

The Young Will Come Round – Bank On It

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MOTIVATIONS shift with age and changing life experiences and to generalise based on the generation or age group is convenient, but not constructive ('Examine values of our youth' by Madam Geraldine Cheong; last Friday).

There should be little alarm that the young (aged between 18 and 29) link material success to happiness. After all, the youth - within academic institutions or corporate firms - face stiff competition within and without to distinguish themselves from their counterparts.

Monetary rewards - in the form of salaries, investment returns, year-end bonuses - are viewed as indicators of their accomplishments, and empower them to scale the socio-economic ladder progressively.

Nonetheless, Singaporeans aged between 18 and 29 are just starting to navigate new-found independence, and financial security is imperative for individuals to be less-reliant on the household.

Second, priorities evolve through the years, and money will no longer remain the sole motivator for many - so it may be an exaggeration to conclude that a focus on material desires reflects negatively on how values have been taught and imparted.

Comparisons across generations are unfair because the responsibilities are dissimilar.

The youth cannot trace their closeness with their families and their spirituality as vividly because taking charge of a family involves a greater deal of ownership than simply being part of it.

With heightened maturity, and after fighting their battles at work, they will eventually recognise the emotional attachment to their families and communities.

While such commitment may not rank as high in terms of personal importance, young people are already dedicating their time and effort in various ways through volunteerism, grassroots activities and service projects.

What is certain is that the youth have not been relishing in the comforts of civil apathy or lethargy; they possess a distinct sense of compassion and awareness.

Furthermore, fears of the overwhelming emphasis on monetary incentives are unwarranted.

A presentation by writer Daniel Pink expounded on how - beyond a certain financial threshold, as tasks or jobs require more conceptual or creative thinking - people are genuinely motivated by the factors of autonomy, mastery and purpose.

Clearly, if we all had a little more faith and confidence, we would recognise that after this transition phase, our youth have the potential to excel in every dimension.

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