

# Addressing Poverty through Education of Women in Developing Countries

*Recounting a World University Service of Canada (WUSC) Colloquium Series event at Trent University*

By **Dorothy Cheng** - March 11, 2018





*A woman in Ghana. Photo by Nathaniel Tetteh on Unsplash.*

We are not doing a good job in fighting global poverty.

This was a sentiment expressed by members of the panel at the recent WUSC Colloquium Series event, titled “Addressing Poverty through Education of Women in Developing Countries.” Trent University Department of Social Work Assistant Professor Dr. David Firang said that even though there are international initiatives to assist developing countries, it will not be enough if women of these countries are not empowered or free.

The panel is part of WUSC at Trent’s ongoing Colloquium Series, a rotation of roundtable and panel events addressing topics of international development and social issues. The panel also featured Yasaman Ahanin, an International Development student who spent a year abroad in Ghana with the non-governmental organization Right to Play, and Yllka Bojku, an executive member of WUSC at Trent and an international student from Kosovo.

Explaining his sentiment, Firang said that though women make up more than half the world’s population, the majority of them live under patriarchal systems that have in one way or another limited or denied their access to certain rights. In developing countries, this problem is even more evident in a phenomenon wherein many women are not allowed to receive an education.

“When more than half the world’s population constantly face issues in getting an education, more than half the world’s potential is not being utilized,” Yllka said. Yasaman added that many women in developing countries are not even necessarily aware that they have rights to education, let alone other basic rights.

Women have important links with a country’s success considering their involvement in both the private and public spheres.

“An empowered woman means an empowered family, community, and country.” Yllka said, with Yasaman adding that a woman should be able to contribute to her family’s sustainability as well.

One of the ways to work on gender equality in developing countries is to engage men and boys in these countries. Recalling the work she had done in Ghana, Yasaman explained an interactive learning activity she conducted in a Ghanaian classroom.

The students were made to list the tasks they had to complete after waking up in the morning and before heading to school. The girls’ list ended up including examples such as cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping, and other. This

naturally resulted in more girls missing class because they were late or tired; or being unsuccessful in school.

The boys' list consisted only of waking up, getting ready, and then heading to school. According to Yasaman, seeing this contrast with their own eyes enabled the students in the classroom to come up with their own ideas of how they can bring change.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Firang reminded the room of the boomerang effects of inequality. "When a group in society is being marginalized and oppressed, the ill effects that occur to them will end up affecting all of society as well."

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WUSC at Trent is a student-run non-profit organization that raises awareness of global issues. They run the Student Refugee Program, which brings three refugee students from global locations to attend Trent with their first year's expenses fully sponsored. WUSC at Trent hosts events throughout the year such as the WUSC Colloquium Series to bring important conversations to campus.

A documentary produced by the WUSC at Trent local committee highlighting the experiences of refugees in Peterborough and Trent will be screening for the first time on March 22 at The Venue in downtown Peterborough. It will be a free event.

Check the WUSC at Trent Facebook page for updates on future events, or email [wuscattrent@gmail.com](mailto:wuscattrent@gmail.com) if you are interested in getting involved.

**Dorothy Cheng**



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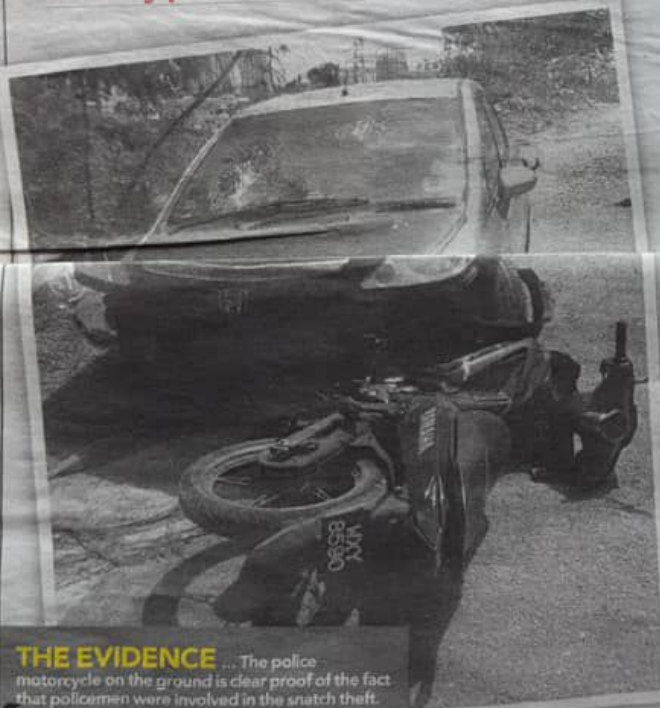
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# ROBBER COPS

