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I dream of a nation that cares

Letter from Kwan Jin Yao

I REFER to TODAY's National Day special issue on "Singapore Dreaming".

Throughout our nascent stages of economic development and growing affluence, the Singapore Dream has been closely associated with notions of pragmatism and materialism, which has culminated infamously in the 5Cs: Cash, car, credit card, condominium and country club membership. The perennial obsession with moving speedily up the socio-economic ladder was encouraged by the administration's focus on prime fiscal growth, trapping many within a rat-race scrambling for promotions, degrees, profit, et cetera.

So, to a large extent, the manner in which our dreams have been shaped has been significantly influenced by the administration's focus on economic progression, measured solely by GDP growth figures and productivity indexes. It has driven many to dream for themselves in their pursuit of worldly personal gains, instead of setting their sights on a much bigger picture.

Given that Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong on Saturday called on Singaporeans to recast the 5Cs to encompass career, comfort, children, consideration and charity, Aug 9 "Singapore Dreaming" issue is certainly timely in helping individuals reposition their priorities and expectations.

The changing global landscape has empowered Singaporeans with greater liberty and flexibility not just in their career options, but also in their life pursuits. Beyond the traditional path of success — through years of academic pursuit and degree-hunting — youths are given the options to excel in their own fields of expertise, be it music, sports or entrepreneurship.

The spirit of enterprise is admirable, and showcases the degree of diversity we should work towards, instead of viewing Singaporeans as mere cogs in the economic machinery.

Of the collection of dreams, the most moving were those from parents who never cease to hope for the best for their children.



AUG 9

Madam Zhang Ah Chun, through thick and thin, highlights that "you don't compare yourself with others who have cars or any of the 5Cs ... I am happy the way I am, just with my family around".

The Singapore spirit and dream are not characterised by those who earn the most or who are the most well-known; instead, this nation has always been supported and crafted by the many ordinary citizens who toil faithfully and honestly to fulfil their responsibilities as Singaporeans, and to give their families the best they deserve.

That is the true Singapore story.

It is time to move beyond our personal spheres of comfort. This starts with Singaporeans desiring to have a greater say in public policies, various stakeholders stepping up to walk the talk, and showing greater care and consideration for the people around us. Focus on monetary progress per se is clearly antiquated; allow everyone the chance to grow and evolve, without losing sight of his family, friends, and the many cherished people around him.

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