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Samantha marks a milestone

HERE ARE statistics which have not been verified or confirmed:

» There are more than 1,000 Malaysians working in the financial district in London which is often referred to as the "Square Mile";

» There are more than 20,000 Malaysians who are legally domiciled in England; and

» There are about 50,000 Malaysians in England without proper documentation.

However, the Malaysian community in the English capital is not conspicuous, often seen in small groups divided by race, religion and political affiliation.

The professionals – doctors, lawyers, engineers and accountants – rise above all these and are often seen as a grouping that towers in a highly competitive environment.

Hence, these people are well-informed of the goings-on and anything "Malaysian" is often communicated to the rest. At the height of summer three years ago during my sojourn as this newspaper's UK correspondent, I was alerted to news about a young Malaysian woman who took to the internet to raise money to further her studies.

She was then and still remains as the only Malaysian to be accepted into the three-year Masters Acting programme at the prestigious Actors Studio Drama School in New York.

Samantha Tan was down to earth when we met and made no secret that her parents could not afford to send her to New York. Nevertheless, she wanted to go through the course and saw no wrong in making an appeal through the worldwide web.

On Aug 15, 2011, I highlighted her ambition and her determination at completing her Master's course. This drew the attention of many generous Malaysians to her cause. Almost all of the first year's fees of about US$50,000 was raised including a big contribution from the Berjaya Group's Better Malaysia Foundation.

In 2012, Samantha returned to London to perform at the closing ceremony of the Olympics. During an interview, she talked about her progress and how much she had gained in experience and knowledge. She returned to Malaysia last year and because of work and travel schedules, we did not meet. However, she kept everyone posted on her progress at the university.

Over the weekend, I received Samantha's touching note. It read: *"Hope you're well :) Quick email just to let you know I have graduated, and now officially hold a Masters of Fine Arts in Acting!*

Below is my final blog post on my fundraising site, with pics of the graduation ceremony etc.

http://myasdsfund.wordpress.com/2014/05/23/and-so-the-journey-concludes-thank-you-and-goodnight/

Thank you again for everything you've done to help me. I will let you know whenever I am back in KL to conduct more classes. If you're ever curious what I'm up to this side of the pond, keep an eye on my professional site www.samantha-tan.com

Do keep in touch and take care!"

On her blog, she posted: *"With our industry showcase and graduation ceremonies now concluded, my life-changing three years at the Actors Studio Drama School at Pace University has officially come to a close. I am now a holder of a Masters of Fine Arts in Acting, and with that everything this website was started for way back in 2011 has come to fruition.*

If I haven't said it enough before, THANK YOU ALL; the part you have played in this incredible fundraising adventure is a remarkable testament to the generosity and kindness of the human spirit, and you have surprised, delighted, inspired and deeply touched not just me personally, but my loved ones who care about me, my fellow actors who dream the same dreams, and in fact every single acquaintance, reporter or general listener I have ever told this story to."

The right stuff

CITIZEN NADES

theSun highlighted Samantha's ambition and determination on Aug 15, 2011.

If there's a lesson to be learnt from Samantha's incredible journey, it's one's tenacity, resolve and steadfastness which determine his or her success in overcoming the hurdles.

If Samantha had sulked after not being able to source funds and given up her dreams, she would have ended up as another statistic among the thousands of people who lead ordinary lives.

The will and determination to strive until reaching the desired goal is a trait which is sorely lacking in our society which has adopted the philosophy that "water will find its own level".

Samantha's trials and tribulations including doing odd jobs, waiting at cafes in New York at night and shuttling between studies and work are untold stories worth being told to young Malaysians.

R. Nadeswaran says Samantha deserves a pat on her back for succeeding despite all the obstacles she faced.
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