



Republic of Trinidad and Tobago



EOC

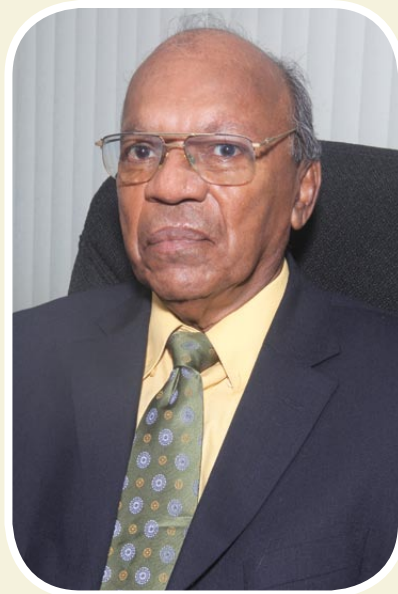
Equal Opportunity Commission

Promoting Equality

Annual Report 2012

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*I*t is with pride and an even greater sense of achievement that I offer stakeholders and the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago our performance report for the year 2012.

We were established in 2008 by an act of Parliament and our primary focus was on securing accommodation and adequate staff. Soon after our establishment in 2008 the Commission proceeded to implement its mandate of service with the submission of an increasing number of complaints from the wider public. After overcoming the challenges of initial set-up, the Commission then embarked on a programme of wider public education following the increasing number of complaints being filed.

This in turn led to an expansion in our public presence following which we facilitated a number of requests from various organizations and institutions to make our services even more understood and accessible. These developments led us to embark on a fundamental reorganization of constituent units, which are now in the process of being implemented. We expect that when achieved it will enhance our productivity and ability to deal with the increasing number of complaints from the public.

The position of Chief Executive Officer was finally filled in March, 2012. There was accordingly in 2012, a greater public awareness of our relevance and importance. With these functionally important elements in place, I anticipate engagement with new initiatives, synergies and policies that will certainly accelerate the development of the EOC towards becoming a household name for protecting equal rights in Trinidad and Tobago.

Sincerely yours,
John La Guerre



*I*t gives me great pleasure to address you, valued stakeholders in this my first CEO's statement in the EOC's annual report. On taking office in March, 2012 I met an organization that laid its foundation well in the four years of its existence.

We sit now at the edge of our 5th anniversary, and like a five year old youth ready for a new world, we are equipped with the basic tools of knowing who we are, what our path is and having an outlook that is forward-minded. The office of the CEO was filled at a timely juncture in the development of the organization to provide the necessary practical guidance and economical management that is critical for the next steps of moving forward and deeper into the execution of the Commission's statutory mandate.

The mandate is the guiding light of operations - to serve the people of Trinidad and Tobago by working towards the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality and good relations between persons of different statuses. It is clear then, that having moved past the creation of an identity and establishment of a space, the work of the EOC is now to arouse greater interest and understanding of the Act under which the Commission is empowered and to assist citizens in availing themselves

of their right to stand side by side with all persons legally entitled to work and reside in this nation.

While in this organization the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, there are two particular parts that, because they directly interact with the EOC's primary stakeholder groups, have emerged as the current targets for rapid internal development. These are the Legal department – including Investigations and the Communications department. Over the fiscal year under review and continuing, both departments are expected to invest in capacity building by acquiring adequate staff members to meet our expanding needs and participate in relevant training sessions to develop staff.

Nevertheless, I urge you to take an interest in each departmental report contained herein as the collective performance reports give a true picture of an organization on the move. As CEO I hope to support this growth by accomplishing the following by the end of my first year:

- (1) Increase the number of qualified staff in the areas of Investigation, Communication and Legal
- (2) Move the Commission to a higher capacity and more comfortable premises
- (3) Build stronger organizational partnership with stakeholders
- (4) Improve the level of efficiency of the operations of the EOC

Finally, as I personally move towards the end of my first year at the helm of this organization, it would be remiss of me to not take this opportunity to publicly and for the record say that I am appreciative of the efforts of the Commissioners, Management and Members of Staff who have been supportive of my duties here. I anticipate only strengthening of these working relationships as we seek to grow the EOC and admirably serve our fellow men and women of Trinidad and Tobago.

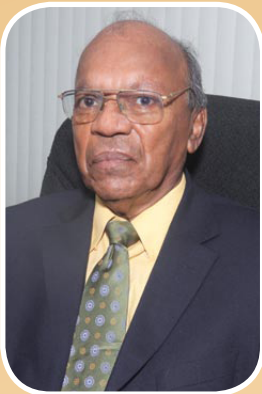
Thank you,
Devanty Dianne Maraj

COMMISSIONERS' BACKGROUND

The Equal Opportunity Commission (the "Commission") was established by section 26(1) of the Equal Opportunity Act Chap 22:03 [Act No 69 of 2000 as amended], for the purpose of exercising the jurisdiction conferred upon it by that Act.

This report is submitted in keeping with section 53 of the Equal Opportunity Act Chap 22:03 which provides: "The Commission shall within three months after the end of each calendar year submit to the Minister a report of its operations during that year." This report covers the period January 01 – December 31, 2012.

Commissioners were first appointed on April 21, 2008 with a mandate of executing the Commission's purpose of existence. The term of office for the first commissioners came to an end in April 2011. Two new faces were added: Dr. Indira Rampersad and Mr. Gerard Besson. At present, the Commission comprises five Commissioners who are as follows:-



Professor John La Guerre (Chairman)
 B. Sc. (Economics) (UWI),
 M. Sc. (Government) (UWI),
 Ph.D. (Manchester)



Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie (Vice- Chairman)
 Ed.D (Human Resources Development)
 from the George Washington University,
 USA



Dr. Beverly Ann-Marie Beckles (Commissioner)
 B.Sc. (Business Management)
 (St. Francis Xavier University,
 Nova Scotia, Canada),
 Master in Rehabilitation
 Administration (Mc Laren
 School of Business, University
 of San Francisco)
 Ph.D (Philosophy, Organization
 and Management, Capella
 University)



Mr. Gerard Besson
 (Commissioner)
 Humming Bird Medal (Gold)
 for Heritage Preservation and
 Promotion in 2007



Dr. Indira Rampersad (Commissioner)
 B.A. (Language in Literature UWI),
 M. Phil. (Latin American Literature,UWI),
 M. Phil. (International Relations), Ph.D.
 (Political Science, University of Florida,
 Gainesville 2007) LLB (University of
 London 2012)

The profiles of the Commissioners are attached as Appendix I.

Vision

The Equal Opportunity Commission envisages an informed and empowered nation that is assured of fair and equitable treatment for all citizens, contributing to a common endeavour for the good of all.

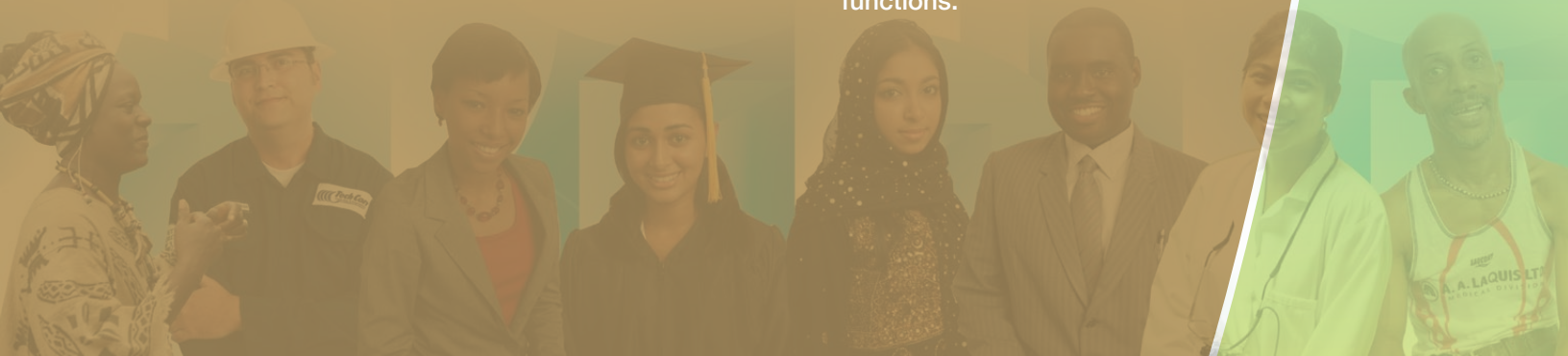
Mandate

The Equal Opportunity Commission is created by section 26(1) of the Equal Opportunity Act Chapter 22:03 [Act No 6 of 2000 as amended], (“the Act”) and is guided in its mandate by the terms and provisions of the Act. The Act seeks, among other things, to prohibit certain kinds of discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different statuses. In particular, the Act applies to:

- (i) Discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, religion, disability, origin including geographical origin, ethnicity and marital status or for reasons of victimization (as defined by section 6) with respect to employment (sections 8 to 14), to the provision of education (sections 15 and 16), to the provision of goods and services (section 17) and with respect to the provision of accommodation (section 18); and
- (ii) Actions that are done in public that may be considered “offensive” in that it is reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or groups of persons, or it is done because of the gender, race ethnicity, origin, or religion of the other person or some or all of the other persons in the group and is done with the intention of inciting gender, racial or religious hatred (section 7).

The Act recognizes the importance of the removal of all barriers to the free flow of resources of talent, opportunities and aspirations, so that each individual can contribute to the national endeavour and expect a fair response in return. In the pursuit of these objectives, the Commission is mandated by section 27 (1):

- (a) To work towards the elimination of discrimination;
- (b) To promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status generally;
- (c) To keep under review the working of the Act and any relevant law and, when required or otherwise thinks it necessary, to draw up and submit proposals for amending them;
- (d) To receive, investigate and, as far as possible, conciliate allegations of discrimination;
- (e) To develop, conduct and foster research and educational programmes for the purpose of eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status;
- (f) To prepare and publish appropriate guidelines for the avoidance of discrimination and
- (g) To do any other thing conducive or incidental to the carrying out of its functions.



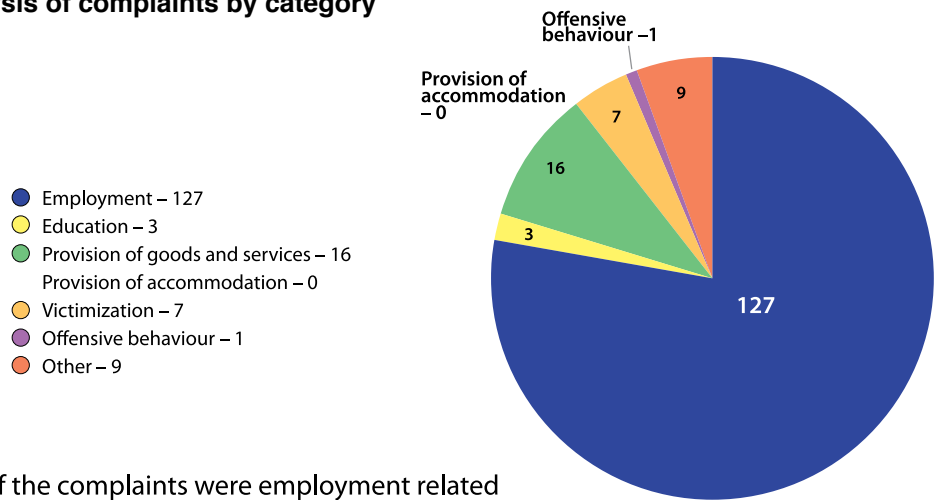
Report with respect to investigations and conciliation of complaints

Under section 27(1)(c), the Commission is mandated “to receive, investigate and, as far as possible, conciliate allegations of discrimination” The investigation and conciliation of complaints is singularly the largest activity that the Commission undertook in 2011.

