



**RAZAK SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT**

INTEGRITY. COURAGE. INNOVATION. CHANGE

# RSOG INSIGHT

Volume 3/2018

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*This issue features a commentary by Tengku Nur Farhana Tengku Abdul Rahman on the slogans in pursuit of cohesive nation, some insights on understanding Generation Y by Umar Zainol and two book recommendations.*

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# ADA APA DENGAN SAYANGI MALAYSIAKU?

Tengku Nur Farhana Tengku Abdul Rahman

Adalah menjadi budaya pihak tertentu untuk memberikan tema bagi setiap sambutan hari kebangsaan di Malaysia dan budaya ini telah berterusan sejak puluhan tahun yang lalu. Mewarisi budaya tersebut, tema Hari Kebangsaan Malaysia ke-61 telah diumumkan pada sekitar Julai yang lalu, iaitu ‘**Sayangi Malaysiaku**’. Sambutan pada tahun 2018 ini telah melakar sejarah baru apabila Pakatan Harapan mengambil alih sistem pentadbiran yang dahulunya dipimpin oleh Barisan Nasional. Beberapa seruan seperti ‘Harapan Malaysia’, ‘Ini kalilah’, ‘Malaysia Baharu’ dan tidak terkecuali juga, ‘Sayangi Malaysiaku’ mulai disebut-sebut oleh setiap lapisan masyarakat di Malaysia. Namun begitu, sejauh manakah seruan ini mampu memberi kesan kepada rakyat Malaysia? Jika tema dan logo hari kebangsaan terdahulu diperhalusi, makna bagi setiapnya tidaklah jauh berbeza dan tetap membawa mesej perpaduan antara kaum dan agama, menzahirkan rasa cinta kepada Malaysia, dan beberapa nilai murni lain yang menjadi tonggak kesejahteraan dan kemakmuran negara. Namun begitu, persoalan utama yang terlintas di hati penulis sejak kecil lagi tak lain tak bukan, mengapa temanya sering berubah setiap tahun? Apakah rasionalnya?

## Rasional Tema

Seperti seruan yang lainnya, ‘Sayangi Malaysiaku’ turut menekankan kepentingan perpaduan dan semangat patriotisme bagi mengekalkan kesejahteraan dan kemakmuran negara. Namun bagi penulis, seruan sebegini bukan sahaja berkait rapat dengan penjenamaan semula (rebranding) tema hari kebangsaan tetapi juga berpotensi sebagai sebahagian daripada operasi psikologi yang dilancarkan oleh kerajaan yang baharu. Istilah operasi psikologi membawa maksud; operasi terancang bagi menyampaikan maklumat kepada umum dengan mempengaruhi emosi, motif, pemikiran dan juga tingkah laku organisasi, kumpulan mahupun individu untuk mencapai sesuatu objektif.<sup>1</sup>

## Menyemai Nilai Murni Melalui ‘Sayangi Malaysiaku’

Pemilihan cogan kata ini merupakan pilihan yang agak baik memandangkan ia mampu mempengaruhi emosi dan pemikiran individu; merujuk kepada perkataan Malaysiaku. Namun begitu, turut terlintas di dalam benak hati, adakah perkataan ‘ku’ tersebut merujuk kepada Malaysia Baharu di bawah kepimpinan kerajaan yang baharu? – Malaysiaku. Bukankah Malaysia ini, ‘KITA yang punya’<sup>2</sup>? Dalam konteks ini, penetapan tema yang lebih tepat dan inklusif mungkin perlu dipertimbangkan agar ia dapat diwarisi dan dihayati oleh generasi seterusnya. Penetapan tema juga dilihat berpotensi untuk memberi impak yang berterusan kepada setiap rakyat Malaysia – tiada konflik pemahaman semula sesuatu konsep/tema.