> Man rams his car into snatch thieves only to find out they are off-duty policemen



**THE EVIDENCE** ... The police motorcycle on the ground is clear proof of the fact that policemen were involved in the snatch theft. Saravanan's damaged car is proof of his heroic act in coming to the defence of a snatch theft victim.



**HERO**  
Saravanan Batumalai

BY DOROTHY CHENG  
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

**P**ETALING JAYA: Saravanan Batumalai had the shock of his life hours after ramming his car into a motorcycle used by two snatch thieves last month: they were off-duty policemen.

The first indication that they were men in blue came when he called 999 after the incident at 12.15pm on July 3 and a police patrol car arrived, only to have the policemen confirm that the motorcycle belonged to the Kelana Jaya police station.

When Saravanan went to the police station to make a report, the investigating officer called in two policemen who turned out to be the ones who had tried to snatch the gold necklace of a woman walking along the road outside his workplace in Taman Mayang, Petaling Jaya.

One had been riding the motorcycle while the other was his pillion.

The drama unfolded just after noon that day when the 27-year-old was in his car outside his workplace and saw two men on a motorcycle snatching a woman's necklace.

"I immediately sped up and rammed into

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# Genneva investors in limbo

> They claim company directors remain unresponsive to their demands

BY DOROTHY CHENG  
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**PETALING JAYA:** Disgruntled investors are claiming that they are still in a limbo over the status of their investments with gold investment company Genneva (under Genneva Sdn Bhd and Genneva Malaysia Sdn Bhd).

Following the sessions court ruling on Tuesday that Bank Negara

Malaysia has the right to freeze Genneva's assets, investors told theSun that this does not change anything, as they have never had assurance that they will be repaid.

"It does not matter whether Genneva's assets have been frozen as a lot of us believe Genneva will not give what is owed to us anyway," said James Lim, a businessman.

"The present directors have been unresponsive to all demands.

"We have never received any reimbursement or assurance in any way," he said, claiming that Genneva has only asked customers for more money.

Lim claims the Facebook page,

Genneva Malaysia Supporters, is "a front staged by Genneva directors to alleviate blame from themselves and direct it towards Bank Negara."

"That Facebook page has been rallying customers to lodge police reports and pay for a judicial review.

"They appealed to elderly customers and those with special medical needs to make their plight known and lodge a report against Bank Negara," he said, adding that another link to their website, www.gmsior.wordpress.com, led customers to an article guiding them what to say in the report.

"A special clause was added after the reports were lodged, stating that

customers were not coerced to make reports and that the customers all had concrete evidence against Bank Negara before lodging reports," he said.

The Facebook page has also asked customers to churn out RM50 each to pay lawyers to file a judicial review with Bank Negara.

"As of now, the review has been cancelled as they could not meet the 90-day deadline to file it and customers have not been given any updates.

"They did not disclose how much money had been collected, where it has gone, and customers are not allowed to meet with the lawyers that

their money hired," Lim said.

Fellow investor Michelle Kwan, a businesswoman, said she, too, has failed to contact the Genneva directors.

Echoing Lim's claims on customers being asked to file for a judicial review, Kwan claims that Genneva had threatened to abandon customers if they do not do as asked.

"They do it in very subtle ways but it's enough to convince some customers who are less educated," she opined.

"We have absolutely no idea where our money is and if we will ever get it back. We are in complete darkness," she said.

# Nurul Izzah shows proof

> She disputes claims that she failed to inform EC of alleged suspicious voters

BY DOROTHY CHENG  
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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Lembah Pantai MP Nurul Izzah Anwar has disputed claims by Election Commission (EC) chairman Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Yusof that she failed to inform the EC of the alleged 4,637 suspicious voters in her constituency.

She said she received a reply from EC secretary Datuk Kamaruddin Mohamad Baria on March 6 acknowledging her letter and stating that the matter was at the

attention of the EC.