Complaints received

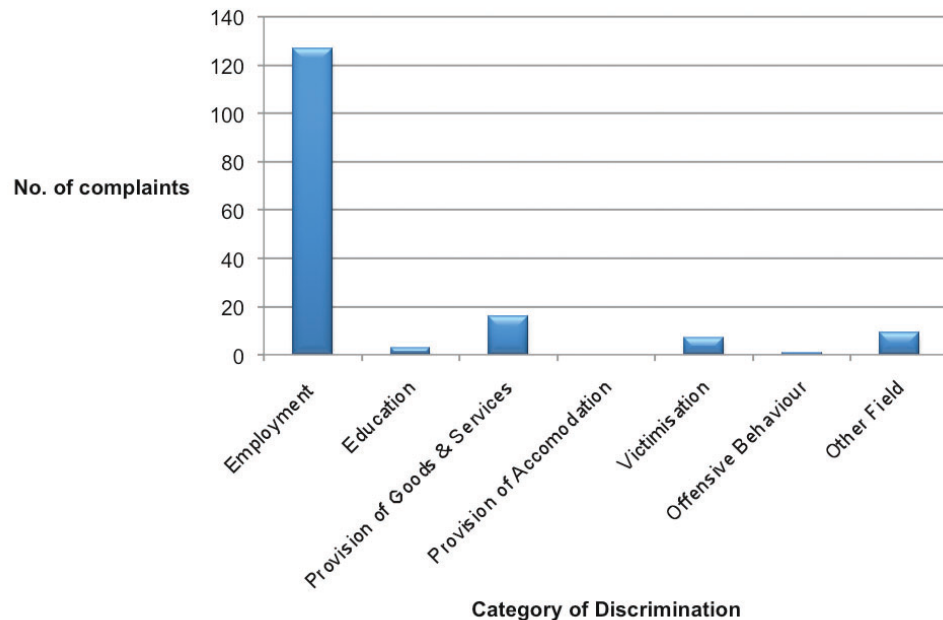
During the period January 01, 2012 to the December 31, 2012, the Commission received 163 complaints, which were broken down in the categories set hereunder:

Analysis of complaints by category



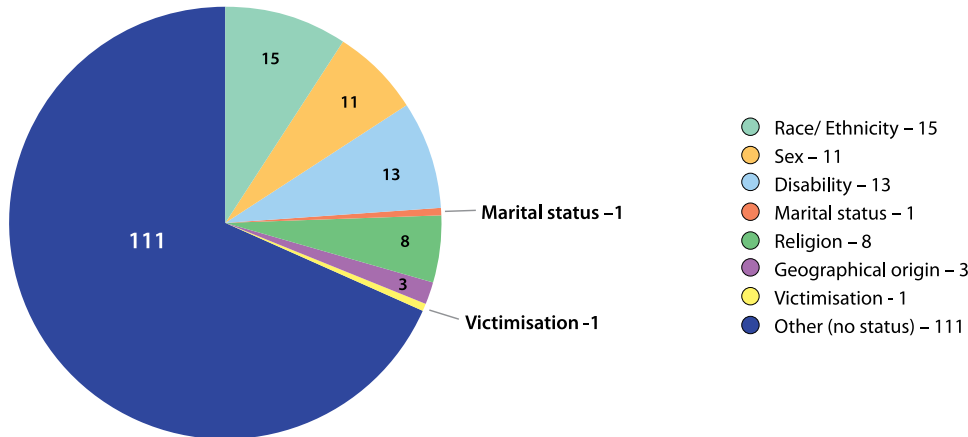
78% of the complaints were employment related

Complaints received by category of Discrimination (2012)



Analysis of complaints in terms of status:

The 163 complaints received by the Commission are broken down into the following in terms of status:

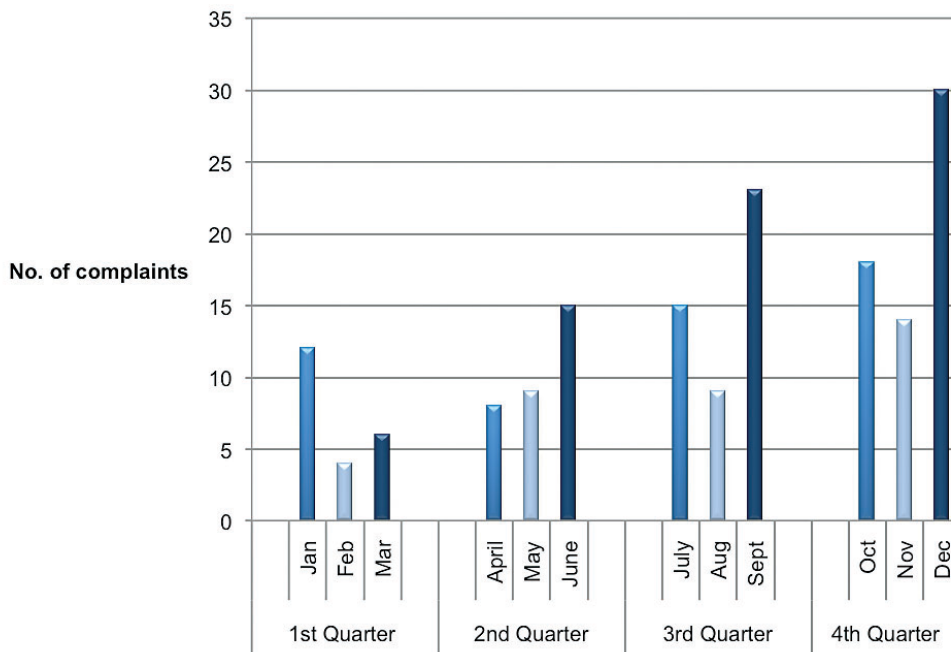


About 38% of the complaints were received during the fourth (4th) quarter of the year. By contrast the first (1st) quarter accounted for only 14%.

Analysis of complaints per quarter:

Details	1st Quarter Jan. – Mar. 2012	2nd Quarter April – June 2012	3rd Quarter July – Sept. 2012	4th Quarter Sept. – Dec. 2012	Year to Date
No. of Complaints	22	32	47	62	163

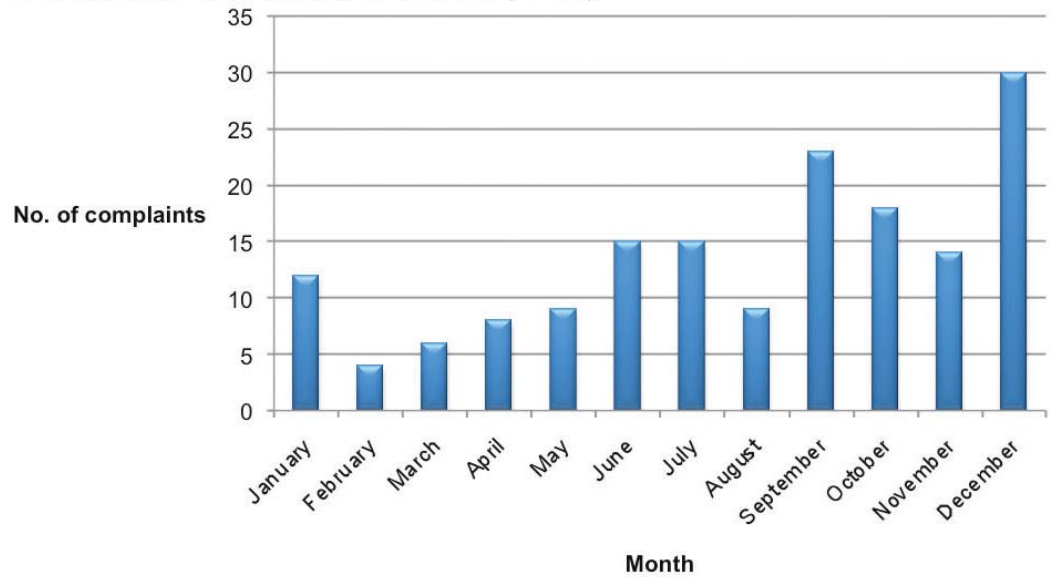
Complaints received per quarter (2012)



Complaints received per month:

January	12
February	4
March	6
April	8
May	9
June	15
July	15
August	9
September	23
October	18
November	14
December	30

Complaints received per month (2012)

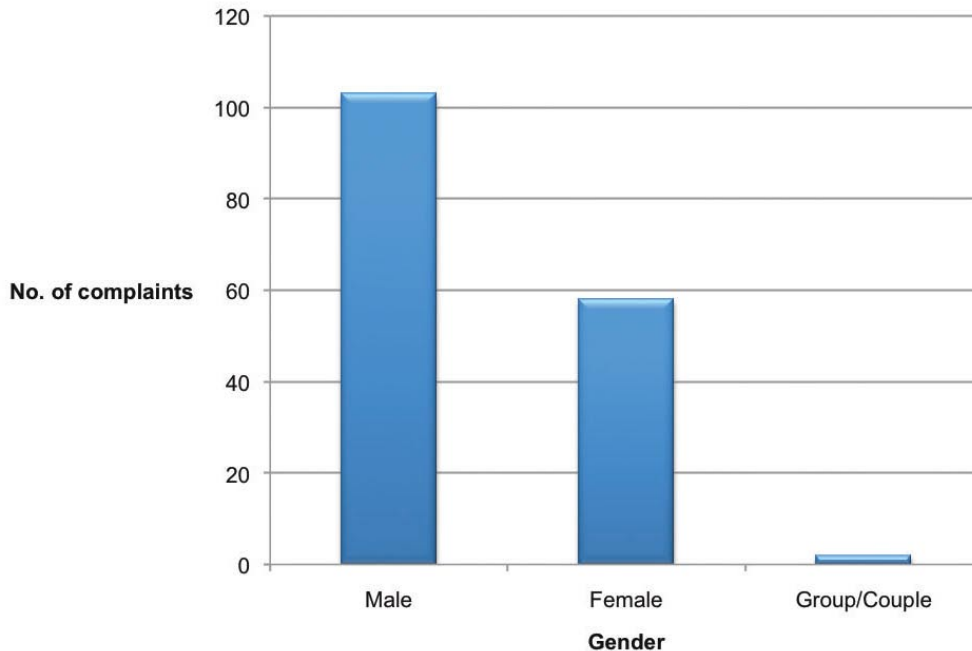


Analysis of complaints received by gender:

Male	103
Female	58
Group/ Couple	2

64% of the complaints were received from males as opposed to females which accounted for 35% and groups/ couples 1% as indicated below.

Complaints received by Gender



Matters before the Equal Opportunity Tribunal:

There are currently two (2) matters before the Equal Opportunity Tribunal.

Further to Section 39 (1) of the Act the Commission prepared and published two (2) reports.

- Report of the EOC's investigation into the complaint lodged by Mr. CARL JAGDEO against his former employers, PETROLEUM COMPANY OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO LIMITED, of discrimination in relation to his employment, contrary to section 9 of the Act.
- Report of the EOC's investigation into the complaint lodged by Mr. DESMOND NOEL against the office where he is employed, the AUDITOR GENERAL OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO, of discrimination in relation to his employment, contrary to section 9 of the Act.

These reports were sent to the parties and made accessible to the public. Both matters remained unresolved.

Proceedings were initiated before the Tribunal with respect to Mr. Desmond Noel's complaint.



Conciliators/Mediators of the EOC: L-Mrs. Mary Chadee and R-Mr. Archibald Joseph.

Complaints referred to conciliation

According to the provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act Chap 22:03 [Act No 69 of 200 as amended] where, upon investigating a complaint, the Commission finds that there is no evidence of discrimination (to which the Act applies) it shall inform the complainant in writing of this, and shall take no further action (section 34). However, if the Commission finds that the matter may be resolved by conciliation, it shall take steps to have the matter conciliated (section 35). During the period January to December 2012, nine (9) matters were referred to the two mediation officers employed with the Commission for such purposes.

Conciliation report for the period January 01, – December 31, 2012

Of the nine (9) cases the Conciliation department received for the said period there were three (3) cases pending from the year 2011. Out of these three cases, two were resolved informally and no further action was taken for one.

Two (2) cases are awaiting final agreement by the parties, two (2) cases were settled with written agreements and no resolution was achieved for five (5) cases.

Quarterly report

Details	Year Ended 2011	Status of cases b/fwd. for 2011	1st Qtr Jan - Mar 2012	2nd Qtr Apr - June 2012	3rd Qtr July - Sept 2012	4thQtr Oct - Dec 2012	MTD 2012	YTD 2012
No. of cases received for the period	22		3	2	4		9	31
TOTAL	22	0	3	2	4	0	9	31
No. of cases in Progress					2		2	2
No. of cases - Resolved with written Agreement	6			2			2	8
No. of cases - Resolved with no formal written Agreement	3	2						5
No. of cases - No resolution	10				1	4	5	15
No. of cases - No further action		1						1
TOTAL	19	3	0	2	3	4	9	31

Report with respect to income and expenditure of the Commission

Accounts Unit

Financial Expenditure

During the period January – December 2012 the Equal Opportunity Commission obtained releases in the sum of six million, six hundred and fourteen thousand, one hundred and nine dollars (TTD \$6,614,109) from the Budget Division, Ministry of Finance. This sum was in relation to Goods and Services (02/003) and Minor Equipment (03/003).

Out of these releases the sum of six million, three hundred and thirty-seven thousand, nine hundred and sixty one dollars and forty-five cents (\$6,337,961.45) was spent under 02/003 – Goods and Services (this consisted of Fixed cost \$1,858,777.20 and Variable cost \$4,479,184.25) and three hundred and sixty-six thousand, seven hundred and seventy-one dollars and thirty-four cents (\$366,771.34) was spent under 03/003 –Minor Equipment.

