

The Story with The Song

'Tanggal 31, bulan 8, 57. Merdeka, Merdeka'. At the school compound, we gather, all holding the mini national flags which were distributed to us by our class teacher. As we sing this song while waving the flag, I look down on the very ground I am standing on, and a feeling pervades the compound, drowning out the out-of-tune singing of those around me.

A familiar feeling, reminding me of late-night conversations I always have and the sleepless nights staring into the night sky, how everything just disappears, and the world is still and quiet. A familiar feeling... of serenity. As I look at my dirty shoes and mismatched socks, a sense of odd tranquillity floods through me, animating my thoughts.

1959 – the year my father was born. He is one of the first of my family line to be born here in Malaysia, as he is the eldest son and his father emigrated from China. My grandfather – whom I never got to meet – came to Malaysia to seek a new life, a paradise, and he found it – a loving family and a prosperous business. Then, trouble arose. There was war, but Malaysia had sheltered my family through it all. From time to time, my grandmother and even my mother would tell us many stories about the war. During the war, our people united against the invaders, made our statements, and protested for our rights as a nation. Also, they would glorify the war heroes that fought and shed blood for the cause of the country.

The thought of that amazes me, how people from different walks of life put aside their differences and come together for a similar notion. In relevance to the modern context, I realised that we never lost that spark to unite for a common cause as a nation. Regardless of race, religion, or culture, we will always unite and stand up to the wrongs in society. Moreover, we Malaysians celebrate every culture and festival together as a nation. People from one culture will take part in another culture's celebration to show love and support as a fellow countryman. All in all, we are a nation made out of love and kindness, and built on respect and tolerance. Seeing Malaysians united is heart-warming, and I can never be any prouder to be part of this great nation. The feeling of serenity? Perhaps it is gratitude.

'31, bulan lapan, 57. Hari mulia, negaraku merdeka'. As the song comes to an end, I snap back to reality. With my eyes slowly tearing up, I looked up at the flagpole where the 'Jalur Gemilang' is hoisted. With a smile, I stood tall and sang the words 'Merdeka! Merdeka!' to end

the song. All my life, I never realised that I had been blessed with such a beautiful country along with beautiful compatriots. I leave the school compound a more grateful person, a more appreciative son, but most importantly, a proud Malaysian.