<sup>1</sup> F. R. Barnett and C. Lord, *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations: Rethinking the US Approach*, (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1989), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Lirik, Bunkface. Kita Punya Malaysia. Jabatan Perdana Menteri, 2018. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/h8x0m8PIkUo>

Pembentukan nilai murni sememangnya bermula daripada pendidikan awal tetapi amalan yang konsisten merupakan sesuatu yang agak sukar terutama apabila ia melawan norma semasa. Kurangnya penglibatan masyarakat dalam aktiviti komuniti dan nilai yang sentiasa berubah - ubah mungkin merupakan salah satu sebab utama kegagalan penerapan nilai murni dalam rutin harian masyarakat Malaysia. Adalah penting untuk memahami nilai yang hendak diperjuangkan sebelum menjadikannya sebagai amalan yang konsisten. Jadi, apakah nilai yang diperjuangkan menerusi seruan 'Sayangi Malaysiaku' ini? Penulis percaya bahawa cogan kata ini tidak dipilih sewenang-wenangnya dan turut merupakan usaha murni yang ingin menjadikan Malaysia ini lebih baik daripada sebelumnya. Pelbagai inisiatif telah dilaksanakan oleh kementerian/agensi/organisasi namun hasilnya masih sukar untuk diukur. Makna dan nilai sebenar bagi 'Sayangi Malaysiaku' ini perlulah disampaikan kepada setiap lapisan masyarakat agar mereka dapat memainkan peranan masing-masing mengikut landasan jelas yang dirangka oleh pihak kerajaan. Mungkin kini tiba masanya untuk kita 'menjejaki' semula impak setiap program/inisiatif yang telah dijalankan bagi memperbaiki cara penyampaian/penyebaran mesej 'Sayangi Malaysiaku' ini. Pada masa yang sama, adalah penting untuk menyebarkan mesej ini melalui medium-medium yang berpengaruh seperti media massa, media sosial, visual grafik, video, ceramah, aktiviti komuniti dan lain-lain slot pendek yang mungkin dapat menyelitkan elemen 'Sayangi Malaysiaku' ini.

Walau bagaimanapun, inisiatif-inisiatif ini hendaklah sentiasa berpaksikan kepada 'tindakan sebenar' oleh aktor-aktor utama – merujuk kepada pemimpin yang memperjuangkan cogan kata 'Sayangi Malaysiaku'. Sebaiknya kembali semula kepada bahagian teori yang mungkin dapat menjadi strategi untuk menjayakan seruan ini. Selain daripada operasi psikologi, sedikit elemen propaganda juga dilihat perlu bagi menghidupkan 'rasa' Sayangi Malaysiaku. Propaganda berasal daripada perkataan Latin iaitu 'propagare' iaitu istilah yang digunakan dalam bidang pertanian; proses penyemaian ranting untuk hasil yang lebih lumayan. Namun begitu, dalam konteks pengajian strategi, propaganda telah ditakrifkan sebagai seruan dan penyampaian maklumat yang berulang kali dan strategi ini berupaya mempengaruhi pemikiran audiens. Maka, dapat dirumuskan bahawa soft approach sebegini sesuai dimainkan oleh para pemimpin secara konsisten agar penerapan nilai murni melalui 'Sayangi Malaysiaku' tersemat abadi dalam setiap rakyat Malaysia.

# Re-examining the Gen-Y Label in Malaysia

Umar Zainol

If you are a heavy consumer of mass media, you are likely to have come across several declarations about different generational cohorts. This is particularly the case with the Gen Ys (aka Millennials), who are often praised for their “can-do” enthusiasm and outside-the-box thinking and at the same time bashed for their purported bratty-ness and sense of entitlement. Gen Ys remain a misunderstood group that - despite heavy coverage - leaders rack their heads to make sense of.

As it stands, many of the findings for different generational cohorts we are familiar with stem from Western research. Among the most well-known findings are the Baby Boomers in the US, who were labelled so due to the spike in fertility that came after World War 2. Due to their background, Boomers in the US are often characterised as hardworking and idealistic. Similarly, studies of Gen Ys in the US began by understanding the context in which they were raised; the information age and technology. As a result of their environment, they are characterised as educated, tech-savvy and health conscious<sup>1</sup>.

