

Fostering Unity in a Time of COVID-19

Amidst a turbulent year dominated by COVID-19, Singapore has remained resilient and adapted to new norms.

In 2020, many in Singapore, whether locals or foreigners, reached out with compassion and empathy to those among us who needed help. You too can help contribute by keeping our communities united and vigilant, to help Singapore emerge from the pandemic as an even stronger and more caring society!



Coming together to share local perspectives

What does it mean to be Singaporean? In 2020, 93 citizens from different backgrounds and walks of life spent seven months exploring and deliberating this question, as part of the Citizens' Workgroup for Singapore Citizenship Journey. They took time from their busy schedules to volunteer in the Workgroup as they felt it was important to contribute to new citizens' understanding of the Singapore family that they would soon be a part of. Their recommendations were presented in their [report](#), as a "welcome gift from Singaporeans to all new citizens". These recommendations will be considered by MCCY when it revises the Singapore Citizenship Journey, a mandatory programme that about 15,000 to 25,000 prospective citizens go through annually.

Some of the Workgroup's suggestions on how new immigrants can learn more about Singapore include:



- **Visit heritage sites and places of worship**, such as the Sultan Mosque, Sri Mariamman Temple, Thian Hock Keng Temple and St Andrew's Cathedral, to learn more about how different cultures and religions live harmoniously together in Singapore, even along the same stretch of road!



- **Learn about the people** who have shaped Singapore's cultural landscape, such as Kuo Pao Kun, Georgette Chen, Eric James Watson and 'Sticker Lady' Samantha Lo.



- **Contribute back to the community** through volunteer activities. This could include volunteering at public facilities and organisations such as libraries, museums, parks, community centres and grassroots programmes. Here, they can interact with locals and play a part in building a gracious and inclusive society for all.

Intrigued? [Read the full report](#) and share it with your friends!

Living under the shadow of the virus? Let your stories go viral instead

The Little Things




Angelina So much has changed since the pandemic but still, one can find victory (and much joy) in the little things – e.g. for me, it will be the smile on the face of my nephew when I let him mess up the mahjong tiles, my 1st homemade century egg congee, and the sudden bulk of time I get to spend at home with my fam and new beloved pressure cooker 🍲

Moving forward 2021, may I (and anyone reading this) continue to find joy and victory in the little/all things 🍀

29 Jan 2021

Home is no longer 3799km away



Chelsea I got married right before the last CNY, and due to the pandemic, my husband and I didn't have a chance to fly back to Shanghai and visit my family. It has been more than one year. The circuit breaker allows me to spend more time with my new family here, with my husband and parents-in-law. They treat me like their own daughter and give me so much caring and love, making me feel less homesick. I feel gratitude.

28 Jan 2021

We all have stories to share from our Covid-19 experience. We would like to hear your stories at [Stories of Us](#), a website dedicated to collecting our shared memories of Covid-19 times in Singapore.

The website is open to everyone living in Singapore, whether Singaporeans or foreigners, to share their everyday experiences. We hope that you can find meaning amidst the difficulties and distress, along with a richer sense of community and belonging.

Read how others have been coping, or how they have been contributing during these times. Share your own stories to reflect your experiences. As we learn about each other's experiences, we learn that we are all in it together—and can overcome this pandemic together. It all adds to a greater sense of fellowship as a nation.

Chip in today, to encourage or be encouraged! You might be bringing that message of hope someone needs to hear.

In a Time of COVID, a Community that Cares

In spite of being in the midst of a pandemic, more Singaporeans and foreigners stepped up to volunteer than before, and have raised record donations for charity.

Adapting to the times, many ground-up initiatives have moved online, using social media for community engagement, and fundraising has gone virtual with an innovative touch.

Here are some of the ways that everyone in Singapore has shown they continued to care amidst COVID-19:

Supporting our migrant brothers

Migrant workers in dormitories were among the hardest hit in Singapore, hosting the largest COVID-19 clusters. Their plight was heavily featured in the media, and though the circumstance was far from ideal, it brought many Singaporeans closer to a community they may not otherwise have reached out to.

Diverse social movements and individual volunteers worked hand-in-hand to support the workers, and initiated projects to provide help or simply bring reassurance and hope.



