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I find the assertions of "it's not racist/xenophobic to talk about CECA or closing the borders to South Asia" tiresome 'cos while one *can* criticise CECA or suggest border/travel restrictions for high-risk countries with Covid-19 without being racist, very often people are.

Even a cursory browsing of anti-CECA groups and comments on Facebook will show you racist, hateful, toxic language and rhetoric.

These words on a screen don't just remain words on a screen. Over time, they shift standards about what's "acceptable" to say about a group of people.

They embolden racists and bigots. They leak off social media and seep into society, shaping the way that people interact with one another, fostering concepts of the "Other" that we are taught to hate and fear.

They put people—many of whom already belong to marginalised communities and lack power—in danger, making them feel unsafe to live in Singapore.

This is harm and injustice.

It is understandably frustrating when the ruling elite dismiss rational, informed criticism of free-trade agreements they negotiated or Covid-19 regulations they implemented/failed to implement as racist or xenophobic, using it as an excuse to sideline critics.

But insisting "it's not racism/xenophobia" falls into the false binary that ruling elite has set up.

They're saying "either you agree with us or you're racist". Stamping our feet and saying "we're not racist!" while not recognising that a lot of people *are* is disingenuous.

One can criticise CECA or border restrictions in ways that are not racist or xenophobic. But we also need to draw a firm line and actively call out racist and xenophobic comments and rhetoric, to show that this sort of hate is not tolerated.

A lot of people making racist/xenophobic comments think they should be allowed to get away with it 'cos "I'm on your side, I'm also criticising PAP!"

No. We can talk about agreement/disagreement on policy issues, but we shouldn't tolerate racism just 'cos "they're on our side".

We shouldn't accept a standard where "as long as it's slamming PAP it's okay".

If we really care about justice, fairness, and human rights, racism and xenophobia cannot be tolerated regardless of one's political affiliation/beliefs.