



Team work: A scene from *Gemuruh*. More than 200 young people are involved in the production every year as performers, writers, musicians, stagehands and everything in between.



Beneficial: A scene from musical *Musikal Sekolah* (School Musical) by the Jakarta Movement of Inspiration. Parents are starting to understand that it's beneficial for their children to be involved in performing arts.

Sammi Taylor

THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

As Broadway and West-End inspired musicals increase in popularity in Indonesia, more young people in the capital are eager for a chance to participate.

One organization helping them do just that is The Jakarta Movement of Inspiration, a creative arts movement established by young performer and producer Nurul "Nuya" Susantono in 2013.

"My concern was that there were not many platforms for young people with creative ideas or an interest in performing arts to actually pursue a career in that field in Indonesia," Nuya explains.

"We thought, well, why not create a movement that encourages that spirit, to sort of bring the Indonesian creative scene somewhere better."

The Jakarta Movement of Inspiration (JKTMOVEIN) inspires young people to explore the performing arts through an annual original musical production. In 2014, the original musical *Gemuruh* (Thunderous) was performed before an audience of thousands, while the 2015 *Musikal Sekolah* (School Musical) was similarly successful. But the most interesting numbers pertain not to the visitors, but the

JAKARTA COMMUNITY DRAWS YOUTH into performing arts

For many youths in Jakarta, the two options for after-school and weekend activities are study or sport. But a small community of young creatives is encouraging the city's youth to explore the performing arts amid the growing popularity of music, dance and drama.

participants — proving that there is a huge amount of interest in the performing arts across Indonesia.

JKTMOVEIN so far received 2,279 applications from 15-23-year-olds eager to participate in the musicals. More than 200 young people are involved in the production every year as performers, writers, musicians, stagehands and everything in between.

It forms a strong community, where young people are encouraged to be themselves, celebrate their di-

versity and explore their passions.

"The sense of community is really strong, especially during rehearsals, when you sing and dance together most days of the week. It's a really cool experience," Nuya says.

"It sort of encourages the youth to be pioneers [...] spreading courage out there to follow your passion."

While the community is thriving, it is still small, and Nuya says a few barriers need to be knocked down before modern performing arts are widely accepted in Indonesia.

"Access to information about performing arts isn't really here, because there is no formal institutional teaching it. There are no performing arts courses in Indonesia right now. Some people don't actually know what performing arts refers to, they just think it is singing and dancing, not what we're doing with musical theater. There's just not much information about it, because it didn't originate in Asia."

"And I guess there is that Asian stereotype of parents wanting their

children to become doctors and engineers. That certainly still exists, but it's getting better and better, especially for my generation. Parents are starting to open up to new opportunities and understanding that it's beneficial for their children [to be involved in performing arts]."

JKTMOVEIN is already working towards eliminating other barriers and stereotypes, primarily that musical theater and modern performing arts distract from preserving traditional Indonesian art forms.

"I know that a lot of seniors would encourage us to preserve our own performing arts, and [not focus on] western influences, like Broadway and West-End. I mean we have our own heritage that we don't want to see disappear either," Nuya says.

"In *Gemuruh*, we mixed the musical theater format with a very tribal but very Indonesian-influenced theme. There were a lot of moves that we took from traditional Indonesian dances. We did use a lot of traditional patterns for our costumes as well. We incorporated some Indonesian heritage, but we did something new with it. And that is sort of us saying that we're not just adopting western culture as it is, we're turning it into our own thing."

This year, JKTMOVEIN is helping others develop their own creative needs and talent and hoping to

branch out into other art forms, with film and social media campaigns on the cards.

But promoting the benefits of performing arts and self-expression through art remains the most important thing to Nuya and the team at JKTMOVEIN.

"[Art] is one of the most effective teachers and educational tools. The arts, performing arts and creativity can enhance and compliment education," Nuya says.

"I would say that storytelling in general, whatever the art form, helps you understand yourself and society as well. For me, it is not just physical — it's spiritual as well, and it increases emotional intelligence. What I'd like to pass on to my actors and talents is that they should be conscious of the growth of their emotional intelligence as they pursue their arts."