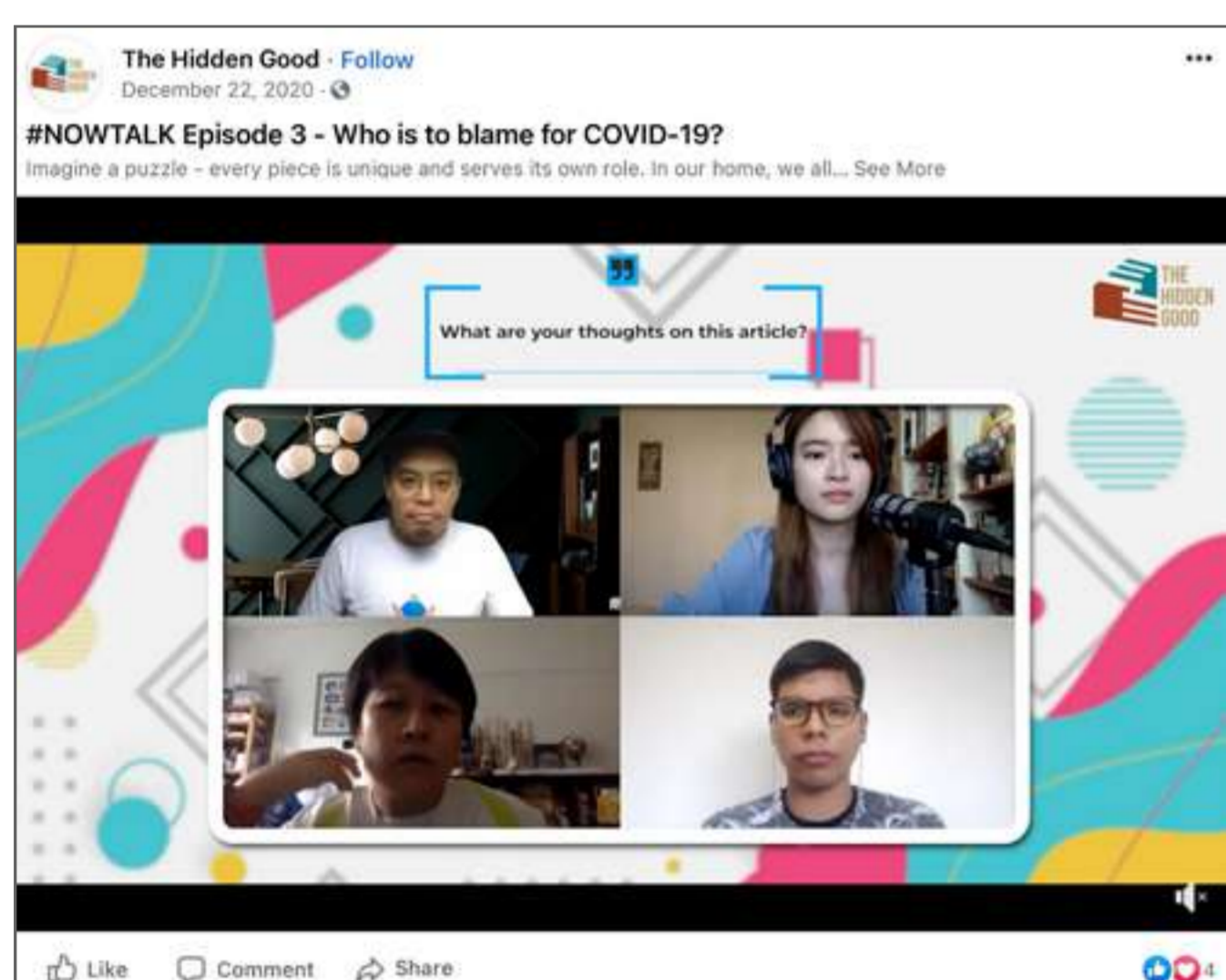
Local artistes and migrant workers perform together and learn from each other in EMBRACE.

Among these, **Embrace, a variety show**, brought migrant workers and popular local artistes together to perform 10 original pieces. From poetry-and-movement to heavy-metal Bengali rap, the acts were a tribute to living in Singapore in this moment; a celebration of diversity that embraced art, people and stories.



Locals and migrant workers bonded through the joy of cooking their cultural dishes.

Through **Cook to Connect**, organised by the **Whitehatters** and **ItsRainingRaincoats**, both locals and foreigners joined together to produce a cook-along show with migrant workers to highlight our appreciation for migrant workers, using food as a bridge across the cultural gap. The activity provided ingredients and essentials to 120 migrant workers, and more than 1,000 workers and Singaporeans tuned in to the cooking demonstrations on Facebook Live. The event allowed for locals and migrant workers to bond over creating dishes together as well as contribute to the community by packing and distributing care packs to the dormitories. It brought people together to stay united in difficult times.



TheHiddenGood's online discussion on forming a more inclusive community during Covid-19.

A community engaged

As the pandemic shook the world, societal fault lines emerged everywhere, including Singapore. Through their podcast series **#nowtalk**, **The Hidden Good** reacts to COVID-19 related discriminatory incidents through voices of common Singaporeans. Their discussions reflect how everyone has a responsibility to keep Singapore safe not just from the pandemic, but also from discrimination—just as the virus does not discriminate against race, language or religion. At a time when fears can influence our actions negatively, it is even more important now for us to be aware of our biases, stay open-minded and united together.



Irene and her family folding paper cranes to wish for the safety and happiness of Singapore.

Everyone can play a part

There are also other creative ways to show care. Ms Irene Chu's family took to folding paper cranes as their stay-home activity during the Circuit Breaker, symbolising their wish for safety and happiness for Singapore, to pull through the period safely. As seen on **Instagram**, the family, who migrated here from China 20 years ago, had fun folding dozens of the cranes, while sharing messages of encouragement and appreciation for frontline workers, "our SG heroes".

While 2020 has been challenging, the adversity has also given us a chance to demonstrate the best in us. We hope you have been inspired to get together with your communities, to start your own projects or to rally your community and networks for a more caring and harmonious Singapore!

Let us know if you would like to continue receiving *Integration Matters*. We would love to hear your feedback or suggestions about this newsletter—drop us an email at NIC_Secretariat@mcc.gov.sg or visit go.gov.sg/nicnewsfeedback to share your feedback. We look forward to hearing from you!



<https://go.gov.sg/nicnewsfeedback>