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Why I Want To Be A Journalist?

Everyone walks past a thousand story ideas every day, but struggling to survive in an ever-evolving society, most of us tend to get wrapped around stress' little finger, forgetting to take a breather now and then to just pause and appreciate the little things around us.

"I firmly believe every book was meant to be written."- Marchette Chute

And just like her, I, too, firmly believe that every story is meant to be told. To me, everyone, or rather, everything has it's own story to tell. It could range from the Big Things, (world news, natural disasters, global crisis, even celebrity gossip), right down to the Small Things (**the** mamak stall that sells the fluffiest *roti canai*, the old pre-war buildings that nobody looks twice at, or even the spider in the crack in the wall). Granted, most who venture into journalism aim to cover the Big Things – for the sake of glitz, glamour, fame and publicity. But what about the Small Things? Who, then, is going to tell their story? And this, brings me to why I aspire to be a journalist- to tell the story of the Small Things, of the Things Long Forgotten (or Almost Forgotten).

Strolling through Ipoh's famous Old Town, Kuala Lumpur's renowned Petaling Street, or even the popular Armenian Street in Penang, a strong wave of nostalgia never fails to overwhelm me and hit me head on. The *ring-a-ling-ling* of a bicycle bell, the smell of freshly baked pastries wafting from a nearby confectionary, the playful banter between customers and shop-keepers, the low murmur of conversation in coffee shops as old friends get together to enjoy a cup of their favorite coffee and reminisce the old days, -- these sights, sounds and smells are so wonderfully familiar to me; so full of energy, yet at the same time ever-so-gently enveloping me in their cocoon of warmth, peace and love, that I know that right here, is where I belong. This place, this country- is home. *Aku anak Malaysia.*

Our country is indeed one to be proud of, with her lush, tropical rainforests, coastlines dotted with sandy beaches, and cities steeped in history. However for me, the greatest thing that our country has offer is our hybrid of arts, culture and traditions; first introduced by our ancestors, cultivated over the generations, and fine-tuned into our very own Malaysian blend that is unique to other parts of the world. Growing up, I was lucky enough to be exposed to many of these traditions, like the art of wau-making, batik-painting;

games like gasing, batu lima, and also festivals like the Chinese Mooncake Festival and also the Festival of Lights, just to name a few. But unfortunately, in this era, where modernization is rampant and society continuously grows more demanding, most people no longer have time for the Small Things. Historical buildings are torn down, replaced by apartments and office blocks, and festive greeting cards and family reunions are replaced by emails and Skype calls. We have revolutionized communication and technology, but we have lost our culture.

Although the norm in society is now changing, and there are many projects out there dedicated to cultural and heritage preservation that are slowly gaining popularity, like the Ipoh Bus Project and the Penang Story Project, this disheartening fact cannot be disregarded- most of the younger generation remain horrifyingly uneducated regarding the distinct culture that is Malaysia herself. Her precious habits and traditions are slowly fading, and it is indeed saddening to let them go. But more importantly, it is the fact that the next generation will never be able to experience the joy and the wonder of these different, diverse cultures that agonizes me the most. It pains me to think that they may never be able to taste traditional *kuih kapet* during festive seasons, nor try their hand at *congkak*, or making their own *batu lima*. Neither will they be able to admire the ruined beauty of pre-war buildings, or appreciate the architecture and structure, because they would be long gone, torn down to make room for booming development.

Therefore, as a journalist, I aim to tell the stories of these Small Things, to be a Voice for the Voiceless, to educate the younger generation on our disappearing culture. Through my writing, I not only target to spread the word, but hopefully, inspire them enough to preserve and salvage bits and pieces of our dying traditions. Culture shapes our country's identity, it *is* our identity, and what is a country without her identity? On a more ambitious scale, I hope that through writing and educating, Malaysia's distinct culture, heritage and traditions will continue to flourish. Not only flourish, but I hope that it shines bigger, brighter and better than ever before, putting our country firmly on the map, where she rightfully belongs.