

THE BEST OF 2017 YOU

The Best of You is about appreciation. It is a space for you to appreciate the people and experiences that have shaped you into the person you are today. In doing so, we hope to shed light onto the diversity of people and stories that make up our community. This is a reminder of our shared humanity — to appreciate people as who they are.

What does a maid mean to you? Ritchelle

Appreciation
Regret
Moving forward
Love
Humanity
Dream bigger
Hope
Empowered
...

STORIES FROM
THE HEART

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Back home, being a maid puts you at the lowest class of society. My dad tried to stop me. Like everyone else, he knew how badly a maid could be treated in Singapore. But I had to. After my husband passed away, leaving me with two sons, I had to.

It's been ten years since. My two sons tell me, you come home for two weeks but leave for two years. It breaks my heart, but I'm not the only one facing this problem.

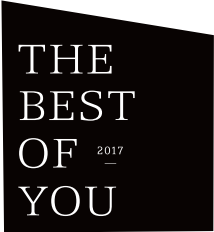
I left my family behind for a better future. Like many women, this is

my way of confronting a common problem. Slowly I realised that I'm more capable than I thought I was. My strength and knowledge comes from within and the people I see everyday.

At work, I am a sister to my employer. At home, I am a fighter, a mother and an achiever. Beyond that, I'm an individual. I paint, I create, I write. I feel, I love and I cry.

I am a maid. And so much more.

EDITOR'S WORDS



Some of my greatest inspirations for starting The Best of You movement were women. Many of them were the women in my graduate program in psychology. They were all supremely accomplished multi-hyphenates: mother, daughter, best friend, employee, employer, researcher, student, caretaker, domestic goddess, life partner etc. I often wondered how they could take on so much and still keep it together, and at the end of the day still be a best friend to me. What an amazing spirit they had. I remembered telling myself that they must function at a superhuman level. Superheroes they must be, I told myself.

My theory was right. After receiving thousands of stories from the public since the movement's inception, it turns out that women are, indeed, superheroes. Ritchelle, one of our feature personalities for 2017, exemplifies this theme. Domestic helper by day, and superwoman at all other times, she creates art and upgrades herself through adult education to become an entrepreneur, all while being the primary caregiver to her employer's child and sole breadwinner for her children back in the Philippines.



They wanted the best for me. Jo Upcraft

"I don't want to be here..." I said, my face forward, staring out to the ocean where the water was a deep oily blue, angry and thrashing as it mostly is in February on the UK's Cornish coast.

"You're going to be great!" my dad replied from the driver's seat beside me, taking a sip of his tea. It must have been cold; we'd been sitting in the beach carpark for half an hour.

He tried to hide it, but I knew Dad felt as nervous as I did, despite our chatter throughout the 300 miles and five hour journey.

Of course, we'd arrived way too early just in case we

Jo's story reminds us that we can often be more than who we think we can be. Encouraged by her parents, she uprooted herself from a small village in England and took a chance to step outside her comfort zone, eventually landing herself in her dream job twenty thousand miles away from home.

Pak Koon's tribute to his mom reminds us that all you need to be a superhero are the qualities of perseverance, kindness and generosity. After the passing of his father, Pak Koon's mom tirelessly raised her family on her own.

Perhaps then superheroes aren't too far from our reach. Sometimes when we look at our own stories and our seemingly ordinary lives, we surprise ourselves with the extraordinary things that we have accomplished and the amazing things that we have done for others. Perhaps we don't have to look further for superheroes in our lives. Look closely at your own lives, and perhaps you may just find that you are a superhero yourself.

Sai Tzy Horng
Founder of The Best of You Movement

'hit traffic'. We couldn't be late. It was dark when we set off that morning, and it wasn't much brighter as Dad checked his watch, pulled away from the carpark and drove towards the campus at Falmouth.

"You can do it," he said.

We couldn't make eye contact because we both knew I'd cry. Or he would. Or we both would.

I'd meant what I said. I didn't want to be there. I was 18 years old and embarking on my first ever interview for a place at university. I was wearing a proper 'lady' dress with clunky high heels, hauling an enormous portfolio of school work under my arm. I felt stupid.

I'd only ever known my small countryside village in middle England. The field opposite the house. The pub around the corner. The local shop, where only the magazines they sold interested me. How I waited with anticipation for the new issues to arrive so I could devour their other worldliness, outside of the tiny, leafy, comfortable, safe haven I'd grown up in.

This was my Dad's world too, for over 40 years. He had never left the village. He didn't have the qualifications for further education, or the privileges to travel, back in his day. That's why he and Mum – who came from a neighbouring enclave – were so keen for me to be accepted as a student at Falmouth.

"If you hate it, you can just come home!" they'd assure me, "We'd just like for you to see more than the familiarity around you."

They wanted me to explore, evolve, meet new people, mix with different cultures and to have moments they hadn't had the opportunity to experience themselves. They wanted the best for me.

I got the place and I loved every minute of student living.



