

Online Only - Learn from Taiwan, Singaporeans

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Letter from Raymond Heng

I am appalled by the lack of graciousness shown by Singaporeans. The incident happened one morning when my pregnant wife and I were taking the MRT to work.

We boarded from Commonwealth station (at around 7am). The train was not packed then but all the seats were taken. My wife, clearly pregnant, and I stood near the priority seats as there were no available seats.

We alighted at Raffles Place station but the short journey left a bad aftertaste. Throughout the trip, none of the passengers offered their seats to my wife. Worse still, some even pretended to sleep, or turned their head away when we made eye contact. These people looked able-bodied, young and well dressed but none were gracious enough to offer their seats to my wife who needs it more.

We had just returned from a holiday in Taipei, and I am sad to say we Singaporeans have a long way in emulating our Taiwan counterparts. Even during peak hours, the Taiwanese have a habit of leaving the priority seats empty (they rather stand) so those who need it can easily find a seat. Also, the Taiwanese seem more willing and proactive in offering their seats when they spot someone in need.

Another observation we made (which left a huge impression) in Taipei was, the passengers would queue in an orderly manner within the designated 'arrows' while waiting to board the train. This allows outgoing passengers to alight first and made boarding the train a breeze (even during peak hours).

We do have a similar system in Singapore but sadly again, nobody seems to follow it. Just check out Raffles Place MRT or City Hall Interchange during the peak hours.

Singapore and Taiwan are both beautiful metropolitan cities in their own ways, but the incident made me realize we have some catching up to do to be a more gracious society.

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