

"Singapore should do more for the elderly." Do you agree?

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In the year 2104, the elderly have become a common sight as Singapore as a country feels the effects of a rapidly aging population. Much of Singapore's historic success should and must be attributed to the resilience and undaunted efforts of our predecessors who have spared no effort in being a central pillar of support for Singapore through the years of arduous nation-building efforts. Doing more for the elderly means simply to demonstrate special consideration and to bestow honor upon the elderly by various forms of financial subsidies, improving all means of transport to ease transport and mobility inconveniences for the elderly. An ancient Chinese proverb says it best, when loosely translated, means we should always remember the source of our blessings. Thus, should Singapore do more for the elderly who have made immeasurable selfless sacrifices over the years to turn a little nondescript dot on the world map into a country famed for a world-class economy, medical industry and internationally renowned educational hub? This essay will attempt to expound on the reasons why I totally

agree that we should indeed do more for these elderly in Singapore.

Firstly, Singapore's rapidly ageing population is a genuine concern. Making provisions to cater to the needs of the aged thus necessitates careful thought and planning to ensure sufficient provisions are made to improve the country's infrastructure in order to ease the mobility and transport demands of an ageing population. By the year 2030, Singaporeans aged over sixty-five would form twenty to twenty-five per cent of the entire Singaporean population. With the number of elderly Singaporeans increasing dramatically in recent years, it is imperative that we do our part in allaying various potential problems that a growing population of the elderly in our country may pose. For example, the retirement age in Singapore has recently been increased in the year 2012 from sixty-three to sixty-five. Now, Singaporeans are able to work for a longer period of time before retirement, enabling them to have enough financial support for themselves as they continue to do their part for society. However, as more elderly remain in the workforce, we simply cannot neglect the fact that these elderly require more care and attention as they are weaker physically and may not be as able-bodied as their younger counterparts doing the same jobs. Financial subsidies in the form of annual tax rebates, exemption, or additional contribution to their Central Provident Fund, for example, would be an excellent way to honour aged workers for their valued contribution to society. It would behoove us, with our rapidly ageing population, to ramp up on improvements in and the number of wheelchair ramps and facilities for the disabled and elderly to ease the difficulties many face. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the needs of the elderly are met even while they are actively contributing to our economy in the workforce so the senior citizens can enjoy a better quality of life.

Furthermore, Singapore should do more for our elderly as we simply cannot negate the innumerable achievements of the elderly who have played a pivotal and integral role in helping Singapore achieve vast economic success and achievements in many other areas during their early working lives. By sacrificing blood, sweat and tears to propel Singapore's progress, these unsung heroes of yesteryears have effectively and painstakingly enabled the nation to take gigantic strides of advancement in the various economic, educational and medical sectors, literally bringing our country from a third world nation, to a first world country. These admirably great strides of progress have successfully placed Singapore on the world map, with an enviable slew of economic, educational and medical accolades, putting us technologically and economically on par with other larger countries in the world. Without the help and contribution of the elderly from post-independence years till now, Singapore would have never dreamt of achieving such unimaginably prodigious feats that would have otherwise be achieved by the larger and more advanced or perceptibly more powerful countries in the world. Thus, it is only obligatory that we should treat our elderly with greater respect and honour, and understandably do more for them, for they have benefited our society in countless aspects that we can hardly conceive. With Singapore attaining worldwide recognition and cognizance with international acclaim for running one of the world's finest airports, most efficient ports, and our airlines hailed as one of the best globally for many years running, it is surely incumbent upon us as younger generations of the elderly who formed the backbone of our country in their younger years to treat our aged seniors with respect.

Moreover, being a typically Asian country, Singapore is traditionally rooted in the Asian value and culture of filial piety,

What can secondary schools do to ensure the health, safety and well-being of their students?

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Secondary schools have a lot to grapple with in their modern day quest to ensure the health, safety and well-being of students. The convolution of the education system in increasingly complex societies therefore necessitates a sore need for schools to ensure that these vital needs of their students are met. This can be done through a variety of ways, such as health checks, sports carnivals, safety talks through the media, newspaper, magazines and so on. It has become imperative for schools to educate students and address various stakeholders of the school system on how to ensure the key aspects of students' health, safety and well-being. What are some ways by which secondary schools can ensure these critical aspects of their student body are met? This essay will seek to expound upon the diverse suggestions which secondary schools can do to safeguard the health, safety and well-being of their students.