爸爸去世以后，妈妈一夜之间变成了巨人。

PAK KOON

爸爸去世以后，妈妈一夜之间变成了巨人，一百十六公分身高以下的巨人。

那时候瘦小的我，每抬头去看巨人，都觉得这巨人满怀心事，脸上总是展着愁颜。她来不及好好面对丧夫之痛，就要努力过日子，为了守护这个家，那么勇敢去面对闲言闲语。妈妈是一个很小心眼和多虑的女人，出街常常会害怕被人说三道四，我紧紧抓着他，告诉这位巨人，不用管其他人的嘴巴，妈，我们过好自己的生活就好。

过了那么多年，我依然不懂妈妈是如何办到的，亦父亦母，包容我的种种，让我成为现在的我。当然，我是有很多缺点，甚至很多时候都不爱自己，逃避自己。但我能成长到今天，一切都要归功于我妈妈，我躲在她的臂弯下成长，一切的风风雨雨都有妈妈扛着。

渐渐地，我高她半头。我依然觉得妈妈是巨人，我心中最美的巨人。妈妈为了我，当了那么久的巨人，我是时候要好好成长，过日子，好好照顾她和自己，成为她的巨人，风雨同路，一路相扶。

我不会舍弃让妈妈不当巨人，因为我需要她，她也需要我，我们是彼此的巨人，最好的你，最好的我。

When I graduated I landed my dream job on the biggest selling teenage magazine in Britain. Little did I know then that I was embarking on a career in journalism that would bring me to Singapore.

My mum and dad are the best of me. They unselfishly urged me to live wild, free, independently, fearlessly and extraordinarily, and to know a life that they didn't have the chance to.

Twenty years on, and living thousands of miles apart, I am forever grateful and they are forever proud. We still cannot make eye contact whenever we say goodbye to each another.

Domestic helpers can be successful businesswomen too. Yuliani

Being a domestic helper is not easy for me with limited English speaking ability and low education. I'm Indonesian, I've already been in Singapore for 7 years, and I have one day off every Sunday. I use my off day to learn something that can make my dream come true and make my future bright.

On January 2014, I joined an organisation which helps domestic helpers and low-income women set up their own business. Its name is AIDHA, micro-business school. I joined Module 1 to learn about finance and technology. I had joined for 4 months at the AIDHA office and realised I needed a scholarship for Module 2 to learn about entrepreneurship and business management. I was very excited and tried my best to get it. Fortunately, I got the scholarship for Module 2 which starts on April 2014. Every Sunday, I went to AIDHA to do Module 1 & 2. It was really tiring but I didn't give up because I always remember in my mind if I could do this course I would be a leader and could set up my own business. How awesome if helpers can manage their own company or business, unbelievable right? But this is the reality and after I graduated in business management on December 2015 at AIDHA and after going through the training, I am really confident in starting my

own business.

In July 2016, AIDHA called me to do an interview to be a trainee at AIDHA campus office. This was a really great opportunity for me to help improve my low education and try office work perhaps.

I tried my best and answered the questions very honestly during my interview. With no experience in working in the office, I was still confident in myself. Because I know I am hard-working, honest, a fast learner and have a very good attitude.

I'm very lucky I passed my interview and started training on August 2016. To be a successful woman you don't need to be from a rich family or have high education, but we domestic helpers can be successful businesswomen if we are keen to learn and use our free time to do positive things.

Hopefully, my story can inspire all domestic helpers in Singapore to do better things on their off days, and so that all employers can give their helpers off days with their full trust and understand that helpers are also humans - they have certain talents and skills, just that they need to develop that while they are in Singapore.



