

Netizen's farewell letter to Singapore sparks debate

By JANICE TAI

AN ONLINE letter that outlined why a young Singaporean has chosen to live abroad has generated much interest and discussion in cyberspace.

Addressed to Singapore and written by a netizen called Zing, it garnered more than 3,000 shares on social networking sites and close to 300 comments by last night.

It comes amid an ongoing national conversation, where Singa-

poreans are encouraged to share their views on how to create a better future for the country.

In the letter, the writer – whose identity, gender and location are unknown – wrote about how Singapore's economic pragmatism has been the push factor for Zing to head overseas to pursue personal dreams.

"I'm 20 years old and I don't want to be jaded, but you're already feeding me defeatism and banality as a lifestyle choice," wrote Zing.

The writer added: "I looked into your dreams one night and they were full of dollar signs. Getting by and not living. Getting but not achieving. Buying and selling but not giving."

Zing also referred to the relative freedom and diversity that cities like London offered and which the writer felt Singapore lacked.

Originally posted on the website stories.sg, the letter was reposted on Sept 2 on another blog – Youdonthavetoagree.

Some netizens agreed with

Zing on Singapore being too suffocating and materialistic and said they understood the writer's decision to leave.

Said 22-year-old freelance beatboxer Bryan Lim: "We often get conflicting signals where ideas appear to be encouraged but what is supported in the end are practices that have proven to have worked."

But many others disagreed with Zing and defended Singapore. They said it is more constructive for the writer to remain

and try to change things for the better if he or she is unhappy.

In his post, the managing director of luxury magazine Singapore Tatler, Mr Gilbert Cheah, who is in his 40s, said: "I lived in the US myself for 20 years and found the writer's bashing of Singapore to be over-generalised and short-sighted."

He added: "Everyone is free to chase their dreams but to bash the country that gave them the opportunities and resources to even be able to emigrate is unnecessary

and ungrateful."

Mr Eugene Tan, 42, a Nominated MP and law professor at Singapore Management University, said this is an issue that should be addressed in the national conversation.

"People are beginning to realise that there is more to life than material aspirations. We need national consensus on not only how to attract foreigners but also to retain our own Singaporeans," he said.

[✉ jantai@sph.com.sg](mailto:jantai@sph.com.sg)