

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. My name is Bidhya Shrestha. I am currently a Y2 student in the University of Hong Kong. I am ethnically Nepalese, born and raised here all my life, and like many other ethnic minorities, I have been subjected to racism. In my speech today, I would like to stress that racism is not simply stemming from individuals, it is rather institutionalised as a weapon that marginalises ethnic minorities and as a system that works against them.

In Hong Kong, we live in a space where racial profiling is so prevalent with the assumption that people belonging to a certain race is more prone to crime without any substantial evidence. We live in a space where an 11 year old ethnic minority Arjun Singh was arrested by the police for bumping into a Chinese woman in 2010, in a space where we have another ethnic minority, Mr Limbu, who was shot to death by a police in 2009 in a situation which could have been avoided. In Mr. Limbu's case, the police constable contended that he had shot Mr. Limbu in self-defence.

The reason why I am mentioning these cases is to ask this important question - Did the police find Arjun Singh or Mr Limbu more threatening because of their race? Could the police have handled the situation better? I am not saying that the government solely functions to discriminate or target us racially but I am emphasizing that we cannot deny the unchecked and unconscious bias which proliferates in our system and fuels issues of racial profiling and arrests.

These cases are prime examples as to why the Race Discrimination Ordinance which has been implemented for 10 years has to be amended. The RDO is the only one in the anti-discrimination ordinance that does not cover the exercise of government powers and functions. It is important to fill the gaps in the RDO which exempts the government. I believe that with the amendment of the RDO, it can finally serve as a foundation which supports ethnic minorities in fighting for their rights. Because minority lives do matter and it is crucial to unweave racism from the system which victimises ethnic minorities. The government authorities should no longer be exempted from the Race Discrimination Ordinance. It is time that the ordinance ensures that nobody is above the law, not even the government. Thank you