**Table 1**  
Generation cohorts in the U.S.

Cohort label	Birth years	Defining events during formative years	Brief description of cohort's characteristics
Second World War cohort	1922–1927	Second World War	They worked for common good and were unified by a common goal. They are team oriented and more patriotic than other generational cohorts
Post-war cohort	1928–1945	After Second World War	They experienced remarkable economic growth and social tranquility, a time of family togetherness. They joined in the rise of the middle class and sought a sense of stability.
Leading-edge Baby Boomer	1946–1954	Assassination of JFK and Martin Luther Jr., Vietnam War	They watched the first man walk on the moon. They also championed the civil and women's rights causes. They are nevertheless hedonistic and self-indulgent.
Trailing-edge Baby Boomer	1955–1965	The first sustained economic downturn since the Great Depression	They witnessed US's defeat in Vietnam, Watergate, Nixon's resignation, the oil embargo, and raging inflation. They are thus less optimistic especially about their financial future than leading-edge Boomers
Gen X	1965–1976	A time of economic and social instability and uncertainty	They matured during an era of soaring divorce, accept cultural diversity, and value quality of personal life more. They are individualists and do not like to be singled out. They show an unmatched spirit of entrepreneurship. They prefer a lifestyle that provides freedom and flexibility.
N Gen or Gen Y, Millennium	1977–1994	The 'Information Revolution'	Growing up in the advent of the Internet, they will be the “engine” of growth over the next two decades. They are more idealistic and social-cause-oriented than Generation X. They are pragmatic as well as elusive consumers that have grown up in a media-saturated environment.

Source: Adopted from [Schewe and Meredith \(2004\)](#) and [Bush et al. \(2004\)](#)

Findings by Schewe and Meredith and Bush et al. outlining key events in the US as experienced by different generational cohorts.

Source: Ting, H., et al., Are we Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y? A qualitative inquiry into generation cohorts in Malaysia, *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences* (2017) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.kjss.2017.06.004>

Since globalisation and social-media have allowed Western values to penetrate many other parts of the world, these findings could be applied to different countries to some degree of accuracy. A TIME magazine article highlights the case of China, where a once-traditional, family-oriented culture is being

<sup>1</sup> Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next – Confident. Connected. Open to Change. *Pew Social Trends*, 2010, Retrieved on <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2010/10/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change.pdf>, Pew Research Center

overtaken by self-involvement and overconfidence; much like their Western peers<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, events such as the global economic downturn, terrorism and international tragedies have made its mark on an entire generational cohort worldwide.

But a closer examination in different countries uncovers a more complicated reality. In pinning down the exact characteristics of Gen Ys, many forget that there exist certain distinctions between Gen Ys in different countries due to their unique sociocultural environment. In Spain, the dual effects of a fledging national economy - unemployment and drop in education - has led to their Gen Ys to be unfavourably labelled *Generacion Ni-Ni* (*ni-trabaja, ni-estudia*) or *mileuristas*, in reference to their minimum salary of EUR1000. In China again, the long-term effects of the now discarded One-Child Policy have been two-fold: it has created a disproportionately male society and a high-dependency on adults (named *Ken Lao Zu*- literally translated to “someone who lives off the elderly”).<sup>34</sup>

Academic studies acknowledge that generational cohorts are impacted by their shared experiences. Since human behaviour correlates to the Person in their Environment<sup>5</sup>, a cohort is likely to have similar behaviour if they grew up in a similar setting. This is no different for Malaysian Gen Ys. But while Baby Boomers and Gen Xers lived through the May 13 racial riots and the New Economic Policy, their successors would be swayed by different events. Gen Ys in Malaysia could instead be more influenced by the legacy of its longest-serving Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad (Look East Policy, Vision 2020), the *Reformasi*, and perhaps global events such as the Bosnian War which received heavy media coverage in Malaysia at the time. Even in pop culture, the recent deaths of iconic American celebrities Chester Bennington and Anthony Bourdain was just as poignant to young Malaysians as it was in the US, spurring a dialogue on the importance of mental health. It is therefore necessary to explore the impact of both local and international events on Malaysians’ behaviour.

