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Date: 21 November 2022



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(Above) Senior lecturer at NUS Geography Kamalini Ramdas dived into what careful raging and dreaming of feminism meant.

(Left) Writer Claudia Rankine and poet Nate Marshall discussing the inspirations behind Rankine's books *Just Us* and *Citizen* and her play *The White Card*. ST PHOTO: GIN TAY

# Issues of home, racism and raging feminism spark thoughtful sessions

**Charmaine Lim**

A sombre, thoughtful mood settled over the Singapore Writers Festival last Saturday as topics of home, racism and feminism engaged audience members.

Heart Is Where The Home Is featured Filipina-Australian writer Merlinda Bobis, Canadian journalist Kamal Al-Solaylee, Afghani writer and film-maker Atiq Rahimi and former footballer Lilian Thuram in a thoughtful, emotional discussion on what home means when you leave your country of birth.

The difference in leaving for higher education and leaving due to war created varied perspectives. They mused on the ways in which the meaning of “home” changed as they settled in new countries. For Rahimi, a deep pain was felt when

“I did go back to Afghanistan, but my tragedy is that they changed the locks”.

In a post-pandemic world, Bobis and Al-Solaylee questioned how relationships with home have changed. Though the question remained unanswered, the discussion offered food for thought.

The heavy topic of racism was left to the eloquence of writer Claudia Rankine and poet Nate Marshall in *A Conversation With Claudia Rankine* and Nate Marshall.

Rankine shared her process of writing *Just Us*, which involved conversations with white men she met during her travels and work events.

Though she did not realise she would write the book, these moments provided the material.

But there are still instances in which people of colour excuse cer-

tain racist behaviour or ideation. Marshall noted “among Asians and certain blacks, there are aspirations of whiteness”, as an explanation of the need to perform for the white people in order to gain acceptance.

Senior lecturer at NUS Geography Kamalini Ramdas’ keynote *Feminist Dreaming: The Future From Here* ended the night with a dive into what careful raging and dreaming of feminism meant.

She emphasised the idea that protests are not the only way to push for change. Classroom discussions and personal conversations are among the more subtle ways to incite thoughts about feminism and equality.

Dr Ramdas said: “A perfect Singapore is where we have access to all the same things, where we all have the same starting point. That would be the perfect anywhere.”