



**SEAP ICSW SOUTHEAST ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL NEWSLETTNER. #3 26**

## From the Primacy of Grievance to the Pursuit of Grace



### Our world is steeped in grievance.

From the grand stages of political theatre to the daily scroll of social media, it is grievance that gets amplified – the slight, the snub, the scar. In too many places, power is being built on a sense of having been wronged.

Whole ideologies now rest on the fuel of resentment. Election campaigns are shaped not around the promise of a better future, but around enemies to defeat. And online, the loudest voices are often those most aggrieved – not always the most harmed, but the most fluent in a language of outrage.

In progressive spaces too, the gravitational pull of grievance is strong. Activism collapses into antagonism. Campaigns fracture over perceived purity.

Disagreement disintegrates into betrayal. Somewhere along the way, the idea of building something bigger has been drowned out by the pull to call something out.

Let's be clear: the expression of grievance is not wrong. Often, it's righteous. When people are marginalised, excluded, or exploited, grievance is not only appropriate – it's necessary. It has animated many of the great movements of our time. It can be the spark for change.

But the danger comes when grievance stops being the spark and starts being the structure. When it moves from response to identity – from “*what happened to us*” to “*who we are*.”

Grievance can offer clarity, belonging, and moral urgency. But when it has primacy – and becomes the dominant emotional logic – it narrows the story. It invites cynicism. It fragments coalitions. It leaves no room for surprise, for repair. For grace.

### **What if we moved from the primacy of grievance to the pursuit of grace?**

I’ve spoken before about the idea of grace – not in the religious sense, though there are echoes there for many – but as an organising force. For me, grace is about assuming the best in others, giving the benefit of the doubt, choosing forgiveness over holding a grudge, maintaining a sense of perspective.

But it’s also about seeing beauty, finding joy, and choosing hope, even in small, ordinary ways.

When we pursue grace, we don’t ignore injustice. But we refuse to be defined by it. It’s what helps us stay at the table when it would be easier to walk away. It’s what allows coalitions to breathe, to flex, to hold difference without breaking. We see this all the time in the intimacy of our own lives. It’s the neighbour who checks in. The friend who forgives. The commuters who figure out together an alternative route when the train line is down.

The campaigner who listens first, then reacts. The team that keeps working through disagreement because the cause matters more than the clash.

These aren’t soft things. They are not sentimental. They are resilient. They bind, build, and restore.

### **So, what would it look like to make grace the organising principle of a new kind of movement, as an antidote to the primacy of grievance?**

It could mean:

Leading with **curiosity**, not certainty

Building **solidarity** that connects us across difference, rather than the grievance which isolates us.

Creating space for **joy**, the fierce kind that celebrates our resilience and humanity, not the grievance that defines us by our pain.

Cultivating **agency** that moves us forward, not the grievance that freezes us in place.

Holding onto **dignity** – ours and others’ – that sees us as whole humans, not the grievance that reduces us to our fractured parts

In practical terms, it might mean approaching our narrative work differently – telling stories that humanise, not just criticise. It might shape how we build partnerships – slower, more open, more generous. It could change how we communicate, how we campaign, even how we show up in meetings.

It might mean investing more time in listening before acting, especially with those closest to the problem but furthest from power. It might mean designing campaigns that invite people in, rather than calling them out – creating space for doubt, nuance, and evolution.

It could shift how we respond to disagreement – resisting the urge to react immediately or defensively, and instead asking: *what might I be missing here?* It might even affect how we measure success – not just in terms of reach or impact, but in whether we've strengthened trust, deepened relationships, or left people feeling more seen and valued.

If grievance is the fuel of division, perhaps grace is the counterforce. Not passive or soft. But active, courageous, and quietly revolutionary.

If we want to build something bigger than the sum of our anger, grace may not be the reward at the end of the road.

It might be the path that gets us there. And it might also make us feel a whole lot better about the journey.

Because the real revolution may be not just *what* we fight for – but *how* we choose to fight.

July 22, 2025 Author: [Adrian Lovett](#)

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## The Power of Grace in Social Solidarity

G- gratitude

R – Respect

A – Acceptance

C – Compassion

E – Engagement

In the rapidly ageing population in the SEAP Region, the Power of Grace in Social Solidarity is the way forward in the realm of social welfare services, based on Intergenerational Solidarity, where we give **gratitude** to the families, pay **respects** to the elders, **accept** the tremendous contributions of the women, show **compassion** to the children and **engage** the community in solidarity.

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