**1. In light of Mark Frost’s historical research considered in Tutorial 5, what do you think of the contention of the authors (Mathews and Nah) of the article above that “still, we think there is reason to believe our society isn’t that far from making “regardless of race” a lived reality for all in Singapore. Elaborate on your response.**

Being a multi-racial society, the Singapore government has been trying to promote racial harmony and equality for a better Singapore. Although I feel that racial equality has improved since the past, I disagree with the authors contention that our society is not that far from making “regardless of race” a lived reality for all in Singapore.

Matthews and Nah cited many surveys and statistics to justify the improvement in racial equality in Singapore. While it is not revealed the method of conducting the survey, I feel that some of the questions are dubious and not reliable. Quoting from the article, “about a fifth of Malay and Indian respondents indicated they had lost out on a job due to their race at least once (for example by requiring Mandarin speakers when it is unclear if this is a genuine business requirement), compared to 5 per cent of Chinese respondents saying the same”, the subjectivity of the survey and makes the results sceptical. The survey seems to imply that the respondents are assuming the reason for losing the job when the reality might be different from their assumptions. Losing a job is an embarrassing event especially in a highly competitive society, it would not be surprising if one were to shrug off their incompetence as an uncontrollable event due to prejudice. By allowing the “race” card as a convenient play to stay societally competitive, I think we are far from making “regardless of race” a lived reality for all in Singapore.

Other sceptical survey results cited by Matthew and Nah include “More Chinese would also accept a Malay (52 percent) or Indian (53 percent) person helping to manage their business, up from 38 percent and 42 percent respectively in 2016.” Are Chinese more accepting of Malays and Indians in the management because they are self-willing, or are they forced into acceptance, perhaps by legislative or perhaps, by to pull in talents through the societal perception that a company that is more acceptance of all races have a better working environment? In fact, this suspicion applies to most of their survey results where it cannot be determined whether the respondents are self-willing or are they forced into acceptance. As mentioned by Mark Frost’s historical research, Singapore established ethnic residential quotas for state-subsidised housing blocs and estates to achieve racial balance in Singapore. However, while this establishment serves to promote racial balance, it ironically, also manifested the opposite of “regardless of race” notion. Are the races living together because they are willing, or because they are forced to? In my opinion, to truly be “regardless of race”, the races must be self-willing to live together harmoniously without an external driving force.

In my opinion, the ambiguity and subjectivity of a society that is “regardless of race” is taken too lightly by the authors. Although they considered the subjectivity that people tend to see themselves and their close circles as being less racists than others, it is not sufficient. Furthermore, they addressed the ambiguity in societal definition of “regardless of race” and highlighted the respondents’ consensus that it is important that race not limit anyone’s opportunities, but that it could still be appreciated and acknowledged. However, this consensus itself poses subjectivity and ambiguity as what is deemed to be limiting opportunities might differ among everyone. Singapore is a city that seems to be governed by quotas, but by specifically setting aside a set quota for minorities, it introduces race as a factor in opportunities. For example, if a company found a Chinese candidate to be more capable and suitable than the Malay candidate, they should have the rights to employ the Chinese candidate based on his capability rather than employing the Malay candidate just to fulfil quotas.

Moreover, I do agree with the author that paradoxically, while we wished for a society that is “regardless of race”, the more we discuss about the topic, the more it proves that we highly regard races. In modern context, I feel that Singapore cares too much about achieving racial equality which is undoubtedly important, but rather than enforcing racial equality, it might be better for society to realise its importance naturally either with societal education or societal. Only when society realised the natural benefits of racial equality then can we truly be considered as achieving a “regardless of race” society.

5. “Narratives of Singapore encountered in heritage centres, galleries and museums in Singapore have abjectly failed to include women in their stories. The only way to redress this glaring neglect of more than half its human population is to establish a heritage gallery wholly dedicated to women.”

**Do you agree or disagree? Elaborate on your response. You must mention at least two heritage spaces that you have visited (in person or virtually) in your response.**

Heritage centers, galleries and museums should serve to provide the most accurate information to the public by trying their best to paint a complete picture. While I disagree that all these heritage sites have abjectly failed to include women in their stores, I opine that they are under-appreciated and thus, inaccurately telling Singapore’s narratives. Futhermore, I disagree that the only way to redress this negligence is to establish a heritage gallery wholly dedicated to women.

The Singapore City Gallery located in the URA (Urban Redevelopment Authority) Centre is a fitting example of under-appreciating women in Singapore’s narratives. Outside of the gallery sits three statues of Samsui women who are Chinese female immigrants that contributed much to our economy and industries in the 1920s and 1940s. Although their contribution is undeniably significant and as equally important, there were no mention of the Samsui women and their contributions in the gallery itself despite having their statues. Moreover, the gallery’s content has an evident biasness towards URA themselves and the under-appreciation is not unique to women but all the foreigners. Nonetheless, while there is an under-appreciation for the women, efforts to include them are still manifested in the Samsui women statues.

The National Museum have also included women in their storied. For example, they have a section dedicated to the history of Women’s education in the 1900s. Moreover, there are noticeably more sections dedicated to prominent male figures such as Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles compared to female figures, and the museum does indeed seem to have under-appreciated the women. One such example is Hajjah Fatimah who arrived in Singapore in the 1800s and crafted a successful business network. She then contributed back to the society through the building of houses for the poor along with the donation of her land. Is her contribution less significant than that of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles? Why is her contribution not mentioned in the gallery but Sir Thomas Stamford’s is mentioned? In this regard, I agree that there is some neglect of women in the stories of Singapore. However, I would not consider it as having failed to include women in their stories as they were mentioned at various sections despite those sections numbered few.

Additionally, I disagree that the only way to redress this neglect and under-appreciation of women is to establish a heritage gallery wholly dedicated to women. It might be unfair for other groups of people if Singapore were to establish a heritage gallery for women and might suffer additional biasness. As mentioned earlier, these heritage sites should serve to portray the most accurate and complete view of Singapore’s narrative. Any method should suffice as long as their stories are painted as accurately and as completely as possible. One such method would be the mentioning of their stories when telling Singapore’s stories in these heritage sites. Referring to the Samsui Women statues example, the City Gallery can mention their contribution and tell their narrative alongside Singapore’s narrative. This will solve the negligence of women in their stories, be more inclusive of women and paint a more complete picture of Singapore’s history.