

Students at ITE College Central using the National Youth Council's first Civic Conversations toolkit, called *Beneath the Surface*, to initiate discussions about race and religion. The workshop was held as part of Racial Harmony Month in July. PHOTO: NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL



# ITE students share their experiences with racism

Session includes workshop using toolkit that initiates discussions on race, religion

Shermaine Ang

When a young woman was seeing a Chinese boy, she would often hear slurs like "Oh, your girlfriend is Indian?" She eventually split up with him as she felt it was an unhealthy environment for her to be in.

Another youth said that in her dating experience, she felt people looked down on her as she is Malaysian.

They were among 84 Institute of Technical Education (ITE) students who shared their experiences with racism on Friday.

The discussion on race and religion was held as part of Racial Harmony Month in July at ITE College Central. It was held according to Chatham House rules, under which participants are not named.

A panel discussion was also held with Mr Eric Chua, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Culture, Community and Youth, and Mr Thambyrajah T., chief operating

officer at the Singapore Indian Development Association (Sinda).

One participant said her Muslim cousin married a Christian woman and converted to the Christian faith. His parents were angry at her but accepted this over time. She said she hopes her own parents and older generations can be more open to interracial relationships.

Another participant said: "A lot about what makes a partner great is not even about their race." Agreeing, another chimed in: "I think racism is taught - people are not born racist."

Some participants shared racist jokes which they had heard, which often revolved around skin colour.

Mr Rizki Naufal Azhar, a visual communications student at ITE Central College, said of his discussion group: "We agree that we don't really see the race of people, we see the person himself."

The 19-year-old said the older generation might be more resistant

to interracial relationships as they are unfamiliar with other cultures, but added that he hoped they might come to understand and embrace differences over time.

At the dialogue, Mr Chua announced a new civic conversation toolkit being developed by the National Youth Council (NYC) to deepen understanding between local and foreign youth, and dispel misconceptions.

He said young people may feel more comfortable discussing these topics anonymously online, but face-to-face conversations are also important as they allow for deeper conversations. He added that people may behave irresponsibly online and discussions can turn into echo chambers.

The new toolkit, the second in a series of three Civic Conversation resources, will be used at workshops with youth to facilitate conversations on local-foreign relations. It will be ready by the end of 2023.

The toolkit comprises a role-playing board game, and conversation cards encouraging young people to share their experiences and discuss myths and scenarios on lo-

cal-foreigner relations in Singapore.

Friday's session also included a workshop using NYC's first Civic Conversations toolkit, called *Beneath the Surface*, to initiate discussions about race and religion.

These included questions on casual racism and interracial marriages, and scenarios such as a father being unhappy that his son has a girlfriend of another race, or a friend making a racist joke and calling those affected, sensitive.

Over 1,000 polytechnic students have attended these workshops since the toolkit was launched in November 2022. In the next two years, 2,000 more youth are expected to use the toolkits.

A 2022 NYC poll showed that even though half of local youth thought foreigners tend to stick to their own circles and expressed concerns over competition for career and educational opportunities, they agreed that foreigners add to Singapore's cultural richness and economic competitiveness.

The poll was conducted with 700 Singaporean and foreign youth.

Singaporean youth have also grown more open towards other nationalities working or studying in the Republic.

According to the poll, close to seven in 10 youth agreed that Singapore should encourage people of other nationalities to work and study here, an increase from 2019 when six out of 10 shared this sentiment.

The workplace was the main source of interaction between local and foreign youth, where six in 10 had conversed with one another.

Getting to know locals through close friends was the second source of interaction for foreign youth.

For local youth, the neighbourhood was their second source of interaction with foreigners.

Over half of all the youth polled agreed that more interactions with one another would improve awareness of each other's challenges and deepen community bonds.

Mr David Chua, chief executive of NYC, said survey data shows that youth who have foreign friends, or more opportunities to interact with foreigners, have a positive attitude towards local-foreigner relations.

"The Civic Conversation toolkit is an additional resource for both local and foreign youth to meaningfully engage one another in their desire to move beyond tolerance and deepen mutual appreciation and acceptance," he said.

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A dispute ensued between the passengers of an amphibious vehicle and the staff of a tour company after it was involved in an accident with a car along Raffles Boulevard on Wednesday. PHOTO: SHIN MIN DAILY NEWS

## Tempers flare after accident involving duck boat affects tour

Elaine Lee

An accident between an amphibious vehicle and a car along Raffles Boulevard led to unhappiness among tourists after their schedule was disrupted on Wednesday.

Shin Min Daily News reported on Thursday that a dispute ensued between the passengers of the Captain Explorer DUKW tour and staff of tour company City Tours after the programme was cut short.

The vehicle, which can travel both on land and on the water, takes passengers around the Civic District before it enters Singapore River through the Marina Bay area.

A tourist surnamed Zhang, 44, told the Chinese-language newspaper that the tour was supposed to start at 2.30pm, but the accident just outside Esplanade caused the ride to be delayed by an hour and the tour duration was reduced as well.

