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I SAY

Telling the Singapore Story

Angeline Koh

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's message at the launch last month of HeritageFest resonated with me.

"Home means you must have some memories, you must have shared experiences and ... some sense of where we came from, why we're here, what it means to us," he had said.

What are memories and shared experiences but stories. And storytelling is what Singapore as a nation needs.

When I speak of storytelling, I do not mean the "once-upon-a-time" children's fairy tales. Stories are the stuff that

life and memories are made of; our stories shape us. We all have histories, even the quietest of us.

Our shared memories can be painful ones like seeing a loved one through cancer, or happy ones like remembering the old kampung house we grew up in, or silly ones that make us laugh at ourselves.

We have personal, family, community and national stories, which engage not just our minds but our emotions and which glue us together.

Stories are heritage that we leave with our children and our children's children.

Have we come closer to finding our Singapore Story,

What are memories and shared experiences but stories. And storytelling is what Singapore as a nation needs ... Our children need to realise they are heroes in the making. They have the power to become heroes by the brave and sacrificial choices they make — to live well and for the good of others.

our marvel-filled adventures of unlikely knights-turned-heroes on a quest?

There are unsung heroes in our midst — they are people we meet each day in our homes and in our schools, at work and at play.

Our children need to realise they are heroes in the making.

They have the power to become heroes by the brave and sacrificial choices they make — to live well and for the good of others.

The Singapore Story is the sum total of the stories of her people. So where do we start?

Moving HeritageFest to the heartlands was a step in the right direction. Mr Lee hit the nail on the head when he said these trails should be developed by the community, as a "grass-roots, bottom-up" effort.

In the 2000s, BBC ran two series *Capture Wales* and *Telling Lives* to connect communities. People made digital stories about real-life experiences, using their own photos, words and voice.

Storytelling movements can take off on the digital platform; it can empower ordinary people to share their stories.

But digital storytelling is less developed in Asia, as John Hartley and Kelly McWilliams wrote in the book *Story Circle* (2009).

Here in Singapore, we need to keep telling and listening to our stories. As a digital storyteller who started a storytelling social enterprise, I believe we need to help others find and tell their stories.

The late Dana Atchley, also known as the father of digital storytelling, once said: "The stories and anecdotes we share with one another are the ways we let each other know who we are, where we come from, where we are going, and most importantly, what we care about." ■