A Malay daily on Sunday quoted Abdul Aziz as saying he had not received any letter from Nurul Izzah or her office regarding registered voters in Lembah Pantai believed to be either deceased or having false addresses.

"I was shocked when I read that article because I sent the EC the letter on March 4, and EC secretary Datuk Kamaruddin Mohamad Baria replied on March 6 saying they received the letter on March 5," Nurul Izzah said yesterday, showing reporters the relevant letters at the Lembah Pantai parliamentary office.

"I am baffled as to why Abdul Aziz would make a statement that is tantamount to lying," she added.

Nurul Izzah also urged Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein to take action on

political violence in her constituency, saying it has plagued Lembah Pantai since last year.

"In March last year, volunteers from the Lembah Pantai parliamentary office were intimidated by a group of hooligans during voter-surveying in a housing area," she said.

"The crowd at a PKR talk at Pantai Permai in May last year had eggs and stones thrown at them, and children and elderly people were injured," she said.

She said last month vandals attacked billboards, broke into a PKR operation centre in Jalan Kurau, causing about RM20,000 in damages and stole a PKR tent in Taman Sentosa Utama.

"Hishammuddin must act fast to end this, otherwise it will be like giving such hooligans blanket immunity," she said.

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Author: Steinmetal

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*Writer and musician Marco Ferrarese's debut novel "Nazi Goreng", about a young, Malay, Punk-loving skinhead caught up in the dilemma of Nazism versus living a normal life, is full of violence, debauchery, philosophy, and reality, but most importantly – it hands an important moral lesson to us on a platter. Ferrarese's unique narrative and insightful evaluation of Malaysian culture takes the novel to new heights, promising to be one of the best contemporary novels about this whirlwind of a country we might ever see.*

It's not every day that Malaysians get to read about real Malaysian social issues, dramatized and put into perspective for informed discussion. Most of us reside within our little comfort cocoon of false hopes and mild social environments, the dirty reality lurking somewhere out there but never quite materializing in front of us. This is why a lot of Malaysians, especially the youth, remain sheltered from and largely uninformed of the phenomenon known as "Malay Nazism".

Marco Ferrarese, an Italian writer and musician who spent the past few years working in Asia, said the volatile and intense climate of racial tensions in Malaysia made a profound impact on him, describing it as something he had not seen before. His experiences and opinions with this brand of racism, which some might describe as uniquely Malaysian, spurred him to write a novel with a rather unorthodox hero: young Asrul from Alor Setar, Kedah, pursuing the ultimate Malay Nazi dream – which is basically a Malaysia free from non-Malays.

"Nazi Goreng" the novel can be plainly described as a coming-of-age novel, but that would be doing it little justice, since it also happens to be a weighty and troubling analysis of the ever-present and inherent racial tensions in Malaysia. The novel also delves briefly into the world of Malaysian skinheads and punks – a small, ostracized subculture that most urban Malaysians probably have a hard time taking seriously when in fact, a lot of the supremacist ideologies fuelling Asrul's actions stem from the skinhead culture of Neo-Nazism and racial supremacy. Being a punk musician himself, Ferrarese very delicately evaluates the erratic and inciting nature of the skinhead culture, and its relation to our young protagonist who is suffering from quite the identity crisis. To be honest, I would not have minded if the novel went on for another 50 pages, if it meant those extra pages would be spent on further explorations into the underground music scene.

Asrul is first introduced to us as just another Malay kid from the suburbs, but with a fondness for Punk and other kinds of heavy music. He goes around minding his own business for the most part and is in fact quite a casual, normal teenager, but Malaysia's rather interesting demographical situation in which thousands of foreigners flood cities annually to take up odd jobs (a large number of whom do this illegally), has left some sense of resentment imbuing inside him, spurred on by an equally misguided sense of entitlement. A traumatic run-in with Indian gangsters is the catalyst that sets that resentment exploding and festering discontent within him, and charismatic, intimidating, and forceful Malik seizes his opportunity to plant seeds of hatred into Asrul's susceptible mind.

Almost everybody in the world knows a 'Malik'. He might not be your friend, but you know of him and his ways and for the large part, try to avoid him. Strong-willed, hard-headed, convincing, intelligent, compelling, yet bubbling with violence and aggression, such 'Maliks' are powerfully captivating, and dangerous both from the outside and inside, especially once you hear what he has to say. "Nazi Goreng's" Malik is the perfect mold for this personality, à la Malaysian style. He latches his haunches easily into Asrul, who is initially meek and clueless, and there is no path for Asrul anymore except the one Malik has paved for him.

