

Tan Teck Wei / 18 March 2012

Dear (guests in order),

I would first like to thank the Singapore Council of Women's Organizations for the wonderful opportunity to be here today. It is every debater's dream to address an audience this diverse and committed, on a stage as big as this.

About a week ago, I was invited to be a facilitator at Debating 101, a workshop for primary school debaters, run by my alma mater, Raffles Institution. As part of the course, we hold breakout sessions with the kids to get to know them better. I asked a group of primary school debaters why they wanted to debate and at such a young age.

The first answer to come up: because I like to argue and because I like to win arguments, especially against mom and dad. Parents beware.

Then, at the back of the room, a tiny voice cries out and says, "because we can choose how to help people in society". And I agree. Debaters don't always win the arguments, and the debates, but we do it anyway. We debate both for the good days and through the bad ones. We debate with the belief that that by becoming a more rational and informed person, we can make a difference in society when we grow up.

In light of this, the tournament jointly put together by NUS and SCWO was brilliantly crafted. Most debate tournaments focus on large geopolitical issues and economic issues, because these attract the most attention on the news and amongst the leaders of the world.

At the same time, however, there is a genuine need to evaluate the profound changes in our society, and the issues facing women today form a significant consideration. This tournament did not limit itself to traditional debates about women, but was topical and current. On behalf of my friends and fellow debaters, thank you once again for an excellent tournament.

Delivering social justice requires an open mind and the courage to act, and I sincerely believe debating enables future generations to create the social change we hope to achieve. If your child does start an argument with you tonight, there may instead be reason to smile. Thank you.