Firstly, secondary schools can conduct frequent clinical health checks for their students. This is important because with myopia

becoming a widespread and increasingly worrying trend among school-going children in Singapore, afflicting about three in five of our student population, frequent health checks, particularly eye checks are salient impositions to maintain the health of our students. Frequent eye checks will instantly demarcate those who need immediate medical attention from those who are healthy. Optometrists and ophthalmologists can also be invited from various eye centres or the Singapore National Eye Centre to conduct seminars on how to take care of one's eyes and the suitable measures to adopt to avoid contracting various eye diseases. Students who are identified as suffering from various eye ailments can be consequently referred to optometrists to get a pair of spectacles. Other health checks and educational seminars on asthma and how to spot symptoms, hypertension and even talks on coping with stress and stress management can also be conducted. Through these talks, students can glean various useful stress management skills. Other students who are detected as having developed symptoms of diverse illnesses that are diagnosed through these educational health talks and seminars can thus obtain treatment earlier. This can prevent rapid and subsequent deterioration of these maladies to more serious health and medical conditions or chronic disorders.

Moreover, health talks and seminars can be organised by coordinating with the national Health Promotion Board so that various health talks on diabetes and its prevention for example, the importance of leading a healthy and balanced lifestyle through exercise and diet, as well as the early and symptomatic diagnosis of various diseases and illnesses can be conducted. These talks can help students recognise early symptoms of various health issues they and their family members may encounter as well as the acquisition of practical tips to keep these health problems at bay through diet and

exercise. Additional health talks by various medical practitioners can also boost sanitation, hygiene and medical awareness of various physical diseases that commonly afflict and the appropriate medical advice on dealing with such ailments should the need arise. With a recent increase in the number of student deaths during Physical Education classes becoming an alarming trend, such health talks and seminars can play a vital role in alleviating health and hygiene concerns among the student body. At the same time, nurses could also give advice through such formal educational health talks to students such as how to maintain a healthy and balanced diet, various exercise regimes, duration of each exercise regime and so on. Therefore, having frequent health-checks, talks and seminars by various medical professionals and practitioners in contributing to the health of secondary schools students is an idea that should be considered and if possible, implemented as it offers a host of potential benefits for the student body.

Next, another way to ensure good health and well-being among students would be the active promotion and organisation of more sport events or carnivals. Although at first glance, carnivals may seem to be superficial and frivolous, purposeless events, carnivals organised by schools can alleviate stress for students as they get to revel in the joy that comes with organizing, planning and executing such events, particularly when they get to enjoy the various food and games stalls set up on the day the carnivals are held. Psychologically, students benefit as they are permitted to take a long-awaited and coveted break from the monotony and rigour of academic studies. More importantly, students are enriched socially which forms an important and pivotal part of their emotional and psychological well-being as they are allowed the opportunity to forge bonds between their seniors, classmates and themselves, which enable

strong friendships to be built that last a lifetime. Such socially and emotionally enriching activities like carnivals do wonders for the psychological well-being of these students. Moreover, sports events organised by schools such as swim meets, athletic competitions and cross-country runs, often regarded as peripheral activities due to academic pursuits which schools devote more resources to, deserve an emphatic increase in priority since these activities help to strengthen students' physique. Through an increased launch of sporting events such as football carnivals, rugby competitions and many more, students can develop leadership skills and encourage team-work. Discipline, which is also a key moral value critical for the success of any individual, can also be instilled and honed through these sporting events.

Last but not least, the safety aspect of students in secondary schools should not be overlooked. Schools can take active steps to launch safety talks held by the traffic police with segments featuring victims of car accidents who can share their experiences of being involved in accidents. These talks on road safety and personal sharing of these accident victims' experiences serves to provide a practical and useful learning experience for students to have an invaluable opportunity to interact with and take advice from real-life people who have encountered car accidents and how they coped with and handled the recovery process as well as help students gain a more vicarious perspective of road dangers. These seminars involving the Singapore Traffic Police can also feature practical road safety tips and the importance of abiding by traffic rules. For example, the traffic police can brief students on the rules that pedestrians and motorists have to follow such as when crossing the road and the hazards and undesirable consequences of drink driving. With an increase in the number of fatal road

accidents involving teenagers and young adults in their twenties, these road safety tips and seminars will serve as precious gems of practical wisdom, greatly beneficial in educating those who are at a vulnerable age of the dangers commonly encountered on Singapore roads. It is therefore evident that the Traffic Police can play a vital role, more than just a perfunctory one in contributing to the safety of our students. In addition, to further enhance the safety of secondary school students, special talks organised by the Singapore Police Force can also integrate various sharing by ex-convicts and ex-secret society members by exposing secondary students to the reality and dangers of joining gangs in Singapore. These talks can also include advice on how teenagers can steer clear of gangs, how they can get out of a gang if they are already in one, and the severity of consequences should they stubbornly get themselves embroiled in secret societies. These educational talks, with an interpersonal touch, are excellent measures that schools can take in contributing to the safety of secondary school students.

