

Online posts can have long-term consequences, so...

Don't post when you are emotional

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THE Internet never forgets. So think twice before posting something that others may find insensitive or incendiary.

This advice came from experts after a blogger's post from three years ago returned to haunt her. It resurfaced on sociopolitical website The Real Singapore and citizen journalism website Stomp.

Miss Cheryl Seow, a Malaysian-born Singapore permanent resident, was slammed by netizens for seemingly suggesting that Singaporeans should blame themselves for their "own poverty".

She apologised and said that her comment was aimed solely at a Singaporean who had slammed foreigners for using Singapore as their "playground".

But that did not stop netizens from attacking her.

When someone becomes the subject of an online lynching, it can get frightening



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and ugly.

And to avoid such undesirable situations, you need to be Internet-savvy, said Dr Michael Netzley, Singapore Management University's academic director of executive development.

"Most people don't understand that the Internet never forgets. What you post today could have long-term consequences," he said.

"You should not post when you are emotional or wish to react to something you saw online."

Professor Ang Peng Hwa, director at Singapore Internet Research Centre, said: "Based on research findings, people tend to interpret online statements more negatively.

"That's why there are such hate posts online. You have to understand that people are going to react differently as opposed to talking face-to-face to them."

Dr Netzley advised Internet users to be conscious of their online behaviour and comments.

Be clear & precise

He said: "Ensure that every word is clear and precise, and that (anyone) would be able to understand the context of your post.

"Always instil a self-checking mechanism. Pause before you hit the 'enter' button and read it again."

Prof Ang also said that netizens should not be so quick to jump on the "hate bandwagon".

"In the case of Miss Seow, many of these netizens didn't check what the context of her remarks was and reacted in a knee-jerk reflex."

Said Dr Netzley: "We should be teaching digital literacy to the children in schools. You can never be fully prepared without knowing how.

"Of course, we could always learn from societal experiences, but that's always a slower and more painful process."



SLAMMED: Blogger Cheryl Seow is still being attacked by netizens despite having apologised.

Others blasted for online comments

MISS Cheryl Seow is not the only one who has been criticised for online comments. Others who have got into trouble for things posted include:

Ms Amy Cheong (right)

The former NTUC employee posted an expletive-laden rant on Facebook disparaging Malay weddings in October last year.

She was slammed online and sacked from her position as a National Trades Union Congress assistant director.

The episode was mentioned by several ministers, including Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

The Malaysian-born Australian citizen returned to Perth after the controversy.

Mr Sun Xu

The Chinese scholar, then studying in the

National University of Singapore, called Singaporeans "dogs" on his Weibo account in February last year.

He was hauled up before the university, fined \$3,000 and ordered to serve three months of community service in order for him to graduate. His scholarship benefits were terminated for the final semester.

Mr Wang Peng Fei

The Chinese national posted a video on YouTube mocking Singaporeans and making racist comments against a minority ethnic group in July

2011.

A police report was filed against him and he was expelled from the private school East Asia Institute of Management. He lost his student visa and \$10,000 in course fees for the year.

After his expulsion, he returned to China.