This kind of academic research in the Malaysian context is scarce, and with such high demand for generational studies, leaders are likely to adopt whatever findings they can muster on the internet and apply them to our own without thinking of the consequences. Even labelling our 1940-1960 cohort ‘Baby Boomers’ may be inappropriate in itself: while Americans were experiencing a high birth rate and economic growth at the time, Malaysia was achieving independence from the British and were facing its own unique set of problems. Indeed, globalisation has allowed people from all parts of the world to have shared values, but forcing a label reserved for other countries to Malaysians would only hinder our understanding of our own people. Without this knowledge, leaders are facing the challenge of reconciling

<sup>2</sup> J. Stein. “Millennials: The Me Me Me Generation”. *Time Magazine*. May 20, 2013. Retrieved from <http://time.com/247/millennials-the-me-me-me-generation/>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> K. Lyons. “Generation Y, Curling or Maybe: what the world calls millennials.” *The Guardian* (London). March 8 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/08/generation-y-curling-or-maybe-what-the-world-calls-millennials>

<sup>5</sup> Postulated by Kurt Lewin in 1936, Lewin’s equation  $B=f(P,E)$  links behaviour to the Person in their Environment

Western values with local norms. Particularly in the professional context, how will young Malaysians navigate a high-power distance when, much like their Western counterpart, they value an open relationship with their superiors<sup>6</sup>?

**Table 3**  
Findings of major events by Malaysians

Age- group	Defining events during formative years	Selected quotes
15–24	Introduction of GST, progress of communication technologies	"As a student, I feel it is very difficult to maintain the financial situation ... Sometimes I have to cut down my expenses although I need it desperately, like books ... Even books have GST; they say no GST but there is increment in the price." (Indian, 21 years old) "I have a lot of appreciation towards ... mobile phones, have a lot of value towards it because it's something new, it's something new in a way that it brings in a lot of convenience for a person's life in the sense of communication." (Chinese, 21 years old)
25–34	Political reformation, advancement of information technology	"... the reformation ... that time was the reformation action and I was a student ... around 1998, 1999, because I was in Kajang, the place which was influenced by the reformation and the situation with Amwar Ibrahim ... I still remember that reformation." (Malay, 34 years old) "... what I recall is the I-phone because iphone has changed the market structure ... Instead of just the keypad phone, now everything changes to touch screen, and we can connect everything, like projector, computer, phone call and we can check email anytime." (Chinese, 29 years old)
35–44	Financial crisis, terrorism (911 incident)	"The thing that I cannot forget is during 1997 when I received a lot of offers for study. That time the economy was really down, I received offers to study, but I cannot go because all of the scholarships, study loan ... freeze." (Malay, 35 years old) "When I was in university, I recalled the 911 incident. Then I realized that our society is getting out of control. The more we get developed, the more out of control we are. This event impacted me, I felt afraid. Since this incident, I felt life is impermanent." (Chinese, 38 years old)
45–55	Financial crisis, social security and development	"I think economy wise, that time was recession, during 1987 and 1997 when I was in form 4 or 5. During that time, my parents were very fortunate, they had saving and sent me to oversea to study. But until today, I value money and I don't simply spend because of what we went through before." (Malay, 45 years old) "I remember one of my relatives was staying in one of the blocks at Highland Tower ... We didn't purchase that condo or apartment instead we buy something grounded. We bought something else which is far from the mountain, or else landslide will affect our lives later." (Malay, 48 years old) "I was born in 70s, at that moment not many TVs with colour images and our phone basically a dialled phone. Now technology changes very fast ... everyone has a hand phone." (Malay, 45 years old)
56–64	Racial tension, pre-development natural disaster	"Major events, racial conflicts in May 13, I was in my Form 4 ... only you started to realize eh, I am a Malay, that guy is a Chinese [Laughter]. My classmates, some of them, we are very close ..." (Malay, 62 years old) "You know the flood of 1969. Worst flood in Malaysia in a sense that its kind of like affected a lot of people and all their houses were drown in the flood. Because I was with the Rotaract Club you know, and we were doing relieve work, charity work I was involved." (Chinese, 64 years old)
65 and Above	Formation of Malaysia, Independence, Insurgence of communism, Japanese occupation	"I believed the lowering of the British flag and the raising of the Malayan flag at that time was a very big event, in the sense that, you know, people were emotional about it. You know, they had to leave after having the ... colonised this place for so long." (Chinese, 67 years old) "That was a communist activity ... At that time, communist activity was very alarming. The communist wanted to take control the country." (Indian, 73 years old) "During the Japanese occupation, pretty messy here. We're from rural area ... Dreadful because there are robbery cases everywhere ... We didn't go to school during Japanese era. During British era, we were like back to normal. That time they formed Malaysia and Sarawak joined. Singapore did join as well." (Indigenous group, 86 years old)

