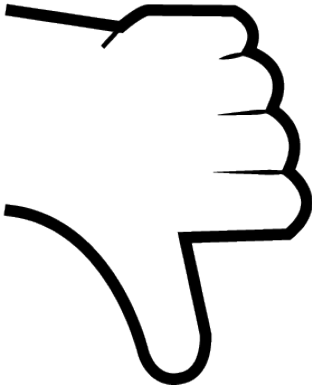


Aiyoh WatLah! Awards 2015

Joint Action Group
for Gender Equality
(JAG)



The Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG)

comprises:

All Women's Action Society (AWAM)
Association of Women Lawyers (AWL)
Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (EMPOWER)
Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor (PSWS)
Perak Women for Women Society (PWW)
Sabah Women's Action Resource Group (SAWO)
Sisters in Islam (SIS)
Tenaganita
Women's Aid Organisation (WAO)
Women's Centre for Change, Penang (WCC)

For more information:

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday 30 March 2015

Vote for the very worst in this year's Aiyoh Wat Lah! Awards

PETALING JAYA – The Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) is proud to present the opening of votes for the 'Aiyoh Wat Lah!' Awards, and with it a fresh crop of bigotry from 2014.

Inaugurated in 2012, the 'Aiyoh Wat Lah!' Awards is an annual awards ceremony doubling as a public education tool, used to raise awareness about the pervasiveness of misogyny, sexism, homophobia and transphobia in Malaysia. Having trawled the murky depths of media reports from 2014, JAG has handpicked the very 'best' statements and actions vying for a win in one of seven categories: 'Foot in Mouth', 'Insulting Intelligence', 'Policy Fail', 'Cannot Ignore', 'Least Helpful to the Sisterhood', 'Enough Already!', and the single glimmer of hope through all the muck, 'Right on Track.'

Discrimination against women in politics continues to be a disappointing trend. Last year, the focus on DAP Candidate Dyana Sofya Mohd Daud was her appearance instead of the merits of her candidacy, and President of PKR, Dr. Wan Azizah Wan Ismail was said to be unsuitable for the post of Menteri Besar due to her biological functions. These are just two examples of the inexcusable treatment of women in politics. To this trend we at JAG have one thing to say: *Enough Already!* In addition to the treatment of women in politics, this year's 'Enough Already!' category includes the continuation of yet another discouraging pattern— poor treatment of the LGBT community, justified falsely by religion or fallacious calls to "natural" behaviour.

"The continued ill treatment of trans people in this country is reprehensible," commented Kristine Yap, of Women's Aid Organisation (WAO). "Malaysia's Federal Constitution

enshrines the fundamental right of all persons, including trans people, to non-discrimination on the ground of gender. Whether physical, verbal or emotional, the abuse that the trans-community has faced is unacceptable and inexcusable.”

Yet, we are happy to acknowledge the landmark Negeri Sembilan case that sets precedence for better securing of transgender rights. In November last year, Section 66 of the Syariah Criminal (Negeri Sembilan) Enactment 1992 which penalised Muslim men who dressed or posed as women in public places, was considered as unconstitutional by the Court of Appeal. This is one ‘*Right on Track*’ outcome for the long-persecuted Malaysian trans-community. Since the awards began in 2012, public discourse surrounding the trans-community in Malaysia seems to have developed. While there is no cause for outright celebration yet, JAG is pleased to see an extension of space for public discussion on issues of gender and sexuality which were once limited to women’s groups. JAG hopes to see a similar ruling soon following the appeal to the Federal Court in 2015.

“It’s been really heartening to see a broadening of public discourse for these issues,” noted Evelynne Gomez, of All Women’s Action Society (AWAM). “I think that public education efforts like JAG’s ‘Aiyoh Wat Lah!’ Awards have increased awareness and extended the scope for an alternative point of view.”

We are also pleased to note that this year’s ‘Aiyoh Wat Lah!’ will be taking the show on the road to Sarang Paloh Heritage Hotel in Ipoh. On hosting the awards for the fourth year in a row, the legendary Ribena Berry, as played by thespian and writer Jo Kukathas, declared; “As sexism, misogyny, homophobia and transphobia rage across the country the ‘Aiyoh Wat Lah!’ awards take to the road. First stop – Ipoh.”

“We are really excited to bring ‘Aiyoh Wat Lah!’ to Ipoh, getting more Malaysians involved in calling out insensitive statements made by public figures in a tongue-in-cheek awards ceremony,” added Aliah Ali, of Sisters in Islam (SIS). “The most important thing is for Malaysians to have a safe space to discuss and demand accountability for statements and actions that we can no longer tolerate from people in positions of power, and going to Ipoh is the perfect opportunity for extending this space.”

JAG encourages all members of the public to visit <https://awammalaysia.typeform.com/to/ZqFTFz> to vote on this year’s nominees, decide on 2014’s worst examples of sexism, misogyny, homophobia and transphobia, and to join us in Ipoh on May 10th!

Note to Editor:

Voting link: <https://awammalaysia.typeform.com/to/ZqFTFz>

Voting duration: 30 March – 18 April 2015

Results will be released during the JAG 'Aiyoh Wat Lah!' Awards ceremony, details as follows:

Date: 10 May 2015

Time: 3 – 5pm

Venue: Sarang Paloh Heritage Hotel, Ipoh, Perak

An Information Sheet is enclosed with this Press Release.