A total of six million, seven hundred and four thousand, seven hundred and thirty two dollars and seventy-nine cents (\$6,704,732.79) was utilised by the Equal Opportunity Commission for 2012.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION STATEMENT OF COST AND EXPENSES FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED - DECEMBER 2012	
Goods and Services (02/003)	
Fixed Cost	
Rent/Lease	1656,000.00
Janitorial Services	202,777.20
Total Fixed Cost	\$1858,777.20
Variable Cost	
Travelling	29,511.19
Electricity	119,500.00
Telephone	329,148.42
Office Stationery & Supplies	87,768.91
Books & Periodicals	22,451.75
Maintenance of Vehicle	19,264.04
Maintenance of Equipment	44,060.92
Contract Employment	1830,000.00
Training	27,149.75
Maintenance of Building	7,945.87
Other Contracted Services	20,180.00
Security	4,800.00
Postage	1,415.00
Medical Expenses	3,555.00
Promotion/Publicity/Printing	1814,729.10
Hosting of Conferences	117,704.30
Minor Equipment (03/003)	
Office Equipment	251,048.15
Furniture & Furnishings	61,778.00
Other Minor Equipment	53,945.19
Total variable Cost	\$4845,955.59
Total Expenditure	\$6704,732.79

Report with respect to Work towards the elimination of Discrimination, Promotion of Equality of Opportunity generally and Public Education and Research Programmes

Under section 27(1) (a) of the Equal Opportunity Act Chap 22:03 [Act No 69 of 2000 as amended], the Commission is mandated “to work towards the elimination of discrimination”. By section 21(1) (b) the Commission is required “to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status generally”. Further section 27(1) (e) charges the Commission “To develop, conduct and foster research and educational programmes and other programmes for the purpose of eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status.”

Pursuant to this, the Commission in 2012 firstly embarked on several general and specific awareness programmes. Secondly, the Chairman engaged in a number of appearances and activities and, thirdly, a survey was commissioned to provide feedback and insight.

Activities of the Chairman 2012

Further to the mandate given to the Commission at sections 27(1)(a), (b) and (e) of the Equal Opportunity Act Chap 22:03, the Chairman of the Commission Professor Emeritus John La Guerre engaged in a number of public appearances and activities during 2012 which were as follows:

- **March 9** – The Chairman was represented by the Communications Specialist and Head of the Legal Unit at a function hosted by the Ministry of Labour titled ‘Industrial Relations Advisory Committee’.
- **April 18** – Did a video/commercial along with all other Commissioners and the Chief Executive Officer on the vision and mission of the Equal Opportunity Commission.
- **August 14** – Interviewed by Ms. Cheryl Lewis, Journalist attached to CTV for comments with respect to the 50th Anniversary of Trinidad and Tobago Independence.
- **August 16 and 24** – Did a Video/Photo Shoot with the Parliament Channel on matters relating to the 50th Anniversary of Independence of Trinidad and Tobago.
- **August 22** – Attended the ‘Commissioning Ceremony of the Law Museum of Trinidad and Tobago’. This ceremony was held under the kind patronage of Senator the Honourable Anand Ramlogan SC.
- **August 23** – Attended a Seminar hosted by the Employers Solution Centre titled ‘Emerging Discrimination claims under the Equal Opportunity Act: What Employers need to Know.’ This seminar was mainly responsible to educate employers of their rights and responsibilities under the Equal Opportunity Act 2000.
- **September 5** – Met with the Permanent Secretary at the offices of the EOC to discuss matters relating to the EOC.

- **September 13** – Chaired a panel at the University of the West Indies in an all-day Conference titled ‘Legacy of Williams’.
- **September 14** – Met with Minister of Public Administration and Information, Ms. Carolyn Seepersad-Beechan - Discussions were held on matters relevant to the functioning of the Commission.
- **September 20** – Met with Mr. Tony Deyal, Journalist from the Trinidad Express Newspaper and was presented with a proposal for promoting equality in the workplace titled ‘Proposal for a Public Information Campaign to Proactively Promote Equal Opportunity in Employment and the work of the Commission’.
- **September 21** – Attended a Seminar hosted by the University of the West Indies in collaboration with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights titled ‘The Institute of International Relations’. The Honourable Anand Ramlogan, SC Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago gave the Opening Remarks.
- **October 3rd** – Conducted an interview for a documentary for the Parliamentary channel.
- **November 16 and 17** – Presented at The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. The EOC’s head of legal delivered the feature address. There were also presenters from Canada, USA and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Conference was hosted by National Center for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) at the Trinidad Hilton.



Dr. Beverly Ann-Marie Beckles, Commissioner, EOC, addressing the members of the audience.



A cross-section of the conference attendees all attentively listening.

Monthly public sessions:

The Commission has a presence, once a month, the fourth Monday of every month at the San Fernando City Corporation, held for the general public within San Fernando and environs. In Tobago it is the third Wednesday of every month at the Central Administrative Services Building (CAST) held for the general public within Scarborough and environs. Seventeen (17) sessions for the year were held for members of the general public; two (2) per month: at the San Fernando City Corporation for San Fernando and environs, and the Tobago Central Administrative Services Building (CAST) for Tobago.

These sessions served to facilitate complaints in South Trinidad, present information on the purpose and scope of the Commission, as well as to provide information on the procedures used by the Commission to investigate matters.

The respective dates were as follows:

- **Thursday April 19** San Fernando City Corporation
- **Wednesday May 16** Central Administrative Services Building, Tobago (CAST)
- **Thursday May 17** San Fernando City Corporation
- **Monday May 28** San Fernando City Corporation
- **Monday June 25** San Fernando City Corporation
- **Wednesday June 27** Central Administrative Services Building, Tobago (CAST)
- **Monday July 23** San Fernando City Corporation
- **Wednesday August 15** Central Administrative Services Building, Tobago (CAST)
- **Monday August 27** San Fernando City Corporation
- **Monday September 17** San Fernando City Corporation
- **Wednesday September 19** Central Administrative Services Building, Tobago (CAST)
- **Wednesday October 17** San Fernando City Corporation
- **Monday October 22** San Fernando City Corporation
- **Wednesday November 21** Central Administrative Services Building, Tobago (CAST)
- **Monday November 26** San Fernando City Corporation
- **Wednesday December 19** Central Administrative Services Building, Tobago (CAST)
- **Friday December 21** San Fernando City Corporation



EOC's banner on the San Fernando City Corporation's banner stand.



Members of the EOC at the monthly public session at the San Fernando City Corporation.



Members of the EOC at the monthly public session at the Central Administrative Services Tobago (CAST).



EOC at the monthly public session at the San Fernando City Corporation.



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Public Awareness Programmes:

Public Awareness Programmes were conducted in 2012 as follows:

1. **Tuesday March 13** Princes Town Regional Corporation Public Education Sessions (PE) for members of Council and Heads of Departments (HOD)
2. **Thursday March 22** Sangre Grande Regional Corporation Public Education Sessions (PE) for members of Council and Heads of Departments (HOD)
3. **Tuesday March 27** Mayaro, Rio Claro Regional Corporation Public Education Sessions (PE) for members of Council and Heads of Departments (HOD)
4. **Tuesday April 17** Tunapuna, Piarcro Regional Corporation Public Education Sessions (PE) for members of Council and Heads of Departments (HOD)
5. **Monday May 14** Couva-Tabaquite-Talparo Regional Corporation Public Education Sessions (PE) for members of Council and Heads of Departments (HOD)
6. **Monday May 21** Penal, Debe Regional Corporation Public Education Sessions (PE) for members of Council and Heads of Departments (HOD)
7. **Tuesday May 22** Chaguanas Borough Corporation Public Education Sessions (PE) for members of Council and Heads of Departments (HOD)
8. **Thursday May 24** Point Fortin Borough Corporation Public Education Sessions (PE) for members of Council and Heads of Departments (HOD)
9. **Thursday May 31** Arima Borough Corporation Public Education Sessions (PE) for members of Council and Heads of Departments (HOD)
10. **Tuesday June 5** San Juan, Laventille Regional Corporation Public Education Sessions (PE) for members of Council and Heads of Departments (HOD)
11. **Tuesday June 12** Diego Martin Regional Corporation Public Education Sessions (PE) for members of Council and Heads of Departments (HOD)

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- 12. **Thursday June 14** Port of Spain City Corporation Public Education Sessions (PE) for members of Council and Heads of Departments (HOD)
- 13. **Wednesday June 20** Brian Lara Promenade, Port of Spain Ministry of Public Administration Public Service Week
- 14. **Thursday June 21** Siparia Regional Corporation Public Education Sessions (PE) for members of Council and Heads of Departments (HOD)
- 15. **Wed 4 July to Sat 7 July** EOC represented for The co-operative Biz Networking Expo 2012 MOLS MED Connex, Center of Excellence Macoya hosted by Co-operative Development Division and Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development
- 16. **Thursday July 19** Tobago Assembly Legislature Secretariat, Tobago House of Assembly (THA), Jerningham Street, Scarborough Tobago
- 17. **Thursday August 23** Employers Consultative Association (ECA) presentation on “Emerging discrimination claims under the EOA” for both private and public employers at the ECA office located at 17th Samaroo Road, Aranguez Roundabout North, Aranguez
- 18. **Tuesday October 16** Presentation on Representational Bureaucracy to the morning undergraduate Government studies class from the University of the West-Indies (UWI), St. Augustine
- 19. **Wednesday November 07** Presentation on Representational Bureaucracy to the evening undergraduate Government studies class from the University of the West-Indies (UWI), St. Augustine
- 20. **Friday November 16 and 17** Presentation at The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. Hosted at the Trinidad Hilton
- 21. **Thursday November 29 and Friday November 30** Third (3rd) Annual Mediation Symposium themed “Transforming Trinidad and Tobago through Mediation”, Hyatt Regency



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11



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Note to reader: Numbered photo corresponds to date and location as respectively listed.



13



18



14



19



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16

ADIATION BOARD OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Transforming Trinidad and Tobago through Mediation

November 29 - 30th 2012, Hyatt Regency Trinidad



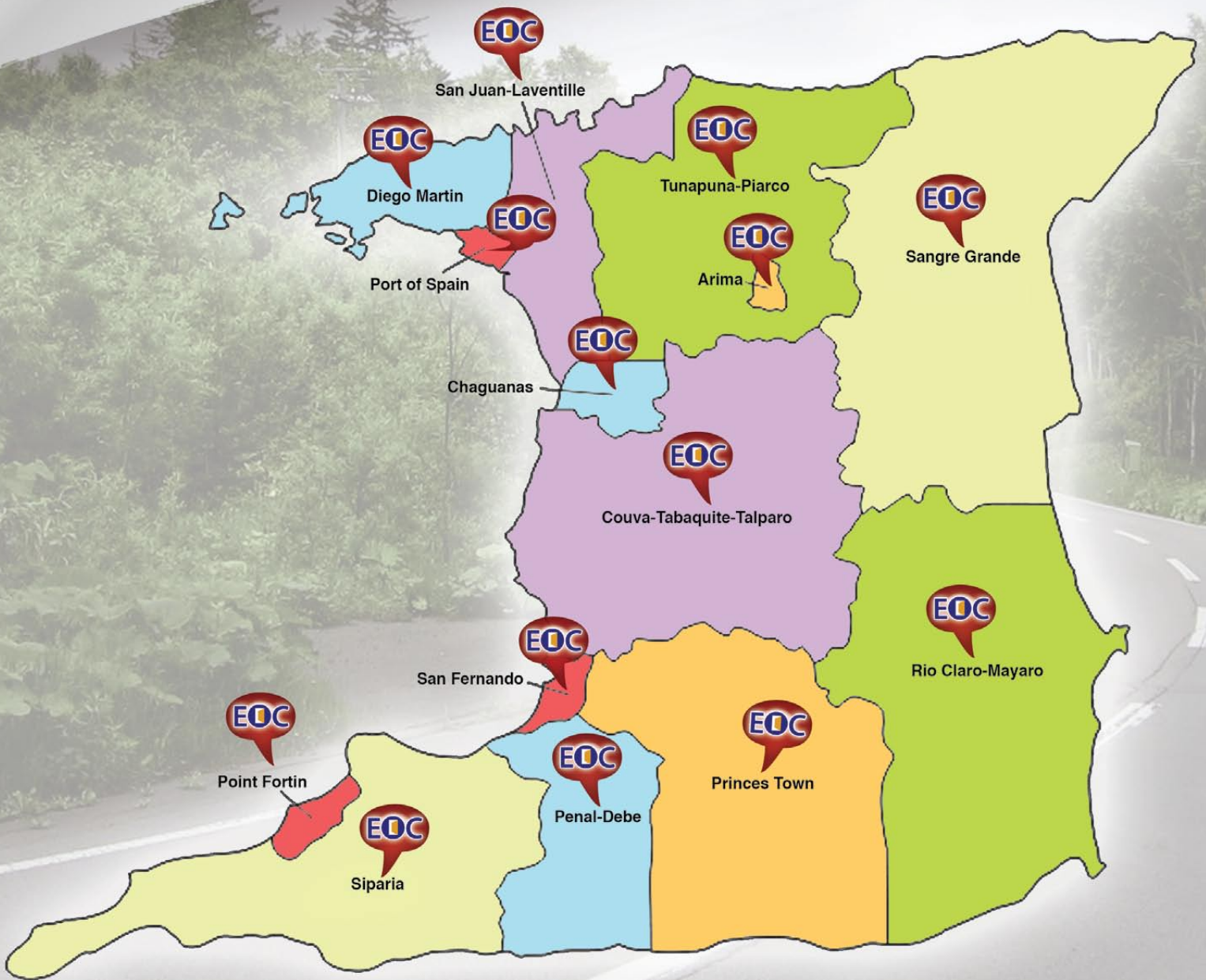
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REPORTS



On 'D' ROAD

All regional and borough corporations throughout Trinidad and Tobago.