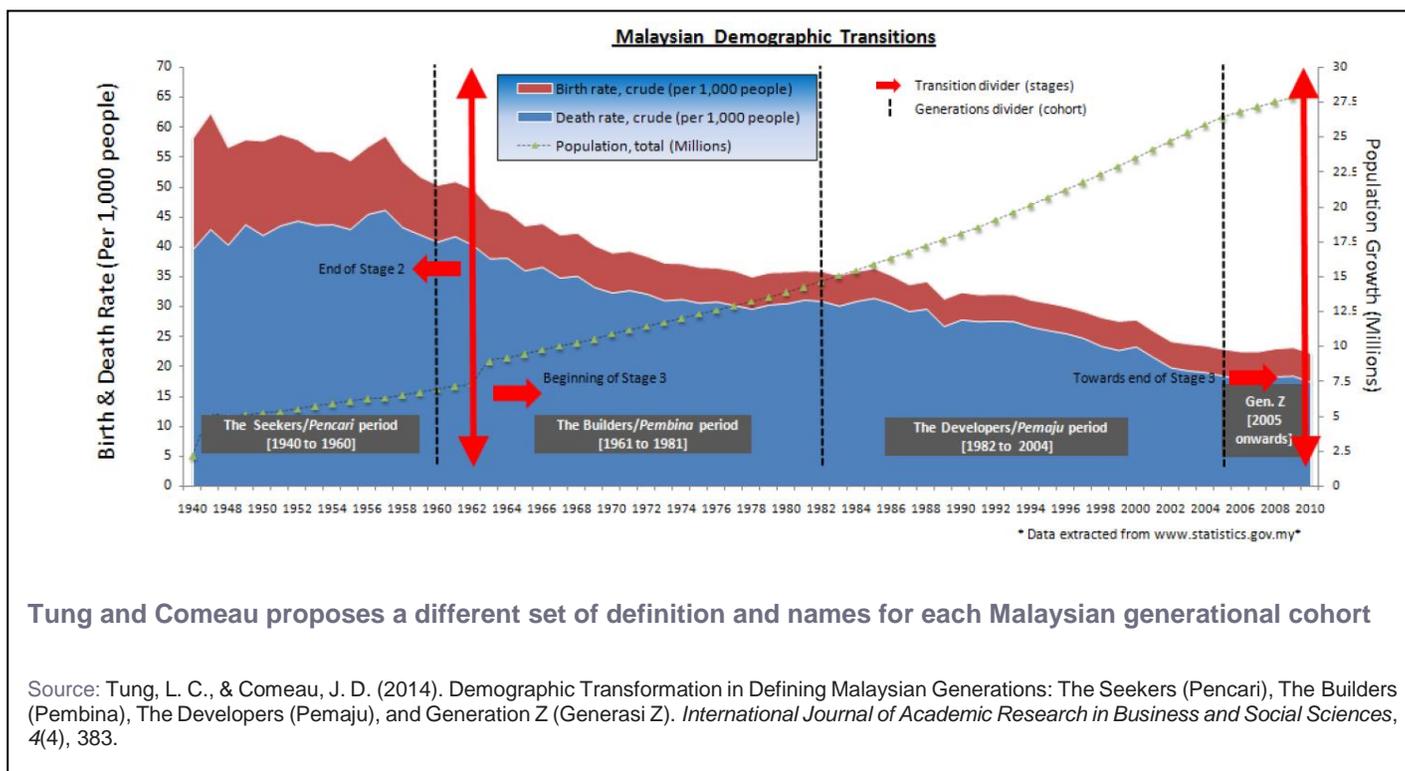
Research by Ting et al. outlining major events experienced by different generational cohorts in Malaysia