To draw a conclusion, there are a plethora of ways by which secondary schools can take in order to ensure the health, safety and well-being of their students. As previously discussed through the aforementioned points in the essay, schools can engage not only in seminars conducted by the various government agencies, but also health checks and sport carnivals to achieve this aim. As we all know, the health, safety and well-being of students will have a direct impact on the school's overall holistic development and performance, therefore schools should do their utmost to employ optimal effort in ensuring this goal is met.

"Every cloud has a silver lining." Are you an optimist or pessimist?

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Increasingly, modern societies worldwide are becoming excessively stressful for many people. More people feel overwhelmed by obstacles which they perceive are casting shadows over their lives. The aforementioned quote encourages and inspires optimism in us in spite of the overpowering challenges we may face, because life will always offer that cherished glimmer of hope. This thought provoking quote leads me to reflect upon my own perspectives on life—do I live my life as an optimist or a pessimist? I will now discuss in my essay my views about why I perceive I live my life as a pessimist.

My extreme pessimism stems from my keen observations of life. The never-ending stream of negative news and tragic happenings that we see every day never fail to make me a depressed pragmatic of life. With the challenges posed by economic difficulties of developing nations, the dangerous mix of technology and terrorism as well as the ongoing poverty and suffering of billions of our fellow humans, I find myself losing faith in our collective future.

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The multidimensionality of the biting reality in the world forces me to be resigned to the fact that things will likely not change for the better. Anything can be brutally disruptive if managed by the infinitesimally incapable and flawed hands of our humanity, and it is impossible for me not to notice this real and scary threat. A positive track forward seems unattainable, hence it results in the slew of pessimistic beliefs that my world centers around.

In life, we are often confronted with a plethora of multitudinous obstacles that seem insurmountable. Over time, even the world's cheeriest optimist will become emotionally worn down. Contrary to the common adage of many optimists, where "there is a light at the end of every tunnel", I often ask myself how often have I actually reached the end of my problems compared to when I am left in the darkness to 'deal with it', because there is no way to reach the light and I have to move on and let things slide. When one problem gets fixed, another instantly pops up, with the level of difficulty becoming more radical each time. It seems as though for each forward step I take, there is an equal and opposite force holding me back. I am resigned to the fact that there are no silver linings behind some thunderous cumulonimbus clouds to speak of. Nothing is perfect and optimism to me is a convenient illusion to convince oneself that these difficulties do not exist. But they do exist, in my world, at least, and there is no reason why I should continue to deceive and lie to myself. I concede that I am a pessimist because I am merely realistic. I have the strength to move on, but lack the hope and anticipation for a new day. To me, the seeming light at the end of the tunnel may be nothing more than the light from an oncoming train.

As an atheist, although I do not have any religious convictions, when I see my religious friends getting no answer from their 'gods',

even after much prayer and tearless pleas, I am compelled to believe that the world is a dismal abyss to which I am eternally condemned. No matter how much optimism and hope they demonstrate in believing that things will change for the better, nothing happens. Not even divine spirits can help them and I am left to conclude that all of humanity can never hope to be released from being clenched in the universal jaws of hopelessness. Amid the confusion and despondency of life, their faith is just a convenient means to provide them with a delusional mirage of hope. I remain the pessimistic person that I am because inasmuch as I would like to believe that religious hope can help someone through a situation; it will hardly solve the problem because mere hope and optimism are not the solution.

To draw a conclusion, after I have effectively shared my perspective on being a self-proclaimed pessimist, I am convinced more than ever that the silver linings said to be behind dark clouds are just a figment of men's imagination and cruel inventions of men's delusions. My friends may attempt to remove me from my world of pessimism, but they will never remove the world of pessimism from me.

**"The tourist does not see the
Singapore the inhabitants know."
How far is this true of Singapore?**

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Singapore is a colourful nation with a distinguishingly rich, unique multi-cultural heritage that has transcended immutable levels of national progress and modernization. This, combined with large amounts of financial investments that the Singapore government has poured into the tourism infrastructure to produce multi-faceted tourist attractions and to develop Singapore as the ideal holiday and tourist destination, has resulted in the unrivalled success of Singapore's thriving tourism industry that many see today. However, as endless tourists flock to Singapore, one wonders intermittently, do these tourists see the country the way that Singapore's inhabitants do? Absolutely not. In fact, the vast majority of the tourists who visit Singapore partake in perhaps one of the most fabricated and least authentic experiences possible, sometimes unaware of the inimical reality that exist. This essay will now investigate the reasons why I agree to a large extent that it is true that tourists implicitly view the country on a different level and

with a different perspective than what Singapore's citizens do and know of their country.