The novel then starts to take an interesting turn as Asrul and Malik leave the small town of Alor Setar for the tourist haven of Penang, and eventually, beyond. In Penang, the innocent Asrul is yet again taken into a situation he initially wants no part of, following Malik around like a puppy dog, becoming embroiled in an illegal drug business. From here, Ferrarese seizes the opportunity to expound on other gripping Malaysian issues such as the death penalty, the drug culture in Malaysia, the frustration of coming to terms with sexual tension and sexuality which are regarded as taboo topics, Asrul's devotion to Islam which is warped by his involvement with the drug business and Nazism, corruption in the police force and government, and of course, unavoidable and underlying racism everywhere you go. That being said, the most important issue Ferrarese touches on is that of foreigners and immigrants in Malaysia. He does what perhaps no other novelist has ever done: giving the reader insight into the thoughts of a foreign worker in Malaysia. They are no longer the 'unnamed untouchables'. They are memorable characters instead of plot devices. He opens up narratives with their thoughts and displays their humanity in all its subdued glory. Ferrarese exposes the mystery of the immigrant – an enigma many Malaysians consider inconsequential and even irritating – to show us that all they want to do is fit in and climb the social ladder – just like us.

It is important to note that "Nazi Goreng" isn't all violence and social commentary – young Asrul does manage to meet a charming Indonesian girl named Siti. The dilemma sprouting from his relationship with her, his duty to Nazism, and his job as a runner for a drug lord culminate in a ferocious climax, a conclusion of which is refreshingly realistic, tragic and deserved.

In the end, Asrul's first major fault was letting his instinct to survive overtake his humanity. One line in the novel perfectly captures Asrul's turn from meek philosopher to full-on Nazi: "Tonight, he had switched sides; he was on the safe end of the blade." It's easy to sympathize with Asrul once you realize his entire foray into Nazism was just to feel like he was on the safe end of the blade. But is the blade even there in the first place? Who was first to wield the blade? This is where Ferrarese's commentary on the Malaysian system of government and more obviously, law enforcement, comes into play – shedding light on the profound effect the actions of authorities have on young minds. However, the novel doesn't try to draw any noble conclusions for us on what racism is and how we should react to it. It simply shows us the reality of the world we live it, leaving us to our own decisions on how we want to change things.

For a country with a colorful cultural climate that suffers occasionally from bouts of passiveness and ignorance, “**Nazi Goreng**” is great for any Malaysian to read. This novel is untraditional in every sense. From the superfluous narrative that switches effortlessly from the different points of view of each character, to taboo themes creeping their inexplicably dark powers over you, Marco Ferrarese has managed to pull readers into the dark and dangerous side of Malaysia. But despite its heavy and controversial subject matter, Ferrarese’s relentless debut novel manages to put the grueling reality of disenfranchised Malay youth and the short-sightedness of their naïve racism into a sympathetic light – giving the rest of us perspective and insight into why they did the things they did, the sympathy of it all taking us through an eye-opening journey of discovering how we all have a Malik, Asrul, corrupt law enforcer, naïve worker, and hopeful youngster in us, driven to either lie dormant or emerge by our actions and decisions.

“**Nazi Goreng**” is now available in digital and print copy. For more information, visit <http://www.monsoonbooks.com.sg/nazi-goreng-9789814423359/>

Marco Ferrarese can be found at his website: <http://www.monkeyrockworld.com/> where he blogs about his music and travels.

Ferrarese's band Weot Skam's new album, Six Pack Tsunami Attack, was also reviewed by Metal-Temple here:

[http://www.metal-temple.com/site/catalogues/entry/reviews/cd\\_3/w\\_2/weot-skam-six-pack.htm](http://www.metal-temple.com/site/catalogues/entry/reviews/cd_3/w_2/weot-skam-six-pack.htm)

» Edited 05 April 2019

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## MSGA Global Article Series:- "Lessons from the KLIA Airport Refugee"

January 16, 2019 / 0 Comments / in MSGA Global Article Series / by Admin

Wednesday, 16 January 2019

By: Dorothy Cheng, BA in History with a Minor in English, Trent University Canada

I remember being 15 and going into the big city for the first time with my friends. Five of us wandered the streets, unsupervised and curious. This was before any of us really knew how to use Google Maps, or drive, or not stick out like sheltered, underexposed sore thumbs. We were there to meet James\*, a man who worked with our school's church. He was going to help us with our assigned topic for a documentary we were making for school.