Branding and outreach:

Billboards, Website, Information and Media



Billboard (Tobago) January 2012

the Commission erected its first billboard in Tobago



Website June 2012

the Commission launched its reconstructed website, in order to facilitate the lodging of complaints online

EOC's Corporate Jingle

The Commission's sixty second radio jingle which was generated and aired for the last quarter of 2011 continued to be aired in 2012. The radio jingle was aired during the prime-time hours (6.00am-9.00am and 3.00pm-7.00pm) on the following radio stations:

- Radio Vision (Power 102.1 FM)
- Radio Jaagriti (102.7fm)
- Citadel Limited (i95.5fm)
- CNMG: Talk City 91.1fm and Sweet 100.1fm
- Hott 93 (93.5 FM)
- Radio Tambrin

A five- minute radio series on i95.5 ran for one week dealing with the EOC in relation to Labour, Industrial Relations and Human Resources.

EOC's Corporate Video

A video was created from the script of the jingle for branding and outreach. The video is currently being aired on:

- The EOC's website: www.equalopportunity.gov.tt
- In house at the EOC's office

The video aired on the following local television stations:

- CNMG
- CCN TV6
- CNC3
- Win TV
- IETV
- IBN
- Tobago channel 5
- GISL channels 4 and 16

Leaflet

The Commission's leaflet on "How to Lodge a Complaint" was again distributed to each Regional Corporation, the Tobago House of Assembly (THA); the Office of the Ombudsman and Warden's offices in the various geographic districts areas. Complaint forms were also distributed at these locations. This was to ensure dissemination to the wider general public and accessibility to the services offered. This material is also accessible on the Commission's website.

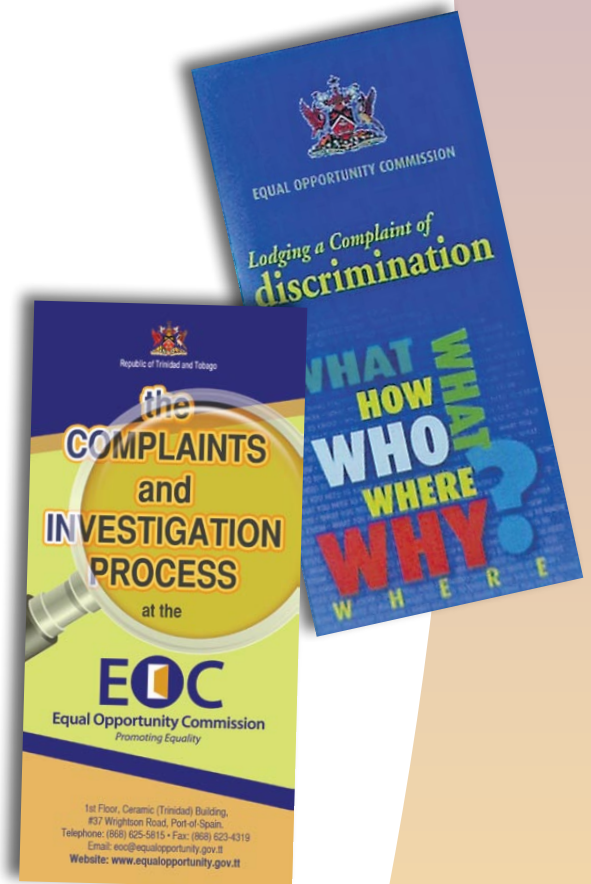
Media

Information with respect to the Commission's core functions, events, notices and its mandate were published in the following print media:

- Trinidad Express
- Trinidad Guardian
- Newsday
- Tobago News

Additionally, members of staff appeared on talk-radio programmes.

Tuesday May 29 Power 102 FM (Port of Spain) talk show programme to discuss the Commission's work.



Special Projects

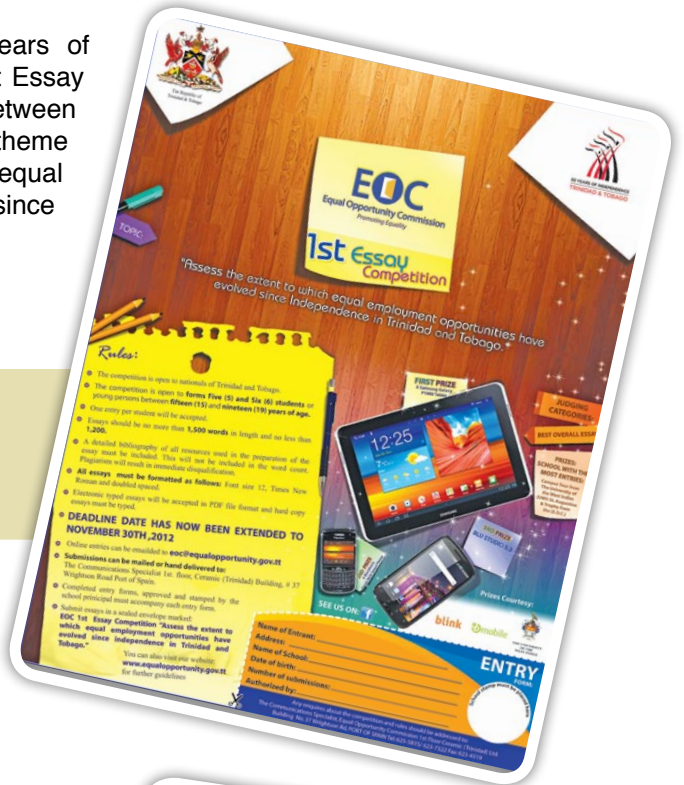
In celebration of the nation's fifty years of independence, the EOC hosted its first Essay Competition for young persons between fifteen and nineteen years of age. The theme was "Assess the extent to which equal employment opportunities have evolved since independence in Trinidad and Tobago."

Monday September 08

Launch of the Essay Competition

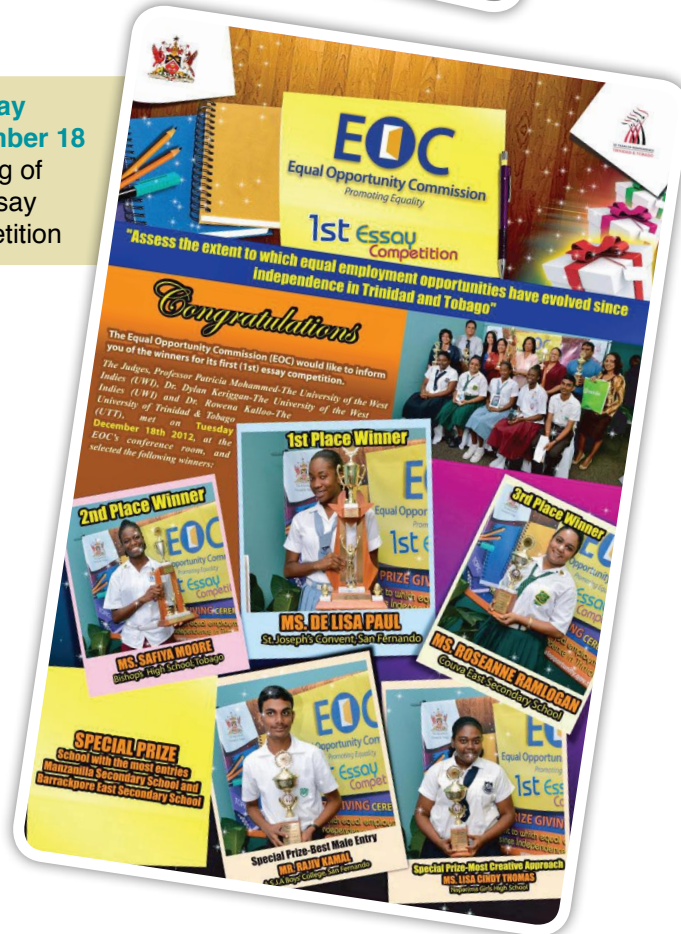
Friday November 30

Closure of the Essay Competition



Tuesday
December 18

Judging of
the Essay
Competition



The EOC takes the youth on

– in essay form



This essay competition was the idea of Chairman La Guerre since 2009 though it materialised only in 2012. He conceived the concept on the basis of encouraging the younger minds to reflect on issues of discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago and within the context of the international arena.

The competition managed to raise the awareness of its target group members and simultaneously that of their school communities. Indirectly, the general public also came to a deeper understanding of the work of the Commission from this competition.



Timing surly was in the EOC's favour as 2012 was also the year our nation celebrated fifty years of independence so the topic also had this element to it. It was: Assess the extent to which equal employment opportunities have evolved since Independence in Trinidad and Tobago. The competition was opened to form five and six students or persons between fifteen and nineteen years of age. The contest ran from September 8 to November 30, 2012.

The judges agreed that the essays were of relatively good quality and there was a good cross section of secondary schools represented. Three winners were selected but the judges added two additional prizes. The EOC is proud to showcase the winning essays on these pages as we congratulate all winners and participants again.

Photos 1-3 at left: Winners with their respective principals and teachers.



Here is winners' row:

First Place went to De Lisa Paul of St. Joseph's Convent, San Fernando

Second Place went to Safiya Moore of Bishop's Anstey High School, Tobago

Third Place went to Roseanne Ramlogan of Couva East Secondary School

The two additional awards were given to Lisa Cindy Thomas of Naparima Girls High School and to Rajiv Kamal of ASJA Boys College.

1st place



Ms. De-Lisa Paul
St. Joseph's Convent, San Fernando

“To be equal, to live in a society that responds to you without prejudice, to be treated fairly no matter what your background may be. Regardless of race or religion, regardless of geographic location, gender or any disability you may have. It’s not just an idea we should live by, but an ideal that our children can look up to, that our communities can aspire to, that our employers must embrace. But it’s more than that; it is the right of every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. It is a right that is championed and upheld by the Equal Opportunity Commission. The EOC is about educating, breaking down barriers and eliminating obstacles to cruelly empower people on the basis of their merit. This is the mission of the Equal Opportunity Commission of Trinidad and Tobago. Equality is everyone’s dream; it’s everyone’s right.” EOC Trinidad and Tobago.

Equal Employment Opportunity ensures that everyone has equal access to available employment. This process is undertaken by affirming that workplaces are unrestricted from discrimination, harassment, and providing databases to assist people to overcome disadvantage. In this environment, individuals are esteemed, valued and have projections to progress their maximum potential and pursue a career of their choice regardless of race, sex, national origin, disability, color, age and in some cases, hereditary status. A number of people have been impacted in the past or continue to be disadvantaged or discriminated against in employment. The twin-isle of Trinidad and Tobago is a core example when examining these issues. Inequality in opportunities and difference in living standards are the core features of pre-Independence societies, a phenomenon we inherited from the days of plantation slavery. These islands comprise multiple racial backgrounds due to the coming of the Indigenous peoples, Africans, Indians, Chinese and other ethnic groups. However, after Independence, there were

many significant changes with regard to the equality of opportunities available.

In the ‘First Phase of Expansion’, according to Nasser Mustapha in *Contemporary Issues in Social Science: A Caribbean Perspective* (1994), the achievement of political liberation from the British Crown in 1962 highlighted a milestone in education in Trinidad and Tobago. In the sixties, secondary schools were established and an attempt was made to provide free secondary education to all passing the Common Entrance Examination. The expansion of education was seen as “opening the channels for upward social mobility to the lower classes.” The late Dr. Eric Williams, the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, stated in the House of Representatives in 1962 that: “...the fact that the free secondary school, entrance to which is determined by the common qualifying examination, demonstrates better than anything else in this society, now or in the future the equality opportunity for all people irrespective of racial origin, irrespective of colour, and irrespective of family status.” In a society based on stratification by colour and class, education was regarded as an equalizer since all persons writing the examinations had equal probabilities in the selection process. In a society categorized by ethnic and religious diversities, education was also sought to bring about consensus and integration in the society.

As Asha Kambon and Lancelot Busby (2000) stated in an article entitled *Education and its Impact on Poverty Equity or Exclusion*, inequality in the education system emerged in the region and is closely related to gender. Most of the dissertation on gender inequality in education was focused on male marginalization and the fact that girls were out performing boys at different levels of the education system. People commonly presumed that if they received some level of education it will result in them being able to secure employment. However, data points to the fact that at each level of

attainment, primary, secondary and tertiary, women have a higher rate of unemployment than men who have achieved the same level of education. Here we notice the inequalities of gender in societies. Currently there is evidence of varied attempts to equalize opportunities to all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, through the initiatives of the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Community Development.