Firstly, my belief is particularly evident in the tourist's experience of our uniquely multi-cultural cuisine. Many tourists would be encouraged by tour agencies and hotel concierges to proceed to Newton Circus for their hawker fix, as Newton Circus has been frequently labelled the most tourist friendly hawker centre by the tourism board, complete with write-ups on the available prices of food. While it seems logical to present a touristy place for tourists to eat, featuring the gastronomical aficionado's wildest dreams of a spectacular tastebud-tickling spread, the branding of the hawker centre as a tourist friendly one has resulted in a large portion of hawkers in the place sacrificing quality in order to put out larger quantities in order to capitalise on the tourist patronage and to meet soaring rent prices. For example, gone are the usual specialist stalls that serve one particular great-tasting dish and its variations alone. Stalls at Newton Circus can be seen to sell several dishes that are sub-standard in taste and sometimes quantity for tourists who do not know any better. Apart from a few reputable stores, places like Newton Circus fuel the unauthentic hawker food experience that most tourists would be clueless about. The Singapore that is a food paradise and haven for hawker food that are gastronomical delights is therefore less known to tourists compared to the locals who are keenly aware of what the best food deals and best-tasting local cuisines and delicacies can be found. Contrary to what locals know, the best, authentic representations of Singapore culinary delights are hardly available all under one roof, which is what most tourists remain blissfully oblivious to, believing the truth to be otherwise.

Moreover, most tourists' impression of Singapore as being a first world country with world-class medical, airport and harbor facilities

is something which locals and tourists can attest to. However, what is unknown to most tourists would be the constant consternation that locals typically face on a perhaps increasingly frequent basis for instance, that of transportation breakdowns in our local Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) trains. Most tourists get around Singapore by tour buses chartered by the various tour groups and while budget tourists who backpack may occasionally encounter inconvenience to their travelling schedule owing to MRT train delays or breakdowns, it does not happen on a consistent basis for tourists and they therefore do not have to put up with the reality of travel gripes that locals have to encounter on a more frequent basis. To most tourists, Singapore is a country known for its spanking clean environment, a clean and green garden city further fuelled by the world-famous Marine Life Park and the Gardens By The Bay, featuring aesthetic appreciation of marine and botany life respectively at their unparalleled and unsurpassed transcendence. Many tourists are impressed by the breath-taking night views of Singapore's financial district, the various imposing commercial buildings and their structures spectacularly outlined against the nightlights that beam across the Marina Financial Centre, the busy financial hub of the country, when viewed from the peak of the Marina Bay Sands' fifty-seventh level, offering an unbelievably panoramic 360 degree view of the nation's landscape. However, these same tourists are spared the day-to-day vexations that locals grapple with every day, in the form of unwelcome rising food and transport prices, increasing income disparity between the wealthy and the poverty-stricken Singaporeans and the unheard disgruntled moans of students of all ages who struggle constantly with progressively stressful lifestyles due to the rigours of our local education system. These same sights that go unnoticed, unseen and unheard by tourists yet experienced

by locals I am sure, are ubiquitous throughout the world, where tourists are exposed to only the best sides of a country, and remain blissfully unaware of the deeper unhappiness, tensions or hardships that the locals encounter on a daily basis.

On the other hand, locals and tourists do share a homogenous experience as far as the exciting world of shopping go, along Singapore's famed shopping belt like no other in the world—shopping along Orchard Road, spanning almost four kilometres of uninterrupted shopping, in twenty-two shopping malls with over five thousand brands—offering interminably shopping delight. The modern facet and landscape of Singapore is undeniably a side of the country that tourists and locals can enjoy on an equivalent basis. Be it shopping along Orchard Road, enjoying a stroll along the integrated resorts at Marina bay and Sentosa or celebrating a night of revel at the annual Formula 1 night race, the glamorous image of what modern Singapore has to offer is masterfully manufactured to boost the tourist industry while increasing the quality of life for Singaporeans at the same time. Tourist attractions which allow for the vast enjoyment of tourists such as the Night Safari, the previously mentioned Marine Life Park and Gardens By The Bay, Universal Studios, the River Safari and the slew of museums like the Art Science Museum and others form an exciting amalgamation of thrills to appeal to and stimulate the senses of both tourists and locals. These experiences undoubtedly available to both locals and tourists, are uniquely Singaporean experiences that locals and tourists unequivocally know, see and enjoy. In addition, the multi-dimensionality of blend of cultures, racial and ethnic groups so distinctively precious to the foundational identity of Singapore, is something which the tourists see and are indelibly impressed with, similar to what is intrinsically know and treasured by locals—the

distinguishable multi-racial ties that bind every Singaporean to the nation. Thus these inimitable aspects are commonly appreciated and known by both tourists and locals in Singapore.