Hari demi hari menjadi yang terbaik tanpa leka Tune Zikri



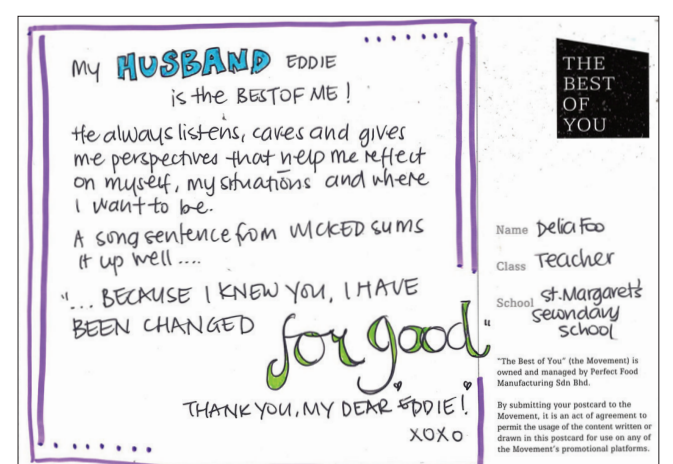
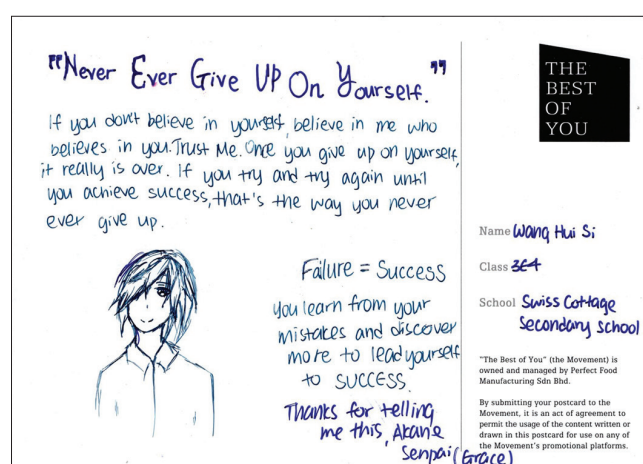
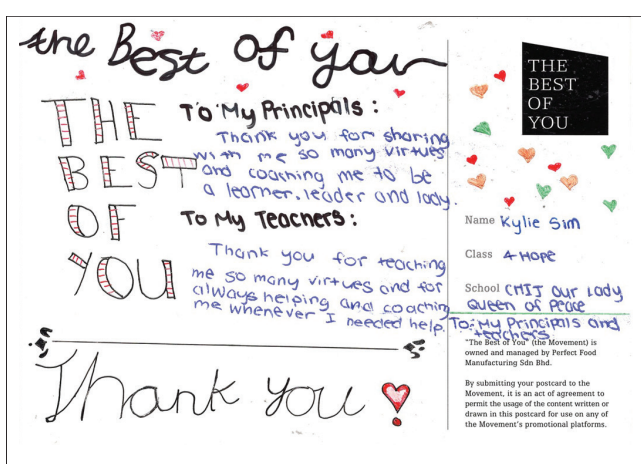
1997, tahun aku bermula di Kuala Lumpur ini. Menjadi seorang animator... barangkali sesuap nasi pun susah sekali, apatah lagi membayar sewa beli. Ke kerja tak ada tambang kena berkaki... Aku ringkaskan perjalanan ke tahun 2000, apabila bekerja sebagai penjual VCD haram. Sedikit-sedikit kegiatan berseni mula terpadam, habis ditinggalkan pensil dan pemadam. Tapi, disini hari ini aku telah dikurniakan sesuatu yang indah dan terbaik pernah berlaku semenjak tahun 1997 yang lalu. Kurniaan yang bakal merubah segala hidup aku. Perjalanan seakan mudah bila bersama si gebu yang pada ketika itu berumur sekitar 22 tahun... agakku di atas dorongan beliau aku melukis semula. Hari demi hari menjadi yang terbaik tanpa leka sentiasa bersama, sesaat tak pernah lupa.

Hingga tiba dua haribulan dua, dua ribu dua ijab dan qabul menyatukan kami berdua.

Tanggal 22.11.2002 sekali lagi aku dihadahi, dengan Mahakarya agung dari Sang Pencipta, melalui jiwa ini. Yang kini menjadi seorang ummi dan seorang isteri, yang aku cari semirip senyum ibuku menjaga abah dan kami setiap hari. Yang dulu satu satunya wanita dalam hidup ini... Alhamdulillah... hari ini aku dihiasi 6 bidadari dambaan syurga. Halijah, Fara, Sania, Saira, Sufya dan Suraya ialah mereka pendorong kerja. Membuat aku bersyukur dengan segala nikmat... Nikmat dan kebolehan yang dipinjamkan sehingga ke akhir nanti. Amin...

Postcard Gallery

These postcards are collected from our school outreach programme where we encourage students and teachers to share their stories of appreciation.



Every week, I will leave them a missed call. Bal



Phone calls to Nepal are expensive. That is why I leave my family missed calls. It doesn't matter if my voice doesn't reach them. With that missed call, they will know that I'm thinking of them.

This is my tenth year in Malaysia. Before that, I was in Qatar working on skyscrapers. Now, I work off the land. Instead of scaffolding, I can plant things again. It brings me back to the rice fields back home in Nepal. It reminds me that I have a family waiting for me.

I'm most happy when watering the plants. To me, a harvest is one of the most fulfilling things in life. When my plants flourish, I feel proud. It makes me feel that I'm part of an important process. Life, too, is like a plant. With time and love, your efforts will bloom.

Being away from home is not easy. But as the sole breadwinner, I'm happy to work hard for my family.

My dream is to open a shop on my own land. To others, it may be a small dream. But for me and my family, it is everything.



WHO IS THE BEST OF YOU?

Seems like a simple question, but for most of us, we will need a while to think about it. And that is what this social movement is about – finding a quiet moment in our busy lives and appreciating the people or experiences who have moulded us into who we are today.

Since 2014, we have received thousands of stories from people like you and me. It was humbling to realise that amazing stories unfold around us all the time, while we are busy minding our own lives.

Your shared stories can go on to encourage and even empower others. It might even be a life-changing experience for yourself and many others. So, tell us about The Best of You.



Share
your
story
and inspire
others today.



- 1 Think about who or what brings out the best of you
- 2 Select a photo or video to accompany your story
- 3 Send us your story at www.the-best-of-you.com

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