Education and access to education is a clear indicator of development in a country. Whereas there were sufficient primary schools in Tobago, there has always been a deficiency with respect to secondary education. In the pre-Hurricane Flora era, within the sphere of social development, the area of education seemed to have been the least developed and this had a substantial impact on the development of the residents of Tobago. In this regard, when compared to Trinidad, Tobago lagged behind in terms of utilities and basic infrastructure. Again we take note of inequality. This, though, has since changed as Tobago is now well provided with secondary schools which paved a way for the preparation of its clientele for employment.

Unemployment is not a modern phenomenon in the Caribbean region. Historians have substantiated that unemployment and underemployment were rampant in Trinidad and Tobago, even during the latter period of indentured immigration and worsened by the world recession of the 1930s. The Moyne Commission which was employed after the conflicts in several British West Indian colonies around 1937 established that unemployment was one of the major issues. Unemployment, according to Jack Harewood (1972), was a mere fragment of a much larger problem of human resources and needed to be studied and solved in the context of the related problems of underemployment, low incomes and poverty and inadequate vocational training and skills. Trevor Farrell (1978), however, argues that unemployment was a major problem on its own since it was not merely or always related to problems of income. Ramessar (1975) also argues that unemployment is a post-World War phenomenon, since it was not until 1946, that official data was collected and published on the unemployment situation.

In the article *The Natural Resources of Trinidad and Tobago* (1981), Cooper and Bacon highlighted that in 1963, the Central Statistical office has carried out a Continuous Sample Survey of Population (C.S.S.P), from which, an unbroken and consistent body of labour force data are available for the period 1965 to 1971. The data for the separate rounds from January to June and July to December of each year indicated a tendency for the level of labour force participation

to escalate, and the rate of unemployment to decline very slightly during the first half of the year, which was the time of the sugar cane crop season. There was an intense shift from a situation of labour to one of labour surplus. According to the C.S.S.P of the Central Statistical Office in 1977, of the 391,000 persons in the labour force, 58,600 were unemployed. Since then, unemployment has been declining as a result of the recent petroleum-induced boom. By the end of the third quarter 2007, overall unemployment had fallen to 5.2 percent. In this situation, young people are the most vulnerable. Out of a total labour force of 625,900, according to Trinidad and Tobago Industrial Policy 1959-2008 (2009), the unemployed in the cohort aged 15-24 number approximately 13,300. The petroleum industry employs both males and females in the technical and managerial fields.

Trinidad and Tobago is categorized as a free market economy. This therefore means that the welfare of its citizens is of vital importance. In today's society, there has been improvement in employment opportunities. Most of the economy was owned and controlled by foreigners with remainder of the economy controlled by small, local, white elites. The involvement of the state in the national economy before 1970 was very limited. The industrialization by invitation model of economic development had been proposed by W. Arthur Lewis in the 1950s and was later adopted by the government. This implementation was helpful to generate employment in the public sector. There was also indirect private sector employment. In 1993, the company of Petrotrin was established by the merger of Trintopec and Trintoc, two state-owned oil companies. A third company, Trinmar Limited was also merged in the year 2000. Locals got more employment opportunities at higher management and at a technical level as well.

Trinidad and Tobago is a nation that emerged from colonial status to that of independent statehood just fifty years ago. The Black Power Revolution in the 1970s was regarded as one of the most defining movements in Trinidad and Tobago's history. It was a watershed in promoting equal opportunity in the private sector as more persons of African and East Indian descent were employed.

The existence of opportunity, however, does not necessarily guarantee equality. In some organizations there is evidence of inequality through compensation packages and unionized employment. This can be considered as inequality in employment since not all jobs are granted this benefit. Unionized employment can also be added to the list as if problems were to arise in work places, some jobs may be able to fight for their rights with the help of another persuading

body to achieve their goal whereas others may be left to fend for themselves. These are categorized as occupational stratification.

The Equal Opportunity Commission which was formed in 2000, claims to seek “to prevent and discourage acts of discrimination relating to race, gender, religion, disability, employment, education, accommodation, status, offensive behaviour, the provision of goods and services, geographical origin, ethnicity or marital status. It recognizes the importance of the removal of all barriers to the free flow of resources of talent, opportunities and aspirations so that each individual can contribute to the national endeavour and expect a fair response in return. In the pursuit of these objectives, the Commission shall seek to educate, conciliate and adjudicate on the complaints that come before it, and will invite the wider society to participate as fully as possible in this enterprise.” Even though, when we gained Independence and became a Republic nation and there were constitutions set in place as equalizers in the country, the Equal Opportunity Commission has been implemented to re-enforce equality among citizens of the nation. With respect to equal employment opportunities, the Equal Opportunity Act 2000 (EOA) disallows an employer from discriminating against an employee because of their status and also from discrimination by victimization. They are to ensure that the laws as regards equality are adhered to, and that people’s attitudes change.

In addition, with respect to the trending topics in our societies today, many establishments and institutions support the acceptance of sexual orientation as a protected status in the Equal Opportunity Act. The Trinidad Express newspaper has published editorials condemning this Act, whilst deliberating on the negative impacts. Published on 8 November 2010, 23 February 2011 and 20 May 2011, they label Trinidad and Tobago as “lagging behind the rest of the progressive world”, and state that “This country’s Equal Opportunities Act, which specifically allows discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, is the most egregious example of official backwardness on this issue.” These are a means to ensure that homosexual persons, as well as HIV and are afforded their essential human rights. HIV victims and the disabled were also phenomena considered with respect to the fight for equal opportunity, especially in the work place where persons may be victimized.

In an evaluation of the extent to which employment opportunities have evolved since Independence, I must conclude by noting that it has evolved a great deal, however, with much more room for improvement.



2nd place

Ms. Safiya Moore

Bishop's High School, Tobago

The human body is made up of a complexity of systems comprising a collection of organs. Those organs are made up of tissues and those tissues are comprised of cells. Individually, these employ specific integral functions and, collectively they contribute to the efficient running and survival of the human body. The human brain is unique for its various parts, the heart for its shape, the liver for its size and the skin for its sensitivity and strength. None of these organs have the exact same dimensions, nor do any perform the exact same functions they are all equally unique and equally important. The absence of any of these organs would jeopardize the survival of the human body as we know it. In the same light, our society is much like a living organism, comprised of persons of various persuasions, backgrounds and abilities. Like the various parts of the human body, these persons should be regarded for the contributions they can make to the overall well being of the society rather than be discriminated against based on criteria that make them unique. Sadly, the latter has come to fruition. However, in figurative terms, the immune system of the living organism that is Trinidad and Tobago has regulated such discrimination. More particularly, as it relates to equal employment opportunities, the regulation of all forms of discrimination where, Discrimination, 'characterized in three ways: discrimination on the grounds of status, discrimination in the form of victimisation and, discrimination through the use of offensive behaviour directed at an individual or group,'¹ has been championed through our foreign policy and the activism of agencies of state as well as non-governmental organisations.

Fifty years ago in 1962 when Trinidad and Tobago gained Independence, one thing that was abundantly clear was that our history of colonization not only crafted a paradigm of diversification, but also implanted seeds of prejudice and inequality in our social fabric.

However, that history of colonization gave us immediate linkages to some of the world's super powers and allowed us bilateral and multilateral relations that aided in combating the issue of discrimination. Trinidad and

Tobago recognising the positive benefits of maintaining relations with our former colonisers and fostering relations with other countries as well generated a foreign policy to facilitate this:

*Trinidad and Tobago's foreign policy accordingly seeks to maintain, develop or enhance relations with strategic countries at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels and to participate actively in the multilateral arena,' constructed on the tenets of 'respect for the sovereignty and sovereign equality of all states; non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, qualified by acceptance of the responsibility of the international community to take collective action in cases of gross domestic violations of human rights or genocide; respect and adherence to international law and to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.'*²

This foreign policy allows us to recognise the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1969), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976), Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) and the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1987). Through the recognition and adherence to these agreements, equal employment opportunities are fostered by combating of all forms of discrimination.

Our foreign policy and relations have heavily influenced the development and running of

state agencies as well. Our adaptation of the Westminster style judiciary and courts of law have roots in our history with the United Kingdom. This said Westminster system we practise engenders parliamentary democracy and prescribes that the rule of law prevails, with an independent judiciary, subject to the Constitution. Our constitution makes provisions to discourage and penalize

¹ Equal Opportunity Act of 2000

² http://www.foreign.gov.tt/foreign_policy/

all forms of discrimination, and as the constitution is the supreme law of the land, the judiciary and courts of law play a paramount role in ensuring the rights of all citizens are never infringed, not limited to but consisting of equal employment opportunities. Cementing the responsibilities of the judiciary in this regard was the passage of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Act in the year 1976, making provision for the Office of The Ombudsman. This institution became a reality in 1977 with the passage of the Ombudsman Act, which contained supplemental provisions. The principal function of the Office of the Ombudsman is the investigation of complaints of maladministration against government departments and agencies by members of the public. The role and functions of the Ombudsman are set out in section 93(1) of the constitution.³ Over the last fifty years these institutions have effectively fostered the provision and maintenance of equal employment opportunities. Additionally, in 2000, the Act of 2000 provided legislature to prohibit certain kinds of discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different status and circumstance and to establish an Equal Opportunity Commission and an Equal Opportunity Tribunal.⁴ This act protects citizens against discrimination as it relates to employment, education, the provision of goods and services and the provision of accommodation.

These mechanisms of the state have made laudable contributions to the evolution of equal employment opportunities over the last fifty years. Similarly, non-governmental organisations have made pivotal contributions to the provision of equal employment opportunities. In the 1930's the Oilfields Workers' Trade Union (OWTU) was founded under the leadership of Uriah 'Buzz' Butler stemming from discontent with social conditions such as very poor housing, inadequate health care, the lack of educational opportunities and racial discrimination, amongst other ills. Since those days, over seventy years ago, the OWTU has been able to establish itself as a strong, militant, democratic institution committed to defending the interests of its members, the wider working class and the nation. This Union considers its role in fulfilling these objectives as not only limited to the shop floor or the negotiating table, but has proven time and time again that it will intervene in the arena of national affairs, if this is necessary to protect and defend workers' rights and the national interest.⁵ At present, Trinidad and Tobago consists of more than a dozen unions, premised on combating discrimination and engendering equal employment opportunities. Equally significant is the network NGO's of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women which was born

in 1984 and founded in 1985. This network boasts a membership of one hundred and two (102) civil society organizations and represents the largest 'umbrella organization' in Trinidad and Tobago with several affiliate NGO's throughout the Caribbean and, additional Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).⁶ This group pursues gender equality, recognition of women's human rights, and women's empowerment nationally, regionally, and globally.

Another major contributor to the evolution of equal employment opportunities is the media, the 'Fourth Estate of democracy.' Thanks to freedom of the press provided by the constitution, the media represents the people and upholds democracy by criticising, commenting on and investigating affairs of the country.⁷ Significant instances in our history where the media provided mileage for equal employment opportunities include the thorough coverage of the 1970 Black Power Movement that sought to identify with and support the African Diaspora, in attaining equal opportunities for expression, education and employment among other things.

Trinidad and Tobago is vibrant and diverse but the fact remains that the stimuli of diversification in any society are also the catalysts for inequality in that same place. Trinidad and Tobago, a paradigm of diversification in its purest form, is therefore susceptible to the plague of inequality. However, as a nation proudly celebrating fifty years of Independence, we can boast that to a great extent we have striven to provide equality, particularly equal employment opportunities. We have made some pivotal achievements in this arena by targeting discrimination where, 'Discrimination can be characterized in three ways: discrimination on the grounds of status, discrimination in the form of victimisation and, discrimination through the use of offensive behaviour directed at an individual or group.' Discrimination on these grounds has been combated via the efficiency of our foreign policy and the activism of agencies of state as well as non-governmental organisations. Through these mechanisms, the evolution of equal employment opportunities in our country has been stimulated. We have been able to engender a system similar to that of the human anatomy where constituents despite their varying dimensions are observed for their uniqueness and contributions to society, but there is still room for improvement. The evolution of equal employment opportunities is still being undermined by subtle instances of discrimination. Is complete equality realistic? Definitely not! Can we strive to reach the closest alternative to complete inequality? Most definitely! Yes we can!

³ <http://www.ombudsman.gov.tt/sitepages/default.aspx?id=11>

⁴ <http://www.equalopportunity.gov.tt/about>

⁵ <http://www.owtu.org/content/history>

⁶ <http://www.networkgott.org/>

⁷ <http://fourthstatejournalism.com/2010/08/06/what-is-the-function-of-the-media-in-a-liberal-democracy/> Michael O'Shaughnessy and Jane Stadler.

Media and Society, second edition. (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 10



3rd place

Ms. Roseanne Ramlogan
Couva East Secondary School

Prior to Independence, Trinidad and Tobago was effectively a 'closed' society. This meant that there was little social mobility in the class structure and individuals spent most of their lives in the same social position into which they were born. Due to the influence of slavery, ascriptive factors such as skin colour and race played a major role in determining one's life chances. After Independence, Trinidad and Tobago gradually evolved into a more 'open' society whereby a person's status was determined through meritocracy and not as a result of skin colour or race. Consequently, this facilitated the upward social mobility of all citizens. As society became more 'open', equal employment opportunities for all became a reality.