We met somewhere near Imbi, where he lived. Before that, we had been taking B-Roll clips of an energetic, rowdy Times Square, then still inexplicably popular with youth such as us. Still sweating and fatigued from residual excitement, we followed James through winding back streets and shaded alleys, and encountered a much different world.

About 20 minutes away by foot was a neglected and isolated commercial area, its façade far from what I used to expect would fit with my image of KL. Aging shophouses were surrounded by peeling, narrow columns of flats, the dripping clothes of their inhabitants draped over sooty balconies. James points to the top of one of those flats and tell us he lives there. The stairway that led up was shrouded in darkness and decorated with all kinds of filth.



"The light's been broken for years," I remember him telling us sheepishly.

We make our way up five stories holding onto the backs of each other's clothes before arriving at his home. Inside, we were greeted with the smiling faces of his little commune, all 12 of them squeezed inside the main hall. I did a quick count: perhaps there were three bedrooms in total. The single bathroom was exposed, connected to the kitchen which extended into the balcony. The unit must have been less than 800 square feet.

On our way over, James had told us his story. James was Chin, which I understood at the time to be an ethnic group in Myanmar. In terms careful enough for ill-informed teenagers, he explained that he and his family had ran away from Myanmar many years ago due to religious persecution. Malaysia was close, you see, situated serendipitously in the middle of Southeast Asia, accessible on all sides by the seas. There were promises of it being only a temporary stop, promises of it being suitable for children and elders, promises of work and shelter and education.

His two young children, lazing comfortably on their mother's lap, were students at a UN-run charity school.

"Their workbooks are donated, and the teachers come and go because they're volunteers. Sometimes there aren't enough books or teachers. Some days they just don't go," he said.

The school is miles away in another area. I ask if he works, a question which makes him laugh. Refugees are not legally permitted to work in Malaysia, he says, his eyes twinkling at the implication. I remember thinking: what a hell of a man, what a hell of a family, living in this place and going to that school and working that job, escaping hell and arriving in purgatory and searching still for paradise. My admiration was for them, my sadness was for them, my well-wishes were abundant.



We made the documentary refusing to condense it any lesser than its 50-minute runtime. It's lost now, a corrupted bit of data in a dusty pendrive, but it was about him and his family and their strength; a love letter of sorts to the millions of people like him around the world who make the most of the worst.

Years later, I was working as a journalist, and a colleague and I were sent to pursue an assignment regarding the "issue" of migrants in KL.

If any one place in KL encapsulates its relationship with migrants, it's the Kota Raya area. During Ramadan, iftar time would see the streets covered with the bent backs of diverse devotees – from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Indonesia... our neighbours all bowed in prayer. When I had gone there on assignment as a journalist, the entire front face of the Kota Raya building was draped with a massive tapestry of colourful cloths: a flag for every nationality operating businesses in the area.

It was a scouting trip for our photographer to get some pictures and for us to understand the feel of the situation, to sniff out just how "bad" things were.

Perhaps I misunderstood the assignment. But everywhere I went, I had the distinct feeling that my journalism was operating on some level as espionage. We peeked into stores only to be met by offended glares. Many hid away into the shadows of awnings or stairwells when our camera approached. The few people we had tried to talk to darted away, calling on their friends to chase us away. We were followed by groups, suspicious of our intentions and fiercely protective over the information we might have gleaned from our investigations. A man shouted at us from across the street,

"Go away! This is our territory!"

My indignation was righteous. This was my city, my country.





Just as we thought things were going to escalate, we see two police officers in the distance. My chest soars, my colleagues start running towards them. But the police do not notice us. Instead they turn into one of those shadowy storefronts, cornering two young men. One officer has his hand on his baton, the other shoves one of the men with moderate force. As far as I could tell, this confrontation was unprompted and unprovoked.

"Kad biru mana?" the officer shouts, shoving the young man's shoulder. The man fumbles, his Malay is broken, he is scared. The officer repeats his query over and over, before finally holding a palm out – he was open for business.

I saw the young men tuck crisp Ringgits into his hand.

