

2nd EDITION



Equal Opportunity Commission
Promoting Equality

ECHO

Magazine

Amplifying Voices For Equal Opportunity

JANUARY 2026

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A Message from the Chairman

As we begin a new year, I would like to extend sincere thanks to all our stakeholders for your continued support of the Equal Opportunity Commission and the work we do to promote fairness, dignity, and inclusion across Trinidad and Tobago.

The past year reminded us that progress in equality does not happen in isolation. It is built through collaboration, dialogue, and a shared commitment to treating people with respect, regardless of who they are or where they come from. Your engagement with the Commission, whether through partnerships, consultations, outreach activities, or advocacy, has helped strengthen public awareness of equal opportunity and the protections provided under the law.

As we move forward, the Commission remains focused on fulfilling its mandate. This includes educating the public about discrimination, supporting individuals who seek redress, and working with organisations and institutions to promote inclusive practices. We also continue to place strong emphasis on prevention through education, as we believe that informed communities are key to lasting change.

In the year ahead, we look forward to deepening our relationships with stakeholders, expanding outreach initiatives, and continuing meaningful conversations around equality and human rights. Your role in this work remains vital, and we value the trust you place in the Commission.

On behalf of the Commissioners and staff of the Equal Opportunity Commission, I wish you a successful and fulfilling year. May it be one marked by cooperation, understanding, and progress for all.

Warm regards,
H. R. Ian Roach
Chairman
Equal Opportunity Commission



Our Executives



MR. H.R. IAN ROACH
Chairman



MS. DENISE DUNCAN
Vice Chairman



MR. JOHN ARNOLD
Commissioner



DR. PETER ELIAS
Commissioner



DR. KRYSTAL-JANE VERASAMMY
Commissioner

VISION

A society which is free from discrimination and prejudice, where human rights and diversity are respected, and where there is equality of opportunity for all.

MISSION

The Equal Opportunity Commission works towards the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity through advocacy, public education, research and the conciliation of complaints.

Employers Engage in Practical Discussion on Workplace Equality



Sessions like these reinforce the Commission's ongoing effort to promote awareness, support compliance and help organisations reduce the risk of discriminatory practices. The EOC remains committed to working with stakeholders to empower employers and employees across Trinidad and Tobago.

The Equal Opportunity Commission partnered with the Employers Consultative Association (ECA) to host a virtual sensitisation session titled "The EOC and the Employer." Attended by over 87 interested persons, the session was held on Friday 21st November 2025 and brought employers and interested parties together for a practical look at how the Equal Opportunity Act applies in workplace settings.

In the lead-up to the event, both teams worked closely to finalise the flow of the morning's programme. A small adjustment to the presentation order allowed the content to be delivered as originally planned earlier in the year. Mrs Cheryl Ann Peters opened the workshop with the first session at 9a.m. Her presentation laid the foundation for understanding the Act, the four categories of discrimination, and the responsibilities of employers under the law.

The second session featured contributions from Ms Jamika Wiggins (Supervisor, Investigating Officer), Ms Lorelei Wong (Legal Officer I) and Ms Adele Ramgoolam (Legal Officer I). They expanded on the Commission's processes, including receiving complaints, investigations, conciliation, and the support available to both employers and employees.

The ECA's PR representative, Mr Nirmal Maraj, served as moderator for the morning. The teams coordinated beforehand to ensure a smooth start, with presenters logging in early for technical testing. The workshop ran in two consecutive segments, wrapping up by midday. Participants engaged with the presenters on a range of topics, reflecting a continued interest from the business community in creating fair and inclusive workplaces.

Commission Team Spreads Holiday Cheer and a Message of Equality

As the year draws to a close, the EOC team came together to record a Christmas greeting video that will be shared across our online platforms and circulated to stakeholders. The message reflects the warmth of the season while grounding it in the Commission's ongoing work to promote equality, fairness and inclusion.

Staff members highlighted the importance of kindness, respect and dignity, values that echo the principles of the Equal Opportunity Act. Each person contributed a short message, reminding viewers that the holidays are a meaningful time to look out for one another, embrace diversity and build communities where everyone feels included.



The video also expresses gratitude to our partners, stakeholders and the public for their support throughout the year. By connecting the spirit of the season with our mandate, the greeting serves as both a celebration and a reminder that inclusion is a shared responsibility.

