

Let Online Writers Maintain Pseudonyms

The Straits Times Forum Online Story (August 24, 2012)

I AGREE with Mr Lim Wei-Qi (“Banning pseudonyms online: No, it’s wrong and ineffective”; Aug 18) that a ban on pseudonyms online should not be the way forward. Given the accessibility of the Internet and the hassle of moderation, banning pseudonyms would not be ideal; furthermore, it is important to take into consideration the valid justifications for remaining unidentified.

Sociopolitical bloggers have the right to decide whether they would like to remain anonymous; even so, their credibility – I believe – would not be compromised in any way. The content is key, and it is the message that matters, not the messenger. Would you readily dismiss a piece of good writing just because it is anonymous?

Similarly, no educated individual would readily take information at face value just because there is a name attached to it.

The onus is very much on the reader to determine whether a piece of writing should be taken seriously. Reliability and accuracy can be evaluated by checking the writer’s other articles in the archives and readers’ comments.

However, the line is crossed when bloggers resort to vitriol, and their articles degenerate into unconstructive diatribes that have the potential to be derogatory and inflammatory.

The bottom line is that we should not be quick to generalise anonymous bloggers. We should judge the material for what it really is.

Why do some individuals or writers choose not to reveal their identities?

Some may be in the civil service, which has its own set of guidelines and regulations in terms of political writing online.

Also, private employers might not be comfortable with the idea of activism on the Internet by their employees.

Family and friends may also be conservative in their thinking. Pseudonyms can help creative expression, allowing writers to be less inhibited in their writing styles.

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