It hits me then. All those years ago in James' flat, he had shown us his "kad biru" – a card offered by the UN to refugees whose status they recognized, confirming them as asylum seekers. Many do not end up getting such official confirmation.

"I don't know if this card is a curse or blessing," James had said then, and at the time, I did not understand the complex duality of this.

Indeed, I have no doubt in my mind that a bribe would still have been necessary, regardless of whether the young men produced their cards or not.

It was then that I realized that the protectiveness, aggression, and affront that we had been greeted with was not a product of these peoples' insolence as we wrongly assumed, but rather it had come from a place of fear. Journalists poking their noses into the private lives of vulnerable people, with the power to demonize and expose them, would certainly not be met with welcome. The assignment had called for an investigation into the nature of the "migrant problem", and this understanding of migrants included both legal and illegal, refugee and non-refugee, it was non-discriminatory in who it considered alien, unwanted, and other.



Last night I learnt that Hassan al-Kontar, the “Airport Prisoner,” had arrived in Canada to the waiting arms of his sponsor family. When Nas Daily first popularized this issue internationally, the indignation of many Malaysians was similar to mine when I was on assignment at Kota Raya and was told I was not welcome.

We fed him. We let him stay. We made him an offer to stay in the country. This is our country.

He should make the most of it.

I am writing this as someone who has never been through such an experience. We were all of us writing about Hassan, without knowing what it is like to be him. I have been through much less and wished that I was thought of with more empathy.

Even when I had attempted to document experiences such as Hassan’s or James’ when I was a teenager, as outsiders how we had presented the issue in our little “love letter” of a documentary is actually also part of the problem.

In viewing refugees with that short-sighted sympathy, we emphasized their courage, strength, and hardiness. We do all this to divert from the responsibilities we owe, not just to our fellow humans but to the order of global peace and prosperity. They are courageous enough, after all, and strong enough, and hardy enough, that they’re used to enduring the living conditions of staying for months in an airport, surviving off donated food, harassment from authorities, and so on. They’re used to it, and it’s only natural for them to endure this. We do this so we can feel good about their plights: they’ll get themselves out of this problem because they’re superhuman, and meanwhile we can fantasize about the extraordinary ability of human beings to overcome the impossible, and pat ourselves on the backs for allowing them the freedom and space to struggle and toil.



The problems that they face are not self-made. Why then is their solution expected to be?

Those of us fortunate enough to never have experienced such a turning point in life should focus our energies not on chastising others on how to solve their problems, or daydreaming about the romantic notion of their strength: as allies we have one major focus, and that is to get our governments to step up and change their laws. Our governments continue to have policies that consistently threaten vulnerable people with deportation, deny them social and economic mobility, sees them as an invasion and a menace, and takes them out of one oppression and places them in another. As Malaysians, we can petition our government to ratify the key UN conventions on asylum seekers and migrants, we can push back on the xenophobic rhetoric used by politicians to harness a culture of fear, and we can voice our support for every bit of positive change initiated by NGOs or progressive MPs. Of course, to do all this, we must confront our own problematic attitudes and perceptions regarding refugees or migrants.

Hassan al-Kontar is in Vancouver now, far from KLIA. There are a new set of challenges for him to face in transitioning into Canadian society: in addition to the trauma of civil war and being a refugee that he will carry with him, there is also the language, culture, xenophobia and racism, weather, and having to start from scratch. Much of the experiences he worked hard to garner in Syria such as his degree or his working experience will be discarded in favour of him redoing it all to get more "Canadian experience."

I know many Malaysians who will say he has made it and his problems are now solved, who will say he is undeservingly lucky to be in Canada, who will ask cheekily and without sensitivity how they too can apply to be in Canada, who will say he got there by cheating the Malaysian government and tarnishing our international reputation. I know many more who will praise him for his resilience and faith, who will say he deserves this win because he worked for it.





There will be millions more refugees working just as hard and getting nowhere as close. Hassan will continue working just as hard, and still face a new set of problems. The answer to the global refugee crisis is not to expect individual extraordinary bravery from refugees. The answer is for sweeping reform in policy and culture. The answer is for those of us who are not refugees to be allies and actually make our governments answer for their senselessly obstructive laws. It takes collective action to affect real change – Malaysians have shown that they know this, and now it is only a matter of opening our hearts and minds.

Disclaimer: This article does not represent the views of MSGA, the MSGA Directorate team or any of MSGA's member councils.

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