Visit our fan page and website to view the video

Men of the Commission Come Together for Inspirational Day

The EOC male staff members recently hosted its First Annual Men's Only Inspirational Day, a thoughtfully planned, paid for, facilitated and coordinated initiative by the men of the EOC. With the aim of bringing male staff together in a supportive and relaxed setting, the event encouraged reflection, teamwork and genuine connection while also focusing on men's mental health. The programme featured two of our very own colleagues as motivational speakers: Mr. Choy Felix, Communications Manager, and Mr. Leon Bain, Graphic Designer and Inspirational Artist. They shared inspiring and heartfelt messages centred on purpose, resilience and the value of uplifting one another in the workplace. With 100% attendance from the male staff members, participants responded warmly, noting that the sessions felt encouraging, relatable and perfectly timed.

Held on Thursday, 4 December 2025, the event offered a full day away from routine, allowing staff to slow down, engage in meaningful conversations and activities while strengthening bonds. From sharing meals to enjoying open discussions, the atmosphere was one of openness, camaraderie and mutual support.

The Men's Inspirational Day reflected the care, effort and unity of the men of the EOC who aid in bringing the organisation to life. Their dedication resulted in a memorable and uplifting experience that strengthened relationships and reaffirmed the importance of teamwork, connection and well-being across the organisation.





Equal Opportunity Commission

Promoting Equality

FAQ?

Who can access the EOC's services?

Anyone who believes they have been treated unfairly based on race, ethnicity, origin, religion, marital status, disability, or sex can access the services of the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC).

Our services are available to everyone in Trinidad and Tobago and are completely free of charge. You don't need a lawyer to make a complaint. The EOC is here to listen, guide, and help resolve matters through conciliation.

Address: #55-57 Manic Street, Chaguanas

Phone: (868) 672-0928



www.equalopportunity.gov.tt Email: communications@eoc.gov.tt

Staff Celebrate the Season at Merry and Bright Christmas Event

The Legal Department brought the holiday spirit to life this year with the EOC's Merry and Bright Christmas Party, held on Friday 19th December 2025 in the Training Room. The afternoon was a warm and cheerful way to close out the year, giving staff a chance to unwind, connect and share some well-deserved festive cheer.

The event featured a catered lunch from Ambrosial Gourmet Catering, and the menu did not disappoint. Staff enjoyed a colourful mix of dishes, including freshly tossed green salad, tri-colour pasta salad, honey mustard glazed chicken, roasted turkey with apple sauce, spiced fish fillet, chicken pastelle pie, confetti rice and ginger orange stir-fried vegetables. Traditional fruit cake and Christmas cookies rounded off the meal on a sweet note.

True to EOC tradition, colleagues also contributed drinks, appetizers, snacks, desserts and table essentials, adding a personal touch to the celebration. The relaxed format kept the afternoon lively, and the room was filled with easy conversation, laughter and the kind of camaraderie that sets the tone for the year ahead.

The Legal Department ensured the planning and coordination ran smoothly, and their efforts helped create an atmosphere that was both festive and welcoming.





The event served as a gentle reminder of the importance of taking time to celebrate our collective efforts. As we move into a new year, the spirit of togetherness shared at the Christmas gathering will no doubt carry into the work we do.

Happy holidays to all, and thank you to the Legal Department for hosting a memorable and meaningful end-of-year celebration.

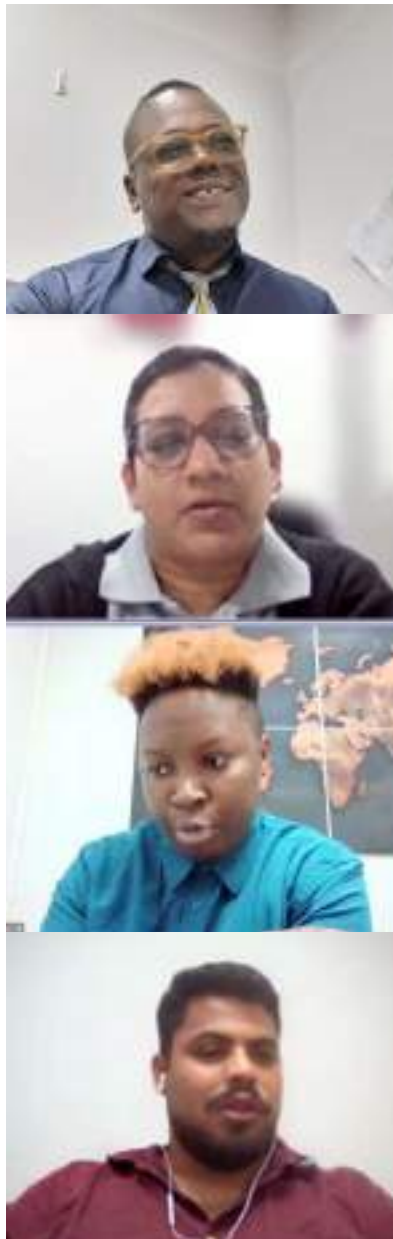
EOC Strengthens Collaboration with Caribbean Centre for Human Rights

