

## **Take heart, Internet-vocal youth are not apathetic**

*The Straits Times Forum Online Story (August 25, 2009)*

I REFER to the criticism by Ms Juliet Chua last Saturday, 'Shame on you, young bloggers'.

I am an 18-year-old student, and my education has allowed me to evaluate and appreciate Singapore's history. I have also developed a keen awareness of current affairs, because I believe youth and students are important stakeholders of this nation.

However, instead of being irked by an increasingly active and concerned chorus, Ms Chua should take to heart the fact that youth are neither apathetic nor lethargic. We appreciate the past, comprehend the present and are cognisant of the difficulties ahead, but we believe equally in moving forward through our rhetoric and actions. The fact that we involve ourselves in writing (or blogging) and a plethora of community activities shows we do not take what we have now for granted. We may be critical in our comments, but our enthusiasm and patriotism cannot be denied.

Therefore, the key is to strike a balance between idealism and realism, criticism and constructiveness. When I pen a criticism, it is because I believe there are viable alternatives to be considered. My experience in volunteerism and hands-on grassroots activities has equipped me with the perspectives to evaluate policies critically. Sure, no one policy can please everyone, but a multitude of opinions will render decisions more all-encompassing and representative. Our voice matters, and youth can equally make a difference.

We cannot afford to let feelings of nostalgia and notions of self-satisfaction obscure our vision of tomorrow. As we have proven over these 50 years or so, the only way for Singapore to remain competitive and prepared is to adapt, be open and ever ready to challenge the status quo so as to advance to greater heights.

**Kwan Jin Yao**