for health and tell them they should not smoke. The children then ask, “why do you do it?” pass them a leaflet on harmful effects of smoking and walk away. It was a radical advertisement but it certainly got smokers thinking.

9 Let me give you another example closer to home. I am sure you have heard about the “polite Ah Lian” incident. This is about a young girl who got into a quarrel with an elderly woman after giving up her seat in the MRT for the woman. The elderly woman felt the young girl took too long to give up her seat. This led to all kinds of nasty exchanges between both of them and a much publicised debate on who was right or wrong. However, instead of just talking about it, a small group of youths decided to take action. They initiated a campaign called “Stand up for Singapore” in August to demonstrate public graciousness. They used social media to encourage youths to sign up and make a stand. This small group of youths got 500 young Singaporeans to wear red and board trains all over Singapore to encourage passengers occupying priority seats, to give up their seats for people who need it more. Their actions raised awareness and got people reflecting on what it means to be gracious.

10 Our past members of CampTeen are shining examples as advocates. You would recognise them as your co-facilitators during the Camp. In fact, a number of them have been returning to co-facilitate CampTeen for three to four years now. They make it a point to give back what they have learnt. Each year, our youth wing comprising past

CampTeen members organise Rafusicul, which means Race, Fusion and Culture, to bring people of different races together through music. They organise this fun and lively event entirely on their own by reaching out to fellow youths, getting them to participate as well as getting some of their friends on board to support their efforts. They plan to organise Rafusicul again towards the end of the year. So, look out for it and join us.

11 I understand you have come up with interesting messages and ideas of promoting racial harmony during the camp. I look forward to hearing your views. I wish to challenge you to put your ideas into action. OnePeople.sg will certainly give you the support. And I hope to see as many of you join our Youth Wing and be voices of our mission.

12 While this Camp may have ended, it is the start of your journey. Do keep your connections alive. Spread what you have learnt to your friends via Facebook and Blogs. Join us on Facebook , share ideas and let us keep the conversations going. For a cause like racial harmony to truly gain momentum, we need champions like you. So be an advocate, and make a difference. Let's Love Out Loud!

13 This Camp would not have been possible without the generous support from our donors, partners and volunteers. I would like to take this opportunity to thank National Integration Council 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 successful CampTeen.

14 I wish you a pleasant afternoon ahead.

Thank you.