On Wednesday, 5th November 2025, the Communications Unit of the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) met virtually with the Caribbean Centre for Human Rights (CCHR) to explore collaboration on initiatives supporting vulnerable populations. The meeting, held via Microsoft Teams, brought together key personnel from both organisations to discuss joint advocacy, outreach, and educational opportunities.

Participants:

CCHR – Riana Kanhai (Program Manager, UNHCR), Daniel Natera Narine (Outreach & Interpretation Coordinator), Ana-Lissa Jack (Legal Associate), Alicia Aquing
EOC – Choy Felix (Communications Manager, spearheading from EOC's end), Ria Watson (Research Officer II), Kieron McCarthy (Business Operations Assistant I)

The discussion highlighted CCHR's ongoing projects, including legal assistance for domestic violence survivors, restorative justice initiatives, and advocacy to remove the saving law clause in Trinidad and Tobago. Choy Felix outlined the EOC's mandate to promote equality in employment, education, provision of goods and services, and accommodation,



The meeting, held via Microsoft Teams, brought together key personnel from both organisations to discuss joint advocacy, outreach, and educational opportunities.

emphasizing mediation and referrals to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal when necessary.

Key areas for collaboration were identified, including:

Outreach activities and information booths in communities and schools. Mediation training and capacity-building sessions. Joint workshops and webinars on equality, human rights, and youth engagement. Development of referral pathways for cases requiring specialized legal expertise

The EOC confirmed its participation in CCHR's Human Rights Support Hub – Christmas Hub Edition on 16th December 2025 at Plaza de Montrose, Chaguanas, where staff will provide information and support to the public in line with the Commission's mandate.

Both organisations agreed to schedule future meetings, including legal officers, to formalize collaboration and explore additional initiatives. This partnership represents a significant step forward in promoting equality, protecting human rights, and supporting vulnerable populations across Trinidad and Tobago



Equal Opportunity Commission
Promoting Equality

FAQ?

**What must be included
in a complaint?
You should state:**



- Who you are (complainant)
- Who is the respondent
- What happened & when
- What steps (if any) you already took



Phone: (868) 672-0928

www.equalopportunity.gov.tt Email: communications@eoc.gov.tt

Promoting Dignity and Inclusion at the Christmas Support Hub

The EOC joined the Caribbean Centre for Human Rights (CCHR) for its Human Rights Support Hub: Christmas Hub Edition on Tuesday 16 December 2025 at Plaza de Montrose in Chaguanas. The event brought together civil society organisations, private sector partners and service providers in a coordinated effort to offer rights-based support to families and individuals in need.

As the region's central hub for human rights solutions, CCHR designed the Christmas Hub to provide access to essential services, information and seasonal relief. The focus for the day was on dignity, inclusion and practical assistance, especially for vulnerable groups.

The EOC participated as an implementation partner by hosting an informational booth that highlighted the Commission's role, mandate and services under the Equal Opportunity Act. Staff engaged with attendees, answered questions about discrimination, and provided guidance on how members of the public can lodge complaints or access support. The booth also focused on public awareness, helping community members better understand their rights in areas such as employment, education, accommodation and the provision of goods and services.



Partners were invited to contribute support items or offer specialised services, and the EOC was part of a wider network of organisations that helped create a welcoming and supportive environment. CCHR also facilitated private consultation spaces to ensure that sensitive matters could be addressed confidentially.

The Commission's participation reinforced its ongoing commitment to promoting fairness, equality and access to justice. By collaborating with regional partners like CCHR, the EOC continues to expand its reach and ensure that rights-based support is accessible to those who need it most.

