

**The Sun: Freespace**  
28<sup>th</sup> March 2006

## **Power of the speck**

*Ng Tze Yeng*

This is the conversation I usually have with myself when I think about the depressing state of the world.

*Me: "The world is s\*\*\*."*

*Mirror: "And you can't do anything about it, you are just a speck, insignificant. You are a nobody. You have no money, no power, you can't change anything."*

Yes. War; famine; pollution; HIV/AIDs; violence against women; trampling of indigenous people's rights; trafficking of women and children; all the usual suspects on population control. And I can't do anything because I am a mere speck in the grand scheme of things.

It was an utterly powerless and frustrating existence.

Sometimes the frustration and helplessness would translate into rage. Rage at discrimination based on gender, class, creed, sexuality and ethnicity. Rage at harsh inequalities created by the deliberate exploitation of human beings, animals and the environment. Rage at blatant abuse of power; such as taking away fundamental rights such as freedom to information and expression, just to advance one's self interest.

My fits of rage were more often than not, expressed through rants and raves peppered by colourful language.

I was, I supposed, angry too, at myself for just being a foul-mouthed speck of dust. The feeling of disempowerment was both suffocating and incapacitating; feeling like my life was being strangled. Something had to be done, but I was too overwhelmed with the magnitude of what needed to be done, and my inability to do it as I was a mere speck.

Salvation came March 2005 in the form of a workshop for young women writers who were interested in effecting positive change under the "Writers for Womens' Rights Programme", conducted by the local NGO All Women's Action Society (AWAM). This visionary programme aimed to empower young women between 18-32 through the power of the word. The sessions centred on developing our understanding of gender and women's issues; and of course as the programme indicated, guided us in our understanding of media issues to sharpen our writing skills.

Far from completing the workshop with the feeling that I could now right all wrongs with a flick of my pen, I left with the affirmation that I'll always be a speck.

But, I am now an empowered speck. And, as an empowered speck, I;

- Can't wave my pen and repeal the Islamic Family Law (Federal Territories) (Amendment) Act 2005 (IFL), but I can, and did write letters to newspaper editors stating my points of protest and signed the petition against the IFL.
- Can't ensure that the Broga incinerator, of which the authorities had made dubious claims that it would cause minimal negative impact on the environment and citizens' health, won't get built, but I can and did help make copies and distribute copies of the documentary "Alice Lives Here" that put forward the Broga residents' many reasons for opposing the incinerator which was minimally covered by the media.
- Can't erase existing repressive laws, but I can, and did volunteer time and energy as a facilitator at a subsequent Writers for Women's Rights Workshop, thus helping to continue to provide a space for young women to think, speak and create.
- Can't stop deforestation by chaining myself to a tree but I can, and do make sure I reuse and recycle the best I can.
- Can't make all the injustices go away this lifetime but I CAN, and WILL continue sharing with other specks the realisation that I had the good luck to come across. We all specks, but we have "speck power" to effect positive change. We CAN create enough momentum for change, we just need to start with the doing.

And it doesn't even have to be anything big; we don't have to be powerful politicians or philanthropists, it is the simple and small acts such as carrying a shopping bag to reduce the usage of plastic bags; writing letters to the editor to speak out; using a reusable food container for take-aways; volunteering at an animal shelter; speaking out against derogatory remarks made on people for being different; simple everyday acts that will effect positive change.

Here's to all of us specks out there. Speck power!

*The writer is a feminist who's becoming less jaded as she grows older. She's really older than she looks.*

**Originally from:** <http://www.sun2surf.com/article.cfm?id=13567>