The concept of equal employment opportunities within a country means that jobs are available to all citizens regardless of class, ethnicity, gender, religion and disability. In a plural society like Trinidad and Tobago, it is critical to ensure that there are equal opportunities for all citizens. In an effort to achieve this, a number of reforms have been undertaken in Trinidad and Tobago over the last fifty years. These include educational reform, the black power movement, the women's liberation movement and legislation.

In Trinidad and Tobago, education played an important role in facilitating social mobility and equality providing the skills and training required to fill employment vacancies. Lloyd Best believed that 'the business of the black' was education because it provided an avenue of social mobility for those who had been historically disadvantaged by the nature of the stratification system. Education provided an opportunity for members of the lower strata to improve their life chances and not be limited from social mobility.

After independence primary education was available to the majority, but secondary education remained highly elitist. This situation presented a major challenge for the then elected People's National Movement led by Dr Eric Williams who wished to implement a nationalist education system that would liberate the population from the 'shackles' of colonial dominance. His proposals to

achieve these included a common qualifying examination for selection into secondary schools; a common curriculum and reduction of the powers of denominational boards. Between 1957 and 1967, seventeen government secondary schools were built, facilitating social mobility for those who had been previously disadvantaged producing qualified individuals who could now join the workforce. The Education Act of 1966 allowed the PNM government to have greater control over student admission; meaning equality for all because they ensured that every individual had the fair chance of attending school. Over the century after emancipation, the upward mobility of thousands of blacks, coloureds and Indians as a result of education meant that Trinidad's society had evolved.

Other incentives including Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses Programme (GATE) transport at no cost for schoolchildren, free breakfast, lunches and textbooks provide immense motivation for persons who were previously deprived of obtaining an education, consequently creating further equal employment opportunities.

Although numerous measures have been put in place to achieve equity in education, there are still many shortcomings to the system. According to Mustapha (1984) there was a significant linkage between socio economic status and occupational attainment level meaning that, in spite of massive educational expansion occurring within Trinidad and Tobago only persons at upper levels of the hierarchy benefited most.

The Black Power Revolution of 1970 in Trinidad challenged the dominant cultural ideology while maintaining the status quo that existed during the colonial era. A number of events in the late 1960s led to the articulation of Black Power in Trinidad. Among the many demands behind the slogan of Black Power, the most urgent were against racial discrimination and employment in particular. For instance, commercial banks did not employ people of colour; if you were not white you couldn't be an air stewardess or a pilot. Pearl Marshall a black girl who entered a queen competition was the crowd favorite, but was denied the

crown because it was not customary for blacks to be chosen as carnival queens. However five years after the start of the Black Power movement she became the first black air stewardess when Sir Hugh Wooding the chairman of BWIA decided to break the colour bar and hired her, showing that headway was being made against the fight for equal employment opportunities.

During the 1970s references to Women's Liberation began to enter the newspapers in Trinidad and Tobago. Groups such as National Joint Action Committee, while emphasizing respect for women, still saw men as the head of households, thus entrenching rather than challenging traditional gender relations. On the other hand, the experience that women gained from actively participating in the Black Power movement helped them mobilize to articulate their own demands. The existence of women guerillas in Trinidad encouraged a subtle challenge to the gender system. Activists used Angela Davis's story as a poignant example to encourage women to join the struggle. After Independence women gained increasing access to education, both secondary and higher, and were moving into areas of work that were traditionally male dominated aspiring to break the proverbial "glass ceiling". In the 1970s the government began taking interest in women's affairs. In 1971 the Ministry of Labour set up the Division of Women's Affairs, aimed at assisting women in the labour market.

Employment legislation is vital as it explains the rights of employees, promotes equality in the workplace and discourages exploitation. In terms of equality we have come a long way with the establishment of the Equal Opportunity Commission which promotes fair and equitable treatment for all citizens. This provides an avenue for persons who face any form of discrimination due to colour, religion, race, gender and disability and should be highly praised as it is one of the most important developments, gearing us in the direction toward first world status, since it ensures that citizens are treated in a fair and equitable manner. The Equal Opportunity Act of 2000 serves to protect employees during the course of employment and prospective employees from discrimination. Last year it was revealed that seven out of eight complaints of discrimination brought against employers to the Equal Opportunity Commission was settled, this is highly commendable. Other pieces of legislation such as the Maternity Act and the Workmen's Compensation Act also play a pivotal role in ensuring equal employment opportunities for all.

With respect to disability, the National Centre for Disabled Persons, (NCDP) established in May 1964 is geared towards helping individuals with disabilities fit into

society. It is their belief that every individual should have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of full and equal participation in society, including employment. In addition there is the Autistic Society of Trinidad and Tobago, the Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association and the lady Hochoy Home for Disabled Children besides countless others all aimed at preventing discrimination against disabled and providing an avenue for them to address any issues they may have.

According to Ryan (1989), fifty two percent of individuals believed that equality of opportunities was a myth rather than a reality. In spite of the various changes and development that Trinidad and Tobago have undergone, there are still 'loopholes' in the system. Favoritism due to political affiliation is present in today's society and nepotism also hinders equal employment opportunities within Trinidad and Tobago, creating a case of 'who knows who', this was evident when chief executive officer Paula Chester-Cumberbatch hired her close relative as a consultant to the Tobago Regional Health Authority, although complaints were lodged nothing was done. Numerous times family members of political associates have been awarded state projects, this sort of action hinders the process of equal opportunity for all citizens as one doesn't have the fair chance of being chosen to supply any services or goods an example of this was when the former Planning, Economic and Gender Affairs Minister Mary King breached the law when her relatives won a Government contract from her ministry last November.

The Freedom of Information Act ensures that the public has access to information on the activities of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. The Act is designed to support the following tenets of governance: transparency, accountability, equality of access, and empowerment and increased participation, thereby promoting equal employment opportunities in the workplace.

It is obvious that many measures have been implemented to promote equality in employment over the last fifty years such as the implementation of education for all. Some of the major changes can be observed with the opportunities afforded to women and the coloureds in society today. It is understandable that employment opportunities have evolved and are based on academic qualifications, thus creating equity in employment for all. While the society has evolved and there is greater equity for employment opportunities remnants of nepotism and favoritism still exist, consequently unfair practices will always be embedded within our society.



Lisa Cindy Thomas
Naparima Girls' High School

"Have you ever woken up and wished you were dead? I used to in my younger years. I was born in the year 1943 in a small village called Esperanza in Trinidad and Tobago. I was a mixed child of both African and Indian decent. It was because of this I was nicknamed 'dougla gyal' by everyone in my village. My family was poor but my father still ensured that my brothers and I received the best education. In my eyes, my childhood was a happy one but as I grew older I realised all the sacrifices and pains my parents suffered to raise my brothers and I. I vowed to myself that I would get a job with a lucrative salary and ensure that their older years were joyful and carefree.

I entered the world of work in at the age of twenty one. It was two years after my beloved country had become an Independent nation. I worked as an accountant for a company that manufactured various food items. It was then I was able to truly experience the injustices of the employment sector. I was the only female accountant working for the company. I had three male colleagues; one was white, one of Indian descent and one of African descent. It was pure torture for me since the men treated me as almost a slave. I was given the majority of the workload and they always got the credit associated with it. By the time my first week of working was over I was tired, confused and practically on the verge of losing my sanity.

Despite it all, I was glad to take home my first pay check to my parents. The look on their faces gave me the encouragement to return to work the next week. As soon as I arrived, I was bombarded by a pile of paperwork from my colleagues. As I sat there calculating the company's profits and losses I overheard their conversation. It was centred on their pay checks. From what I gathered they were not the same although we all worked at the same level in the company. My white colleague had the highest, then the Indian and then the African. When I heard the figures, I realised that in that room the person with the

smallest pay check was me. To make it even worst I realised that I had more qualifications than all three of my colleagues.

I was outraged. I decided to go to my boss about the matter. When I told him of the problem he laughed in my face and then he became angry. He shouted out, 'How dare you! You should feel lucky to be given a job! You're nothing more than a black, stupid woman from the outcasts and slums of society! You think with a piece of college paper you are something! If you don't like it here find somewhere else you ungrateful woman. Now get out of my sight. Get out!' I was in shock. How could I be treated so? Was the world really this harsh? Millions of similar questions swirled around in my mind.

I did look for a new job but it was difficult to find one. The ones I found paid less than I already worked for and I realised they all were the same in terms of inequality. Sadly, I stayed with my current employer for seven more years before I eventually got married and left the world of work. During those seven years however, I noticed and experienced many injustices due to inequality in the workplace. I admit I did contemplate suicide at some points. I hated that I had to get up on mornings and I pitied those who had to suffer even more than me.

Among the acts of inequality that stood out to me the most were the persons that my company hired. Most were from the high classes of society, of the 'higher coloured' races or affiliated with the religion of my boss. These 'elites' of society were easily distinguishable from the other persons who were 'lucky to be given a job.' The 'lucky' ones' pay checks were always smaller and their workload and harsh treatments were always greater than the 'elites'. Women were not allowed to reach certain levels in the company and were never part of the administering body. Persons with disabilities were never hired and were usually turned

Special prize

Most creative approach

away before they even presented their qualifications. It was disgusting to witness and I always felt helpless every day.

I was glad when I met my husband and got married. He did not want me to work and for once I was happy to abide to the will of a man. I settled into my new life of wife and mother which was peaceful and prosperous. My parents were living in better conditions because of my brothers and me. I was elated because my childhood dream was fulfilled. My husband and I were also blessed with three hardworking sons and a beautiful daughter.

Even though I had left I still thought about the injustices of working. Martin Luther King Junior once said, 'I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character.' I had that same dream for my children. They were growing up and would eventually have to enter that wretched world of work. I was scared for them especially my daughter and I hoped and prayed everyday the situation would improve. I even resorted to writing various letters to persons in authority against discrimination in the workplace. As the years went on however, the world began to stand up against discrimination and inequality in the workplace and it became a well-known problem.

By the time my children started to work the situation had improved immensely. My sons were able to acquire jobs best suited for their qualifications and although they were discriminated against because of their colour at times it did not affect their work as negatively as it did me. My daughter however had a harder time because in the 1990s women were still seen as inferior to men in some cases. She managed to find a job however, where she was paid well even though she was not able to advance to the administrative positions because she was not qualified enough. According to her there were women at the head of the company which in my days were a rare thing to see. I marvelled at how much the situation had improved.

In the year 2000, the Government passed 'The Equal Opportunity Act' and established 'The Equal Opportunity Commission' who 'seeks to prevent and discourage acts of discrimination relating to race, gender, religion, disability, employment, education, accommodation, status, offensive behaviour, the provision of goods and services, geographical origin, ethnicity or marital status.'

In my eyes it was a great way to start the twenty first century. Employers were now bounded by law to treat all their employees the same. My children and the future generation would never have to suffer the way I did and for this I am grateful. Gerry Adams said 'The days of humiliation, of second-class citizens and of inequality are over and gone forever.' I do not completely agree with him because there is still inequality present. The society in which we presently live in does not allow it to be because of the level of corruption. I have faith however that someday his saying would come true"

At this point she stopped talking. The tears glistened in Mrs Cynthia's eyes but they were tears of joy this time, which was so different from the tears when she talked about her suffering. Although I was quiet while she told me her story, I understood exactly what she was trying to tell me. Her hope for a better future was coming true. The problem of inequality especially in the workplace had drastically improved since Independence.

The Oxford dictionary describes equality as the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, or opportunities. Miss Cynthia is right in the sense that in Trinidad and Tobago we are not equal in the workplace but we are progressing and will someday reach there. Her story is one of inspiration and is truly an assessment of the extent to which equal employment opportunities have evolved since independence in Trinidad and Tobago.

DISCLAIMER: All names used in the essay are arbitrary. It does not highlight any person's life specifically. The storyline is purely fictional in the sense that it is purely 'made up' and not the actual life story of a particular person. It is just used to highlight the message of the essay. I also wish to apologise in advance to any persons that are offended by my essay.



Special prize

Best male entry

Mr. Rajiv Kamal

ASJA Boys College San Fernando

Over the span of fifty years since Trinidad and Tobago gained independence equal employment opportunities have evolved to the extent that in the year 2000 legislation was passed to prevent discrimination regarding employment in the form of the Equal Opportunity Act 2000. This action as it stands can suggest that employment discrimination did/does exist in Trinidad and Tobago and this legislation seeks to address such instances.

Employment discrimination can be described as denying someone employment, or disallowing one from applying for a job when the grounds for such an exclusion is not related to the requirements of the position. This includes factors such as, race, age, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, and skin colour.

Prior to Trinidad and Tobago's independence and even after 1962 an unwritten but well understood classification regarding job categories existed and the stigma from this classification remained for many years to follow. The Whites were deemed the plantation owners, the Chinese and Portuguese were the traders/business owners the Africans and Mixed population were the skilled manual workers and the East Indians were classified as the agricultural workers.

