



# Apa Itu Activist?

A FORUM ON CIVIL SOCIETY  
ACTION & ADVOCACY

## 1. Introduction & Overview

In Singapore's rapidly evolving political environment, many different groups and individuals are working hard to create change on issues that they care about. But too often we do this in isolation – only to find ourselves firefighting and reinventing the wheel, instead of drawing on shared learning or mutual support.

The “Apa Itu Activist?” Forum hopes to address this by bringing together anyone who is involved or interested in advocacy, to share experiences and strategies, with a view to increasing mutual communication and support, building relationships and conducting more effective advocacy. Its tongue-in-cheek name has been chosen to reflect the fact that Singapore society is still evolving to come to terms with the appropriate role that advocacy should play and the forms it can take.

These two morning plenary sessions feature speaker presentations by notable civil society figures and academics, followed by panel discussions and Q&A. We invite you to join us for a lively conversation about the future of social change.

**Date:** 20 September 2014

**Time:** 9am – 12:30pm

**Venue:** Ngee Ann Kong Si Auditorium at UTown

**Organisers:** Kokila Annamalai, Izyanti Asa'ari, Kirsten Han, Corinna Lim, Jolene Tan, Jolovan Wham and Yale-NUS International Relations and Political Association (YIRPA)

## 2. Forum Schedule

TIME	CONTENT	PANEL
9.00 – 9.30	Registration	
9.30 – 10.45	<p><b>What could civil society look like? Perspectives from home and abroad</b></p> <p>45 min presentations 30 min Q&amp;A</p>	<p>J. Michael Cole (Taiwan) Syahredzan Johan (Malaysia) Vivienne Wee (Singapore)</p>
10.45 – 11.15	Coffee Break	
11.15 – 12.30	<p><b>Civil society in Singapore: Possibilities and constraints</b></p> <p>45 min presentations 30 min Q&amp;A</p>	<p>Nazry Bahrawi Remy Choo Zheng Xi Tay Lai Hock Siew Kum Hong</p>

### 3. Speakers at a Glance

#### What could civil society look like? Perspectives from home and abroad



**J. MICHAEL COLE** has been covering Taiwanese civil society as a journalist and photographer for a variety of Taiwanese and international publications, writing more than 100 articles on the subject. He was one of the pre-eminent chroniclers of the Sunflower Movement's occupation of the Legislative Yuan in March/April 2014.



**SYAHREDZAN JOHAN** is on the Bar Council Malaysia and Malaysian Bar, where he is an activist with the MyConstitution campaign and the Chairperson of the National Young Lawyers Committee. He writes regularly for LoyarBurok, a blog dedicated to freedom of speech and conducts courses and takes up public interest cases for the Malaysian Centre for Constitutionalism and Human Rights. He is also a spokesperson for Projek BERES, a collective movement proposing constitutional and electoral reforms, and often writes articles that have been published in the mainstream media.



**VIVIENNE WEE** is AWARE's second Research and Advocacy Director. A founding member of AWARE, Vivienne previously served on at least five Executive Committees and several subcommittees. She formerly chaired the national task force 'Stop Violence Against Women!', led by the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations. As an anthropologist, Vivienne has worked extensively on gender and development. She taught at the National University of Singapore, the Chinese University of Hong Kong and City University of Hong Kong. She is currently Associate Faculty at SIM University (UniSIM). She has been involved in several multi-country networks and programmes, spanning Indonesia, Pakistan as well as countries in the Middle East and Africa.

## Civil society in Singapore: Possibilities and constraints



**NAZRY BAHRAWI** is a literary and cultural critic who has written for Today, The Guardian and South China Morning Post. He is also the associate editor of Critical Muslim, a UK-based quarterly magazine of ideas and issues, which presents Muslim perspectives on the great debates of our times.



**REMY CHOO ZHENG XI** co-founded the socio-political news website The Online Citizen in 2006 and is a lawyer in private practice specializing in criminal defence and public interest litigation. Zheng Xi is active in free speech and media advocacy, and was a founding member of the #FreeMyInternet campaign in 2013.



**TAY LAI HOCK** is the founder and Kampung Chief of Ground-Up Initiative (GUI). G.U.I. aims to build a 5G society – Gracious, Green, Giving, Grounded and Grateful. At the core of GUI's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Kampung Culture is creating beautiful connections between people and the Earth. Since 2008, GUI has built a Kampung through the power of community and has nurtured highly creative and resilient kindred spirits.



**SIEW KUM HONG** is the Vice-President of Singapore human rights NGO MARUAH. He was a Nominated Member of Parliament from 2007 – 2009, and a core team member of The Online Citizen from 2011 to 2013. He was recently part of the Singapore Advocacy Awards committee.

This event is supported by:



High Commission  
of Canada



Yale-NUS International  
Relations and Political Association



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