Source: Ting, H., et al., Are we Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y? A qualitative inquiry into generation cohorts in Malaysia, *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences* (2017) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.kjss.2017.06.004>

To overcome this, Malaysian leaders should engage with different generations to determine how the environment and events around them shaped who they are. Leaders in both the public and private sector must commit to bridging the divide between generations by creating a safe and open environment for people to share their upbringing and voice their opinions so that we can obtain a better understanding of

<sup>6</sup> A study by PwC found that 98% of its Gen Y professionals valued coaching and mentoring from superiors. Retrieved from <http://www.theedgemarkets.com/article/managing-gen-y>

different generational cohorts and their values. This can be done through several initiatives, including coaching, townhall sessions and company-sponsored gatherings.

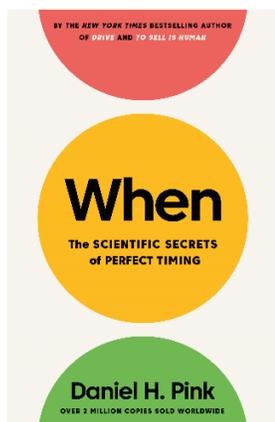


The importance of local generational studies by country must not be ignored any longer. With a demographic consisting of nearly 12 million young people<sup>7</sup> (most of whom have already entered the workforce), leaders must invest in studies that approach young Malaysian as a unique group experiencing exclusive events instead of just another offshoot of Western youths. Especially with Malaysia's multiracial fabric, it may also be necessary to see how different ethnic backgrounds views key historical events. Before we pigeonhole another generation with clickbait titles, studies on Gen Zs must consider how recent events, such as GE14, the #MeToo movement and the fourth Industrial Revolution, will influence our future leaders.

<sup>7</sup> Lo, T. C. "PM: Gen-Y is country's best asset" *The Star* (Malaysia), 13 February 2017. <http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2017/02/13/pm-gen-y-is-countrys-precious-asset-government-will-encourage-youth-to-be-more-analytical-says-najib/>

# Book Recommendation – When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing by Daniel Pink

Khairiah Mokhtaruddin



When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing was published on 2 January 2018. It quickly became one of the coveted books about decision-making in personal and professional settings, focusing on how time affects them without decision-makers (us) knowing so. Daniel H. Pink, the author, has written several bestsellers including Drive and To Sell is Human. Those familiar with his works will see similar prose patterns such as his penchant for bringing forth ideas in threes, utilising literary quotes to illustrate his ideas, and a practical “cheat” sheet following each chapter to ensure readers are left with some opportunity to put the understanding into practice.