In conclusion, I have effectively shown the reasons what I perceive the statement that the tourist does not see the Singapore the inhabitants know to be one that is largely true. To effectively market the tourism industry in Singapore, multiple physical, historical and cultural aspects have been sacrificed in the name of progress. While modern Singapore may be a shared experience for both locals and tourists, the present would never be possible without the past, and unauthentic representations of our country only serves to widen the chasm between the inhabitants' and tourists' views of the country, a chasm that is divisibly hard to surmount.

Write about the things that make Singaporeans proud of their country.

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Singapore has long been hailed as one of the cleanest cities in the world, known for her outstanding levels of hygiene and security. As a Singaporean who has been living in Singapore since the day I was born, I am proud of the extraordinary reputation that Singapore has carved out for herself down through the years. Taking pride in one's country can be defined as revelling in the achievements and accomplishments that the country is known for. As the saying goes "Patriotism is the conviction that this country is superior to all others because you were born in it", therefore I am not ashamed to concede that there are a myriad of reasons why I am a passionate patriot of Singapore. What are some of the reasons that make me proud to be a Singaporean therefore? I will now attempt to pivot my essay on the things that make most citizens like me proud of their country.

Most Singaporeans are in awe and proud of our country as we have a world-class airport and one of the world's busiest trading ports which holds one of the unparalleled largest volume of trade

and influx of cargoes globally. Moreover, Singapore Airlines enjoys the peerless status of being the world's finest and most esteemed airline. For instance, Singaporeans are immensely proud of the widely-known and celebrated fact that Singapore Airlines has been consistently rated as one of the top 5 airlines in the world for 5 years running. This is an illustrious and prestigious global airline award that is conferred annually upon the most deserving national airline that best impresses airline guests around the world and winning that accolade is an honourable attestation. Many foreigners usually come to our country with Singapore Airlines (SIA) as their number one choice airline. For example, I have a friend working overseas who only takes SIA to Singapore whenever she makes trips back here and for her frequent work trips around the world. She has repeatedly told me how SIA has an incomparable and incredibly courteous airline crew and technologically advanced airline facilities compared to other airlines that she had tried out before. Understandably, my friend's insistence on making SIA her number one choice is a natural one. With Singapore's Changi Airport being an internationally acclaimed one, able to take on any other airport globally and competitively in terms of quality service, it is perfectly reasonable that many Singaporeans hold their local airport in such high regard.

Moreover, Singaporeans are inherently proud of our rich Asian culture, heritage and tradition. Our ability to unite as a nation despite our racial, religious and social differences is in itself an achievement that all Singaporeans take exceptional pride in. For instance, on a yearly basis, every school takes especial pride in celebrating Racial Harmony Day, which is a day specially set aside for students to celebrate racial differences by donning traditional and cultural clothes usually worn by the various ethnic groups in

and Singaporeans appreciate the intrinsic privilege of being able to stroll the lengths of a plethora of natural and beautiful greenery lining covering many parts of our island today.

Last but not least, Singapore enjoys unparalleled fame as an indubitable food and shopping paradise. It is every gastronome's dream to savour the slew of ambrosial local delicacies renowned throughout the world. Food aficionados will find their haven nestled in the very heart of Singapore dining, featuring a unique and impeccable taste in fusion and distinctive Singaporean cooking. Gordon Ramsey, one of the world's most renowned chefs, a famed host of many international cooking and culinary shows, came to Singapore to pit his culinary skills against specially selected Singapore hawkers in whipping up three of Singapore's very own famous delicacies, namely, Chicken rice, *Laksa* and Chilli crab. Our very own homegrown chefs won two out of three dishes in the 'cook-off' competition. This no doubt, is a pellucid demonstration of the level of sumptuousness of our local delicacies.

To conclude, from the aforementioned points as discussed in my essay, I have shown beyond reasonable measure, the diverse facts of Singapore's rich heritage, culture, tradition impeccable food, being clean and green, that makes Singaporeans proud to be living in Singapore. Is it any wonder therefore that many Singaporeans are professed patriots of their dearly beloved nation? After all, you can take a patriot out of the country he loves, but you can never take the love for his country out of a patriot.