"We had only five minutes in the water and that was unacceptable," he said.

These tours typically take an hour and the river ride is about 35 minutes, City Tours general manager Wendy Leong told The Straits Times.

In a video seen by ST, the tourists and a City Tours staff mem-

ber were engaged in a heated argument, at times escalating into a shouting match. The tourists were demanding compensation from City Tours.

The situation simmered down after the staff member apologised and said the company would be offering a full refund of the ticket.

According to Shin Min, the next batch of passengers, whose trip was delayed by 30 minutes, also began to complain after the tourists from the previous batch refused to get off the vehicle.

Responding to queries, the police said the accident happened at 2.36pm along 6 Raffles Boulevard.

A 47-year-old male car driver was conscious when taken to Raffles Hospital, it added.

When asked how the accident happened, Ms Leong would only say the situation was being reviewed by their insurance company.

"The incident was resolved by 3pm with 22 passengers affected," she added.

"For those who were affected, we have rescheduled them to another tour date, but for those who can't make it, we have provided them with a full refund."

Police investigations are ongoing.

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# Three nursing leaders receive President's Award for Nurses

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Initially, Dr Loh Huey Peng, the nursing director at the Singapore National Eye Centre, did not like her job as a nurse.

"It was just a job for me," said Dr Loh, now 54, who joined the eye centre 26 years ago.

It took her about a decade to finally love what she started out doing.

In the beginning, she said, the pay was too low, and it was a lot of hard work. But looking back, Dr Loh credits the hard work she had put in as the foundation for her achievements.

On Friday, she was one of three nursing leaders who received the President's Award for Nurses - the highest accolade in Singapore's nursing profession - from President Halimah Yacob in a ceremony at the Istana.

The other two recipients are Dr Hoi Shu Yin, Tan Tock Seng Hospital's (TTSH) chief nurse, and Ms Pauline Tan Chwee Khim, the deputy director of nursing at the National Kidney Foundation.

They each received a trophy, a certificate signed by the President and a \$10,000 cash prize that can be used for their professional and personal development.

Dr Loh's advice to young nurses is: "Don't give up so easily, always value what you've learnt, and add value to what you have learnt."

She said she discovered that she was good in communications and empathising with others, and started to find meaning in her work. "That's when I started to give," she said of her profession.

In 2020, when Dr Loh was deployed to manage a Covid-19 facility at the Singapore Expo, she had to work with a new and diverse group of nurses.

"How could we work so well together within just one week?" she said. "The answer is how you treat your people and the (work) culture.



The three nursing leaders who received the President's Award for Nurses this year: (from left) Ms Pauline Tan Chwee Khim, deputy director of nursing at the National Kidney Foundation; Dr Loh Huey Peng, director of nursing at the Singapore National Eye Centre; and Dr Hoi Shu Yin, chief nurse at Tan Tock Seng Hospital. PHOTO: LIANHE ZHAOBAO

That's what I learnt at the Expo, because the processes were changing on a daily basis... and there was no vaccine yet."

One of the things she did was to hold huddles with the nurses to understand their concerns, even if their needs did not reflect those of the majority, she said.

That experience was a turning point for her, as it changed her management style.

"Previously, I was more rigid," the mother of two admitted.

For Ms Tan, who is married with two children, working in the community allowed her to build relationships and connect with her patients.

"I found my passion in caring for kidney failure patients. It is not just a job, it is about journeying with a friend and helping them to find the meaning of life while they are undergoing treatment," said the 58-year-old.

In 2020, Ms Tan initiated and spearheaded the Renal Rehabilitation task force to introduce a prop-

er programme for the patients, to help them take better care of their condition.

At TTSH, Dr Hoi, who is 45 and married with three children, had collected various other awards, including a Public Administration Medal (Gold, Covid-19) in 2022 for her contribution to Singapore's fight against the coronavirus.

During the pandemic, she led and guided more than 3,600 nurses. She also oversaw the conversion of two floors of the hospital into Covid-19 wards to accommodate the rise in patient numbers when cases spiked, among other tasks.

The three recipients have all contributed to Singapore's fight against Covid-19 in one way or another. Ms Tan, for instance, visited the 700 renal nurses at all 41 dialysis centres across Singapore during the pandemic.

The President's Award for Nurses began in 2000, and has since recognised 93 nurses for sustained

## Recipients of the President's Award For Nurses 2023

1 Dr Hoi Shu Yin, chief nurse, Tan Tock Seng Hospital

2 Dr Loh Huey Peng, director of nursing, Singapore National Eye Centre

3 Ms Pauline Tan Chwee Khim, deputy director of nursing, National Kidney Foundation

outstanding performance and contributions. It is open to nurses and midwives from healthcare institutions in the public, private and community care sectors, as well as the educational institutions.

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陈有炳艺术展 2023  
Tan Oe Pang  
Art Exhibition

Date **29 July - 4 August 2023**  
Time **10am - 10pm Daily**  
\* Closed on 4pm - 7pm, Sunday, 30 July.  
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