

Headline **An open letter from Rufus**
Date **28 Jun 2009**
MediaTitle **Daily Express**
Section **Nation**
Journalist **N/A**
Frequency **Daily (EM)**
Circ / Read **29,826 / 97,836**

Language **English**
Page No **11**
Article Size **209 cm²**
Color **Black/white**
ADValue **431**
PRValue **1,292**



An open letter from Rufus

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Rufus. I'm a member of Fallen Leaves Theatre Company (FLTC). FLTC performs real stories drawn from our lives, which have all been touched by addiction.

We have been on one of life's most challenging journeys and we now want:

- To use these experiences as a warning to today's youth that the thrills of ecstasy, ice or other drugs are not worth it. (So DON'T even START!)

- To highlight the shocking lack of awareness amongst youth of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and encourage safe behaviour.

- To help parents identify risk behaviour and be more understanding.

- To show that fear, rejection and denial is not the way to tackle this societal disease.

We are just like you. We want the same things as you. Family, career, friends. An ordinary life. When we were young, we were ignorant, and we made wrong choices. Now we're making the right one. We want to use our experiences to prevent others from going down this pain-filled road.

You may not think these issues affect you or your family but you would be wrong. In Malaysia, there are 80,000 HIV+ cases, with an estimated 240,000 undetected. Drugs are more easily accessible than ever before. There are over 300,000 registered users of heroin alone, with a suspected four times that figure unregistered. (Source: Malaysia AIDS Council, 2008).

If we do not act now, it will soon be too late for thousands more young people whose only true crime was ignorance.

What we can do for you...

We are trained performers and workshop facilitators. Our real life stories and performances are powerful, moving and they show the results of the mistaken choices we made unknowingly. Using experiences from our lives, we have created a range of scenes to address specific issues such as drugs and addiction, its behaviour patterns and the risks of contracting and living with HIV/AIDS.

In our workshops, these issues are presented, explored and challenged to help participants absorb the learning.

What you can do for us...

Help us to help young people at risk. Our Malaysian youth are bored and short on street skills so they are vulnerable to seeking excitement which may include experimenting with social drugs.

We need a platform. If you are planning an event, celebration, family day or festivals, please invite us. Be creative in how you can involve us. And tell everyone you know about Fallen Leaves.

Our creative drama-based approach is powerful, engaging and effective as well as educational. Our approach succeeds where lectures, fliers and posters have failed, in creating awareness on the dangers of addiction and HIV/AIDS infection, among youth audiences.

Entertaining and meaningful, we can add an element of difference and depth to your event or function.

Give AIDS a face. Addiction and HIV/AIDS are diseases. Understanding this will help reduce stigma and fear of those living with these dreaded illnesses.

This matter is urgent. Together we can STOP young people from a life of drugs, addictions, diseases and pain. Together we can do more for our young people to erase their ignorance and become aware of the risks.

Thank you for listening. We hope we have moved you to do something. Anything. And to do it now.

Best wishes,

Rufus
(FLTC Member)