The central thesis of this book is that decision-making is not merely based on intuition or business tools. In the first part of the book, he posits that timing is not an intuitive feeling i.e. I feel the time is right but is backed by science such as what is our chronotype – a personal pattern of circadian rhythms (internal timekeepers) that influence our psychology and physiology. Chronotypes are often divided into two avian-based categories – either you are early risers (larks) who feel energised during the day but wear out by evening or night owls who tend to be more productive at night. In this book, Pink contends that most fall into the third bird category based on the normal distribution in each population. While chronotypes are useful distinguishers, the more important factor is synchronising the type (what type are you), task (what kind of task), and time (what time will the task take place). Regardless of what type of bird you are categorised in, everyone experiences the day in three stages – a peak, a trough (point of low activity or achievement), and a rebound. Third birds and larks experience it in the order while night owls experience the day in reverse – recovery, trough, peak.

Part two of the book complements the awareness of the types we are with the timing and task. Again, in threes, timing is divided into beginning, midpoint, and endings, with each having the potential to make an impact in what we do. He starts with the beginning and its significance – how one begins something may have lingering effects until the end. Midpoints, he contends, may have a polarising effect of demotivation or rejuvenation. Interestingly, sports teams have a better opportunity to win, if they are with a point or a goal deficit at half-time. Half time/midpoints allow regrouping and realignment towards the end goal. Endings often have a poignant note to it – nobody favours a bad or uneventful ending – therefore extra exertion is often seen in this final stretch. As much as opening lines in literature catch

one's eye and become memorable, authors often write and rewrite their ending to ensure that the final sentences encapsulate the central theme of the piece, resolve any question and more importantly ensure the story has a lasting impact. Ernest Hemingway, for instance, rewrote his ending to *A Farewell to Arms* thirty-nine times.

In the final part, he shared how we can overcome the trough periods despite our types and based on the task that we may need to undertake through synchronising (timing, task, and type). Utilising the renowned dabbawalas<sup>1</sup> – lunchbox delivery and return system in Mumbai – he focuses on how attuned, in sync, disciplined, and dedicated the dabbawalas are in undertaking their tasks without technology (no smartphones, clocks nor GPS) beyond the vehicles they use, which are bicycles and trains. To be able to sync, especially in group timing, requires an identified, acknowledged and respected pacesetter – one who maintains the standard and focus. Secondly, one must sync to one another (in the group) and this requires a deep sense of belonging. Finally, one must feel good when synching and it comes in full circle – synchronising makes one feel good, encourages better performance and this helps the group perform smoothly.

The book concludes with some personal thoughts by the author, essentially outlining his prior biases, how researching and writing this book has uncovered them, and how this discovery has shifted his outlook. For instance, breaks such as naps and walks are useful methods to overcome troughs. If one has a bad start, it is better to hit the restart button or start in a collective group instead of merely shaking it off and moving on. Midpoints have the potential to make or break and recognising it would make a difference. Endings are powerful mostly in how one derives meaning from it. The author believes that there is such a thing as to when the best time is to undertake a demanding project, to go for a job interview, and to get married. Whether we chose to believe it or not, this book remains highly recommended to those who would like to get to know themselves better and through this self-awareness, may be able to eliminate potential pitfalls in charting the future through synchrony of the present time.

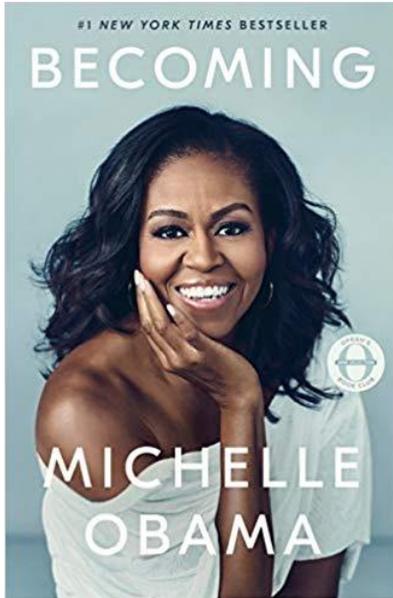
*When is published by Penguin Random House and can be purchased from leading bookstores at RM79.90.*

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<sup>1</sup> The dabbawalas are legendary, with more than 125 years of service, and has been immortalised in the Harvard Business School case study on service excellence.