More information on The Jakarta Movement of Inspiration at www.jktmovein.com

The writer is an intern at The Jakarta Post

— PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE JAKARTA MOVEMENT OF INSPIRATION



Local content: A scene from musical *Gemuruh* (Thunderous) by the Jakarta Movement of Inspiration. The musical mixes the musical theater format with a very tribal, very Indonesian theme.

Sanders and Clinton battle for US youth vote with college plans

Alana Wise and Luciana Lopez
REUTERS/MANCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

US Democratic presidential hopefuls Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders are fighting to be best in class on an issue that resonates loudly with young Americans — runaway student debt.

Days ahead of the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary election that kick off the party nomination process, the White House contenders are shopping rival plans that would make college more affordable.

Sanders is pitching a scheme to make public colleges and universities tuition-free, and Clinton is promoting one that would ensure students pay what they can without taking on crippling loans.

"It's important [to address student debt], so I can actually do something with my life," said Selena Alcantara, a 17-year-old freshman at Southern New Hampshire University, who estimates she will graduate with \$87,000 in the red.

US student debt has surged about 24 percent to around \$1.2 trillion since 2012, according to the latest figures from the New York Federal Reserve, leaving many graduates with mortgage-sized tabs before they enter the workforce.

The problem is acute in New Hampshire — which stages its primary on Feb. 9. There, college debt runs about \$33,410 per student, 15 percent above the US average, ac-



Starry friends: US Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton (center right) and musician Demi Lovato acknowledge the cheering crowd at a rally on the campus of University of Iowa on Jan. 21.

Access and Success, a nonprofit advocacy group. Only Delaware has a higher figure, at \$33,808.

While Sanders is leading Clinton in New Hampshire polls, they are in a dead heat in Iowa.

Nationwide, Clinton has an edge with support from 55 percent of her party compared to 36 percent for Sanders, in the fight to win the party nomination for the November election. But voters aged 18-49, most likely to be affected by student debt, are nearly evenly split between the

getted the issue of student debt more aggressively than their Republican counterparts. Donald Trump and rival Ted Cruz, for example, have not issued formal proposals on the subject.

Sanders, who polls show is the favorite to win New Hampshire, has a



Young at heart: US Democratic presidential candidate, Sen. Bernie Sanders (left) takes a selfie with young supporters at a campaign event

make all state colleges and universities tuition-free, a \$75 billion per year project that his campaign says would be funded by a tax on Wall Street speculation.

"This country made a commitment a very long time ago to provide tuition free education from kindergarten to the 12th grade," said Warren Ginnels, a policy adviser to Sanders. "And right now a college education is just as important as a high school degree was 50 years ago."

Critics have questioned whether the estimates for both the costs and financing are realistic.

When Sanders outlined the plan at Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) this month, the crowd of several hundred clapped and cheered loudly, even though SNHU is private and not under the purview of Sanders' proposal.

In contrast, Clinton has pushed a more cautious plan targeting "debt-free" college education, with proposals to increase access to tuition grants, push for income-based repayments, and — like Sanders — to allow graduates to refinance student loans at

rates.

Addressing a crowd of around 1,000 people in Manchester, New Hampshire last week, Clinton asked how many people carried student debt. "Oh my goodness. Yeah, me too, me too," she said as hands shot up around the room.

Her plan would require students to work about 10 hours a week and would require higher-income families to contribute. Her campaign estimates it would cost \$350 billion over 10 years — less than half of Sanders' price tag.

"I'm a big proponent personally that the kids should have to have some skin in the game," said Scott McCullough, the president of the New Hampshire branch of the National Education Association, which has endorsed Clinton.

Jennifer and David Speidel, an adult couple from New Hampshire, worry their children's student loans will hit shortly after they pay off their own.

"There's no break," Jennifer said.

They are not the only adults who, for one reason or another, are dealing with student debts. About a fifth of households headed by people 45 to 54 years old have them, according to a 2014 study from the Government Accountability Office.

For students already enrolled in college, though, the debts are mounting even as the candidates campaign.

"I try not to think about that too much," said Maw Mullen, 19, another

cording to The Institute for College two, according to recent polls. plan that would on Monday in Iowa Falls. lower interest er freshman at SNHU. Democratic candidates have tar-

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