

A Malaysian is leading a project to stop violence against women, one pixel at a time.

BY MAJORIE CHIEW
starmag@thestar.com.my

ALL hell breaks loose in incidents of domestic violence. Often, a woman ends up battered and traumatised. Who is there to help her?

Let's stop acts of violence against women – everybody! This is the clarion call of The Pixel Project (thepixelproject.net), a global, virtual, volunteer-led organisation working towards that goal.

Founded by Regina Yau, a Malaysian, this coalition of over 30 activists and volunteers in more than 10 cities worldwide is working to raise funds and create awareness to end domestic violence (DV) and violence against women (VAW).

It is poised to launch innovative, viral campaigns via online channels and on-the-ground events. For a start, Yau is urging the online community to help The Pixel Project "paint" the Internet purple using twibbons, buttons, banners and blogskins across Twitter, Facebook, blogs and websites.

On the ground, "Paint It Purple" parties are scheduled to be held in Cardiff (Wales), Cairo (Egypt), Denver, Colorado, Houston, Washington DC and Seattle (the United States), London, Singapore and Malaysia, come October.

"The campaign is leveraging on

Purple purpose



Cupcakes for a cause.
Inset: Regina Yau

the United States' National Domestic Violence Awareness Month," says Yau, adding that this is the first tie-in campaign to spread DV and VAW awareness worldwide.

The first Paint It Purple party will be launched on Oct 2, 2.30pm, at Leonardo's Italian Restaurant in Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur.

This event will kick off a month-long programme that includes charity cupcake sale and a virtual global blog party, she adds.

To join in the fun, and lend support to the cause, just buy a box of cupcakes (four for RM40) provided by Just Heavenly. Party guests can record a quick video endorsement, as part of a Wall of Support campaign.

Alternatively, Yau says, "You can join the global virtual Paint It Purple blog party. Create your Paint It Purple cupcake, take a picture, share your recipe, record a public service announcement and post it on YouTube."

Every participant and his/her PSA will count as an "action" towards helping the United Nations Development Fund for Women's "Say NO - UNiTE" campaign to raise one million grassroots actions against VAW by November.

Funds raised at the KL party will be shared between Malaysia's Women's Aid Organisation (WAO) and The Pixel Project, for various programmes to end violence against women.

Hurry because only 50 places are available.

But Paint It Purple cupcakes (RM6.90 each) will be on sale throughout October at Just Heavenly outlets at Jaya One, Petaling Jaya, Plaza Damansara, KL, and Pavilion KL.

Why paint it purple?

Yau says the colour, which symbolises dignity, self-reverence and self-respect, has frequently been used by organisations working to end violence against women. Purple, white, green and gold are associated with modern women's movement.

The Pixel Project's ribbon incorporates purple and white to signify men and women working together to end violence. The white ribbon came to symbolise men's involvement when the White Ribbon Campaign (WRC) was founded in Canada, in response to the 1989 Montréal Massacre in which a man gunned down 14 female engineering students because they were "a bunch of feminists".

Yau reveals that a Celebrity Male Role Model Pixel Reveal Campaign will be launched before the end of the year, to raise US\$1mil (RM3.4mil), to be shared between WAO and the United States' National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV).

Pixel Reveal aims to sell a mil-

lion-pixel collage of a group of Celebrity Male Role Models online for US\$1 (RM3.40) per pixel.

Four celebrities with strong family connections, who are role models for men in relationships with women and children, will participate in the collage of portraits.

"Presently, the line-up includes a Nobel Prize winner, a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner and an environmentalist. The search is on for the fourth candidate," Yau says.

Award-winning photographer Jillian Edelstein, whose work includes the Nelson Mandela portrait for the cover of the *New York Times* magazine, is the principal portrait photographer.

Choosing male role models from different walks of life emphasises the point that men have a major role to play in breaking the cycle of violence against women, Yau says.

"People don't want to talk about it. It's difficult to get the message through because some people tend to scoff it off as, 'It's a woman's problem, it's not my problem.'"

"How can it not be your problem? It could be your mum, a classmate from Somalia (a victim of female genital mutilation), your aunt getting beaten up daily, a friend getting an earful from her husband, or the neighbour beating up his wife. Do you do anything?"

In India, she adds, the people did, with the award-winning Bell Bajao (ring the bell) campaign launched in 2008, which urges locals to take a stand against physical abuse through the simple act of ringing the bell and asking what's up.

■ For details on the Paint It Purple Party, call WAO at 03-7957 5636 or e-mail annnunis@gmail.com.