In 1962 the population of Trinidad and Tobago was 828,000. In present day this figure has grown to 1.3M. In 1962 Africans comprised 43% of the population, East Indians 36%, Whites 2%, Chinese 1%, Mixed 17% and the Syrian Lebanese 1%. Today East Indians make up 39% of the population, Africans 38.5%, Mixed 20.5%, and Whites 1.2%.

Discrimination along the lines of race as it relates to employment is directly related to the political history of the country. Prior to independence and 20 years after independence the ruling political party was composed and ruled by primarily Trinidadians of African ethnicity.

This factor has been sighted by political and social analysts as having contributed significantly to the Public Service and Police Service including the Military and Regiment in past years being populated by persons of African descent. In the 1980's and early 1990's persons of East Indian descent in both the Public and Protective Service have filed and won cases of discrimination regarding employment and promotional opportunities within the respective organizations.

Less of this type of discrimination is being perpetuated today since citizens have taken a bold stance to take action rather than do nothing against discriminatory practices along the lines of race within the workplace.

Traditionally in the Trinidad and Tobago society the women were the housewives and the men were the breadwinners. Women who worked outside the home did domestic work or agriculture related work. Factors such as employment opportunities and education were limited in the earlier years following this country's independence. With economic growth and development of the nation employment opportunities became more available. More and more persons both men and women of all races were able to gain an education, making themselves qualified for employment. However the ability to access employment remained a challenge for many.

The pre-colonial classification remained ingrained in the thinking of those who employed workers. In the banking sector for example, skin colour played a significant role in the "qualifying criteria" for employment. Persons who were dark in complexion were hardly ever seen at any front counter in any bank in this country. In those years it seemed that job requirements included light complexion as a qualifying criteria.

The extent to which this has changed in my country is phenomenal. Today from general observation it is

clear that the skin colour criteria to work at the bank has been phased out.

Women in Trinidad and Tobago has progressed and developed themselves over the past 50 years to the extent that they are employed in every sector and category of work alongside their male counterparts. Therefore along the lines of gender discrimination regarding employment positive changes over the past 50 years has been effected. Benefits to women who work outside the home have become better over the years, one such being the maternity benefit which has grown from non-existent to full paid leave and maternity grant with the leave period being extended over the years. It is remarkable to compare a female cane-cutter in the early years after independence.

Employment discrimination includes disabled or differently abled persons being disadvantaged when seeking employment. Having academic qualification including the relevant training and experience does not necessarily mean that a disabled person will not be discriminated against as opposed to a fully abled person with similar skill and qualification getting employed faster than a differently abled person.

With the growth and strengthening of the Trade Union Movement in Trinidad and Tobago, a body which represents and defends the cause of the working class many instances of discrimination have been quelled simply because of strong worker representation and education on the rights of workers within this country.

Over the years there has been a significant visible change to the landscape of the working population in Trinidad and Tobago. This change can be described as both positive and encouraging.

The Equal Opportunities Act 2000 is abundantly clear in outlining categories of discrimination. It details what an employer should not discriminate against such as,

in the making of arrangements to offer employment, within the terms or conditions on which employment is offered and by refusing or deliberately refusing to offer employment. The act also prohibits discrimination with respect to training related to employment and employment opportunities.

There are exceptions within the Act relating to gender, race, religion, and disability being genuine occupational qualifications. To the average person these exceptions may sound strange but there are specific examples cited within the Act to clarify instances which may exist.

Taking into consideration all factors including the historical and political perspective of Trinidad and Tobago, looking at the country's growth and development over the last fifty years and bearing in mind the phenomenal development which has taken place along the lines of educational opportunities and economic growth it is abundantly clear that equal employment opportunities have evolved to a large extent in a very positive way. Citizens of Trinidad and Tobago in my view has grown beyond the categorization of colonial days and the associated stigmatization to people who are free in their thinking and expressions to make employment choices and be chosen based on their educational training and experience. Employers are bound by law to be fair in their hiring practices and as a result of legislation in the instance of unfair hiring practices the employee has recourse. We as a people have indeed evolved.

Most entries

The EOC would also like to congratulate the schools with the most entries. These prize winners were awarded with a tour of the U.W.I campus as well as trophies from the EOC.



Barackpore Secondary School.



Manzanilla Secondary School along with Communications Specialist, EOC and Lecturer.



Barackpore Secondary on tour of the UWI.



Students of Manzanilla Secondary with UWI student tour guide.



Barackpore Secondary receiving their trophy for the school with the most entries.



Manzanilla Secondary receiving their trophy for the school with the most entries.



EOC
 Equal Opportunity Commission
 Promoting Equality

1st Essay Competition

"Assess the extent to which equal employment opportunities have evolved since independence in Trinidad and Tobago"

Congratulations

The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) would like to inform you of the winners for its first (1st) essay competition.

The Judges, Professor Patricia Mohammed-The University of the West Indies (UWI), Dr. Dylan Keriggan-The University of the West Indies (UWI) and Dr. Rowena Kalloo-The University of Trinidad & Tobago (UTT), met on Tuesday December 18th 2012, at the EOC's conference room, and selected the following winners:



2nd Place Winner



MS. SAFIYA MOORE
 Bishops' High School, Tobago

1st Place Winner



MS. DE LISA PAUL
 St. Joseph's Convent, San Fernando


3rd Place Winner



MS. ROSEANNE RAMLOGAN
 Couva East Secondary School

SPECIAL PRIZE
 School with the most entries
**Manzanilla Secondary School and
 Barrackpore East Secondary School**

Special Prize-Best Male Entry



MR. RAJIV KAMAL
 A.S.J.A Boys' College, San Fernando

Special Prize-Most Creative Approach



MS. LISA CINDY THOMAS
 Naparima Girls' High School

Report of The Communications, Legal & Research Departments for 2012

Communications Unit

Much of the work undertaken by the Communications Unit was detailed in the section titled "Report with respect to work towards the elimination of discrimination, promotion of equality of opportunity generally and public education and research programmes".

One major challenge that this Unit faces is:

- (i) Lack of sufficient funding to execute effective educational programmes.

For the new calendar year the Communications Unit proposes to embark on the following activities:

- (i) The expansion of the Unit to meet the manpower requirements of an increased number of public awareness sessions.
- (ii) Ongoing public awareness sessions for both private and public sector organizations and institutions. Monthly awareness visits to both the San Fernando City Corporation and Tobago to receive complaints and assist the general public in understanding the work of the Commission
- (iii) Generating press releases after each Commissioners' meeting outlining cases dealt with and statistics unveiled
- (iv) A new strategic Communications plan 2013-2016 geared towards informative advertising
- (v) Working closely with Research to conduct phase II of the "Tracer Study of the Public Awareness Campaign for 2012"
- (vi) Conduct workshops for all media personnel in an attempt to sensitise them of the EOC and mandate of the Commission
- (vii) Target all form six students as a follow up on essay competition to raise awareness of the EOA and work of the Commission



Communications specialist Mrs. Ria Mohammed Pollard is flanked by R, Mr. Roger Belgrave and L, Mr. Sherwyn Williams, also of the Unit.

Legal Unit

The Legal Unit advises the Commission on all legal issues that pertain to the investigation and conciliation functions of the institution as well as all general legal and policy issues that may arise. This Unit is in charge of all the complaints received during this period.

Much of the work undertaken by the Legal Unit was detailed in the section titled "Report with respect to work towards the elimination of discrimination, promotion of equality of opportunity generally and public education and research programmes".



*Head of the Legal Unit,
Mr. Haran Ramkaransingh.*



Research Officer (seated) Ms. Catherine Ferreira and On The Job (OJT) trainee.

Research Unit

Research Objectives

The Research Unit of the Equal Opportunity Commission commenced operations in June 2010, with the appointment of a Research Officer II. The main responsibility of the Research Unit is to develop, conduct and foster research and educational programmes and other programmes for the purpose of eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status”.

More specifically the Unit:

- assists in planning, organising and conducting programmes of research into areas related to the functions and objectives of the EOC
- collects, analyses and evaluates data on relevant trends of equality
- Liaises and collaborates with other Research Units in government ministries and departments and private organizations, for the exchange of information relating to the Equality of Opportunity for the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago.

The role of the Research Unit is to encourage research, and to ensure the quality and dissemination of research projects associated with the Commission by providing support, advice and education on research matters.

During the last fiscal year, the Research Unit focused on:

- Identifying research needs and commissioning research accordingly
- Obtaining baseline data for future comparative study and analysis
- Building an evidence – based culture within the Commission
- Evaluating public awareness sessions conducted by the EOC

In determining its overall approach, the Research Unit focused on examining the statistical data available at the National level that might contribute to an evaluation of the progress made in equality and anti-discrimination efforts and identified existing short comings and has propositioned a series of corrective actions within the organisation.

Research Process

The following flow chart shows the different parts of the Research Process used by the Research Unit.



Research Activities for the period January - December 2012

Completed Research Initiatives

- Formulation of the EOC's evaluation forms that were used to conduct the specific in-house evaluations
- in collaboration with the Communications Department -evaluation of the public awareness/ sensitisation programmes conducted for :
 - Regional corporations /borough councils
 - UWI students on "Representational Bureaucracy"
- An evaluation/ review of the Anti-Discrimination Acts in the regional and international sphere
- An analysis of the National Budget documents 2012 as it impacts/ relates to the EOC
- A preliminary examination of the 2011 Population and Housing Census and its significance to the work of the EOC
- A preliminary study on the changing composition of the public service in Trinidad and Tobago

Ongoing Research Initiatives

Statistical Analysis of Complaint Data of the EOC

The Research Unit also undertook the utilisation of statistical analysis of complaint data of the EOC. The purpose of this research was to investigate the nature of discrimination that is being reported to EOC by a content analysis of the complaints made to EOC. This research study would analyze the data according to a number of characteristics such as type of discrimination, the nature of discrimination and the finalisation of the complaint.

The collection of this data is imperative as it would attempt to provide a snapshot of the race relations/ equity within the country on an ongoing basis.

Outcomes of the Research Initiatives

The analysis of the data of the research initiatives provides:-

- i. The update of statistical analysis on a yearly basis of the complaints data which would contribute to the EOC's Annual Report
- ii. The necessary contextual data on the equality of groups; demographic data relating to such characteristics as nature, gender structure and geographical distribution which is the basic background data that is needed in the course of various activities such as policy making, research and workplace-monitoring
- iii. The kind of comprehensive data source needed in order to provide the Government's national specialised bodies such as human rights bodies, information to perform their monitoring functions to the international agencies

Limitations of the Research

It has become evident that merely counting the number of complaints is an insufficient method of evaluating the effectiveness of law and policies on equity in the country. There is also the meager availability of statistical data for measuring inequalities and the limitations regarding the collection and processing of sensitive data. In addition, the information and data available and accessible via the sites of the national statistical offices in particular the Labour Force Surveys are inadequate and dated. It is hoped that the Central Statistical Office would be able to standardize the relevant data needed in the near future.

Research Agenda for the fiscal year 2013

Research Priorities

In the next fiscal year the following priorities will be pursued:

- The conduct of research projects/ studies to inform forward planning
- The implementation of a monitoring and evaluation framework to support the work of the EOC
- The introduction of a networking system with the IT Unit to improve data collection and analysis
- The formulation/conceptualisation of an EOC Strategic Plan.

Objectives

- To identify the level of current awareness of anti-discrimination/equality legislation and awareness of the Commission and its role
- To capture attitudes towards equality issues
- To acquire data on the level of public confidence in the Commission and its work.

Outcomes

- Increased capability to monitor attitude change of the public
- Access to data to inform future educational programmes
- Provide benchmarks for future studies
- Increased efficiency of the EOC service delivery
- Improved effectiveness of EOC services
- Strengthen liaison with its stakeholders and assess feedback from the community to enhance services to the public
- The mapping of future directions and priorities with enhanced corporate governance to deliver its targets.

Main Initiatives proposed for the fiscal year 2013

- Public awareness of the EOC survey
- Client satisfaction survey
- Monitoring and evaluation of statistical complaint data
- Review of the social programmes designed to promote equity in the social sector.

Report With respect to **Review of the Equal Opportunity Act**

Under section 27(1)(c) of the Equal Opportunity Act Chap 22:03 [Act No 69 of 2000 as amended], the Commission is mandated “to keep under review the working of the Act and any relevant law and, when required or otherwise thinks it necessary, to draw up and submit proposals for amending them.” Following discussions in 2010, a number of proposed amendments to the Equal Opportunity Act Chap 22:03 have been submitted to the Ministry of the Attorney General for consideration. The Legal Unit has been liaising with the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel with respect to the proposed Bill to amend the Act. The proposed Bill is still currently under review.

Report With respect to **The preparation and publication of Guidelines**

Under section 27(1)(f) of the Equal Opportunity Act Chap 22:03 [Act No 69 of 2000 as amended], the Commission is mandated “to prepare and publish appropriate guidelines for the avoidance of discrimination.” No guidelines were prepared or published in 2012. The Legal Unit has set this as one of its targets for 2013.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES



Mothers Day and Fathers Day celebrations at the EOC.



