

Eras Journal - Dahlia Martin

Abstract of "Identity Politics and Young-Adult Malaysian Muslims"

A rivalry between political parties has meant that the position of religion in Malaysia is very much tied in with nationalistic politics. Having been in power since the country's independence, the United Malays Nationalist Organisation (UMNO) of the Barisan Nasional (National Front) has attempted, through use of several national ideologies and discourses, to propagate a Malay Muslim hegemony within a multiethnic framework.

The most obvious result of this is the categorization of the Malaysian population by ethnicity in all facets of their lives. Another consequence is the precarious position of young adults in Malaysia: the government expects much of Malaysian youth, especially Muslim youth, yet ironically, their inadequate representation and vulnerability to authoritative depictions has left them a marginalized group.

This article looks at the discourses concerning young-adult Malaysian Muslims, and, through indepth interviews with a small sample of urban youth, attempts to uncover what discourses young-adult Malaysian Muslims are actually using in their everyday lives. My findings point to a transcendence of religion over race amongst most young Muslims, with there being much discomfort over assuming the ethnic identity marker of 'Malay'.