# Book Recommendation – Becoming by Michelle Obama

Ismail Johari Othman



As the old saying goes “don’t judge a book by its cover”. The cover of the book *Becoming* by Michelle Obama is fashionable, trendy, joyful, and hardly suggest any deep and profound stories inside it. The surprise starts as early as the preface when she brought up a pertinent question often asked to a child “what do you want to be when you grow up?”, as if growing up is finite and at some point, one becomes something and that’s the end. Interestingly, such questions are still common today even at the highest level of discussion.

Organised in three parts, the beginning focused on the early years of the author where her foundation of life was formed, shaped by parents, family, neighbourhood, and schools – becoming me. The next part was about becoming us where she met Barack Obama who later became her husband and had a family with. The final part, becoming more was generally her life as the First Lady of the United States of America.

A famous chef once described Chicago as “it’s big, it’s outgoing, it’s tough, it’s opinionated, and everybody’s got a story”. Well, that is the place where the author was born and grew up. She was raised in a working-class family on the South Side of Chicago where the family rented an apartment on the second floor of a house owned by a grandaunt. Her father was a city labourer before he stopped working due to multiple sclerosis. Her mother was a homemaker right until the author went to high school while her elder brother was a skilful basketball player.

Indeed, her family never owned their own house as her father was innately cautious, aware of the trade-offs, and understood the need to maintain savings for rainy days. Having said so, her parents were generous in terms of attention to their children. They raised their children like adults, indulged every question asked and never hurried a discussion for the sake of convenience. They also insisted on the importance of using proper diction and directed the children towards books for further information on a concept and some piece of history. The children were trained to own their smartness and inhabit it with pride.

Apart from her family, there were others who exposed her in some ways during her formative years. One of them was her high school classmate, Santita Jackson, the daughter of Rev. Jesse Jackson, the

famous American civil rights activist. It was a completely different environment in the Jackson's home, which was far more comfortable in an affluent neighbourhood. One could feel the difference in which the energy pulsed throughout the house, the extended dinner conversations, and by observing the advisers that came and went. She, however, noticed that the family sacrificed control as they were gradually exposed to the public eye.

Princeton University that was then extremely white and very male was another defining moment for the author. Not only did she have to adapt to a new demography, she realised that unlike Chicago, nobody seemed concerned about crime. If there is anything to be vigilant about, it was only the author's studies. Interestingly, she wrote fondly about Czerny Brausell, her superior, where she did part-time work during her Princeton days. The author adored Czerny, a single mother who was smart, a multitasker, attentive, and always encouraged the author to ask hard questions.

Fast forward, she succeeded in her endeavour and went back to Chicago to work as a lawyer at a high-end law firm called Sidley & Austin where she met Barrack who was at the beginning, her mentee. In becoming us, the most enduring as it seems was a defining moment for the author in moving forward. Barrack's upbringing was far more complicated and globalised as compared to Michelle. He was well liked, considerably self-assured, and idealistic. It took a lot of courage for the author to get used to such an unprecedented experience and eventually tying the knot. The arrival of their two daughters and Barrack's entry into active politics in the state of Illinois made us become bigger and tougher for Michelle. At a certain point, the couple sought counselling help from a psychologist. Michelle was generous in highlighting the role and influence of Barrack's mother and grandmother in the latter's life. It was unfortunate and untimely for both of them to have passed away before Barrack reached his pinnacle – elected as the 44th President of the United States of America.

The last part which was becoming more is perhaps still work in progress for the author. As she pointed, there is still a lot about America that she has yet to discover. That perhaps explains why the book is entitled *Becoming!* This book is recommended for aspiring leaders who want to learn about self-growth and awareness which can be attained by giving attention to surroundings and asking hard questions to understand where one is heading (*becoming*).

*Becoming* is published by Viking and can be purchased from leading bookstores at RM139.95.

[www.rsog.com.my](http://www.rsog.com.my)



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