Emancipation Day celebrations at the EOC.



Expectant mothers receive gifts at a baby shower held at the EOC office.



Members of staff at the EOC celebrate our 50th Anniversary of Independence.



L. Administrative Officer IV-Gandalal Naipaul, M-Chief Executive Officer Ms. Devanty Dianne Maraj, R-Head Legal, Mr. Haran Ramkaransingh.



Members of the OJT programme at EOC.



Delicacies from the Divali celebration.



Delicacies from the Divali celebration.



Commissioner Dr. Beverly Beckles at Divali celebrations.



Members of staff enjoying the Eid delicacies at the EOC.



Pictures 1-7: Members of staff at the EOC celebrate Christmas 2012 at the EOC office and Texas de Brazil, Fiesta Plaza, Movietowne.

Appendix I

Profiles of Commissioners



Professor John La Guerre
B. Sc. (Economics) (UWI),
M. Sc. (Government) (UWI),
Ph. D. (Manchester)

John Gaffar La Guerre – B.Sc (Econ) U.W.I, M.Sc (Govt) U.W.I, Ph.D (University of Manchester) is Emeritus Professor of Government at the St. Augustine Campus of the University of the West Indies. He was educated at Progressive Educational Institute and St. Andrews High School in Trinidad and at the University of the West Indies, Manchester and Paris.

Professor La Guerre is currently Chairman of the Equal Opportunity Commission. He was a tutor in Politics at the University of Manchester and the University of the West Indies (U.W.I), lecturer and Professor of Government at the U.W.I St. Augustine until 2001. He served as Vice-Dean and Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Chairman of African and Asian Studies Unit at the U.W.I. He was also the Public Orator at the University and was for many years the Head of its Department of Government. He has written many books on the politics of the Caribbean and Africa and has contributed several articles to professional journals.

Professor La Guerre has contributed several papers to conferences in the Caribbean and elsewhere. He has prepared several reports for the Government including reports on Employment practices in the Public Sector as well as scholarship awards by the state. He was a member of the Hyatali Commission of 1987, was Co-Director of the Centre for Ethnic Studies, U.W.I, St. Augustine during the period 1992-1996, a member of a Task Force on Legal Education in Trinidad and Tobago in 1997 and was a member of the Round Table on Constitution Reform.

CHAIRMAN



Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie
*Doctorate in Education majoring in
Human Resource Development from the
George Washington University, USA*

Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie was born 5th October 1941 in the village of Bethany, Tobago. Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie attended St. Patrick's Anglican Primary School and later went on to Bishop's High School. After graduating from Bishop's she joined the teaching profession in 1960. Four years later she went on to the Mausica Teachers' College where she graduated in 1966 with a Trinidad and Tobago Teachers' Diploma. She gained the reputation as the student having the best record of all time, having won several academic prizes. After teaching for five years at the Hope Anglican Primary School, Tobago, Dr. Mc Kenzie moved to the Community Development Division as a Community Development Officer and later moved to the position of Education Extension Officer in the Education Division, Tobago. Further academic achievements include a Post Graduate Diploma in Community Development where she received the Burney Prize for the Best External Dissertation in 1977, followed by a Master's Degree in Education (M.ED.) in 1979 both from the University of Manchester, England. She earned a Doctorate in Education (Ed.D) majoring in Human Resource Development from The George Washington University, USA in 1987. Dr. Mc Kenzie was appointed an Independent Senator in 1995, and served until 2007. She represented the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago at Commonwealth

Parliamentary conferences in the Turks and Caicos Islands, New Zealand, The Bahamas and India. She was a member of the Commonwealth observer Team for the 2006 General Election in Gambia. Her interest in the education system afforded her the opportunity to serve on many education committees. She served as Chairman of a Task Force on the poor performance of Tobago students in Tobago and sat on a specially appointed Task Force on Education in Trinidad and Tobago.

She once headed the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP) in Tobago and initiated School Leaving Examinations classes in the Tobago prisons. Dr. Mc Kenzie has been a member of the executive committee of the Tobago Council of Handicapped Children Inc. since its formation in 1974, religious instructor on behalf of the Methodists Church at the Scarborough Secondary since 1996, and a motivational speaker at schools and Parent/Teacher Associations. She was also manager/tutor of the Homework Centre run by the Carnbee Mt. Pleasant Sports Club at the Carnbee Mt. Pleasant Community Centre. Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie possesses a terrific sense of humor, and still finds time to engage in the performing arts. She has acted in several plays, both live and on-screen and is versed in the island's oral traditions and speaks the Tobago dialect fluently and effectively. She has also written several folk monologues.



Dr. Beverly Ann-Marie Beckles

*B.Sc. (Business Management) from St. Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia, Canada,
 Master in Rehabilitation Administration (Mc Laren School of Business, University of San Francisco)*

Ph.D (Philosophy, Organization and Management, Capella University)

Dr. Beverly Ann-Marie Beckles is the Chief Executive Officer of the National Centre for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD). She has thirty year's experience in the field of disability management and four decades in the NGO sector. Her work expands at the national and regional levels promoting and advancing disability issues. Her work in the disability arena involves close contact with governments, regional and international agencies and civil society organizations in the promotion of equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Dr. Beckles is highly respected in her field as demonstrated by her involvement in a multiplicity of public and private endeavours. She has received several acknowledgements for her work in the field of disability nationally, regionally and internationally. In 1993, she received a National Award (MOM) in recognition of community service for persons with disabilities and an International Award from Goodwill Industries Inc. in recognition of extensive contributions to persons with disabilities in the Caribbean. She has also received awards from other internationally recognized institutions and has the distinction of being the first recipient of the Inter-American Development Bank's Award for Social Entrepreneurship (1999). Among her academic qualifications is a Doctor of Philosophy in Organization and Management from Capella University, USA and Master in Rehabilitation Administration (MRA) from Mc Laren School of Business, University of San Francisco, USA.



Mr. Gerard Besson
Humming Bird Medal (Gold)
for Heritage Preservation and
Promotion in 2007

Mr. Gerard Besson was educated at Tranquillity Boys' School and at St. Thomas High School in Port of Spain. He is the founder of Creative Advertising Co. Ltd. which he served between 1973 and 1993 and Paria Publishing Co. Ltd. in 1981 which he continues to lead.

Mr. Besson served for seven years on the Council of the University of the West Indies (St. Augustine Campus), and on the Advisory Council for the setting up of an Academy of Arts, Letters, Culture and Public Affairs at the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT).

He also served as Chairman on the committee to inaugurate the O'Meara and the Battery Point Campuses and organised the first graduation ceremony of the UTT.

Mr. Besson was a director of the National Museum and was appointed to the board of the National Trust. He was the convener of the Cabinet-appointed Work Group to observe the 1987 centenary anniversary of Tobago as a ward of the unified colony of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Besson is a member of the Society of Caribbean Historians, an international organisation for the furthering of historical research and teaching of the Caribbean experience.

He is also a member of the Caribbean Publishers' Network, a pan-Caribbean association created to support and promote indigenous publishing throughout the region.

Gerard Besson has worked in all media, and as a writer, publisher and social historian he has curated museums and designed several historical and cultural exhibitions. He has authored books on the history and culture of Trinidad and Tobago, and through his publishing company, has facilitated the publishing of local authors. Mr. Besson was the recipient of the Humming Bird Medal (Gold) for Heritage Preservation and Promotion in 2007. He also was awarded the Heritage Preservation Award—Lifetime Achiever 2007 from the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago.



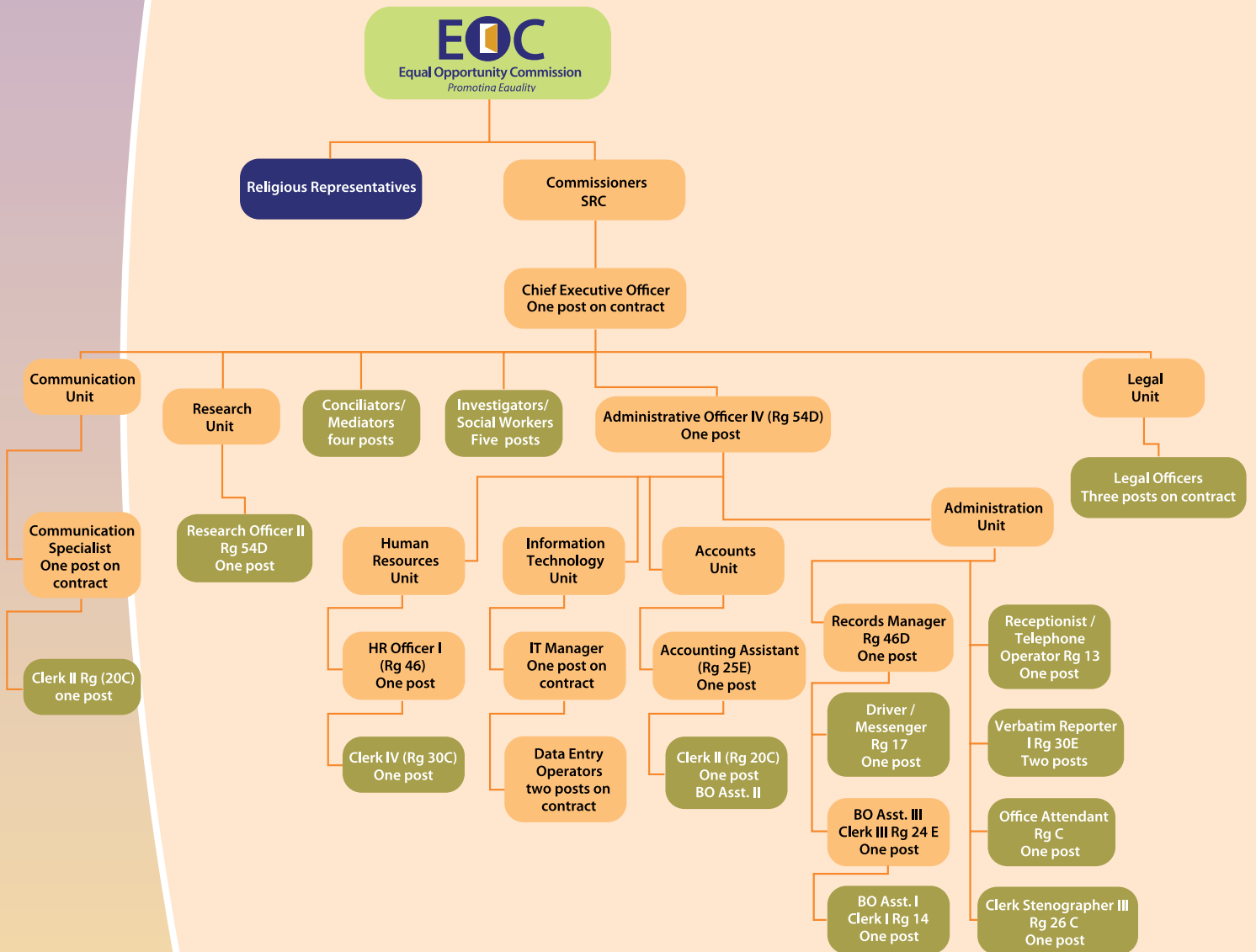
Dr. Indira Rampersad
 B.A. (Language in Literature UWI),
 M. Phil. (Latin American
 Literature,UWI),
 M. Phil. (International Relations),
 Ph.D. (Political Science, University
 of Florida, Gainesville 2007),
 LLB (University of London 2012)

Dr. Indira Rampersad holds a Bachelor of Arts in Language in Literature, a Diploma in International Relations, a Certificate in Translation from Spanish to English, a Master of Philosophy in Latin American Literature, a Master of Philosophy in International Relations and a Ph.D. in Political Science. She also obtained an LLB from the University of London in 2012.

Dr. Rampersad has been awarded two Fulbright scholarships for study in the United States, one at the Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois, to explore the American Political System, the other to undertake her Ph.D. in Political Science at the University of Florida, Gainesville, where she majored in International Relations and minored in Public Policy. Her doctoral dissertation focused on American foreign policy to Cuba on which she has published and presented at many academic and non-academic forums. Her research now extends to Latin American and Caribbean Politics and International Relations, American foreign policy, alternative energy, food security and crime with specific emphasis on the Caribbean.

Dr. Rampersad speaks Spanish fluently and has undertaken extensive research throughout the United States including Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, New York and Washington D.C. Her research has also taken her to Latin America namely Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Panama, Colombia, Brazil and Cuba. She has also been an election observer for the Organization of American States in Grenada, El Salvador and Guyana. She writes a regular column for the Trinidad Sunday Guardian and the New York based Guyana Journal. In addition, she is a regular media commentator on national, regional and international issues. Dr. Rampersad is now based at the Department of Behavioural Sciences at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad, where she is a Lecturer in Political Science/International Relations.

Appendix II Organisational structure





Equal Opportunity Commission

Promoting Equality

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