The EOC thanks the Caribbean Centre for Human Rights for the invitation and looks forward to continued collaboration aimed at strengthening inclusion and empowerment across communities.

EOC Participates in National Stigma Index Capacity-Building Workshop



The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) joined national partners in a successful three-day capacity-building workshop focused on the use of the Stigma Index in Trinidad and Tobago. Held at Hilton & Conference Center on September 26th, 29th and 30th, the sessions, guided by the National AIDS Co-ordination Committee, provided training to community members and stakeholders on ethical data collection and reporting, emphasizing the importance of capturing accurate, lived experiences of stigma and discrimination.

Supporting the EOC at the event were Choy Felix, Communications Manager, and Lorelei Wong, Legal Officer I, who engaged with participants and contributed to discussions on advancing rights-based responses for persons living with HIV.

The implementation of the Stigma Index continues to provide critical evidence to inform policy, challenge institutional barriers, and improve access to care and the quality of life for people living with HIV. The forum, hosted by the Trinidad and Tobago Community for Positive Women (TTCW), also featured remarks from the UN Resident Coordinator, stressing that while treatment progress has been made, stigma remains a persistent barrier.



The EOC remains committed to fostering inclusion and supporting initiatives that protect the rights and dignity of vulnerable populations.

In photos: Above- EOC Legal Officer I- Lorelei Wong and below EOC's Communications Manager Choy Felix shares a light moment with HIV Helpline Coordinator Dianna Weeks



Equal Opportunity Commission

Promoting Equality

FAQ?



**How do I lodge
a complaint?**

**You can fill out
the complaint form
online, download it,
email it, or deliver it
to the office.**



Phone: (868) 672-0928

www.equalopportunity.gov.tt Email: communications@eoc.gov.tt

Legal Outreach Brings Equality Guidance to Eastern Communities

The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) proudly participated in a Free Legal Clinic organized by the Eastern Lawyers Association (ELA) on Saturday, 8th November 2025, at the Brazil Community Centre, LP#51 Transport Street, Brazil Village, via Arima. The clinic was part of ELA's ongoing efforts to provide accessible legal services to residents in the eastern districts of Trinidad, including Tunapuna, Mayaro, Arima, Sangre Grande, and Rio Claro.

more. By providing direct access to legal professionals, the clinic sought to empower individuals with knowledge of their rights and available remedies.

Representing the EOC at the clinic was Haran Ramkaransingh, Legal Director, who guided attendees on matters relating to equality and anti-discrimination. Mr. Ramkaransingh highlighted the EOC's mandate to promote equal opportunity in employment, education, access to goods and services, and accommodation, emphasizing the Commission's role in investigating complaints and offering mediation or referral to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal where necessary. His presence reinforced the EOC's commitment to ensuring that community members understand their rights and have access to supportive resources.

The Free Legal Clinic also featured participation from key partner organizations, including the Office of the Ombudsman, Children's Authority, Council of Legal Education HWLS Legal Aid Clinic, and the Legal Aid and Advisory Authority, including the Public Defenders Office. Together, these organizations provided a comprehensive spectrum of legal support, advice, and resources, allowing attendees to address multiple concerns in one accessible, community-centered space.

The clinic served not only as a platform for legal guidance but also as an avenue for community engagement, education, and empowerment. Residents were able to interact directly with legal professionals, clarify their legal rights, and learn about avenues for recourse, while partner organizations like the EOC reinforced the importance of fair treatment, inclusivity, and equal access to opportunities.

The Eastern Lawyers Association continues to focus on professional development, practical legal support, and community outreach, aiming to strengthen social cohesion and ensure access to justice for all residents. The EOC looks forward to continued collaboration with the ELA and other partners to bring meaningful legal support and education to communities across Trinidad and Tobago.



In photo- Amit Mahabir Attorney at Law and Legal Director Haran Ramkaransingh

The event offered community members the opportunity to receive free legal advice from practicing attorneys on a wide range of issues, including land disputes and property matters, family law (divorce, custody, and maintenance), estates and wills, tenant and land law, debts and contracts, employment issues, personal injury, and

Diwali Celebration Reflects Workplace Diversity and Unity



The staff at the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) came together to celebrate Diwali 2025 with a small, festive gathering. Many staff dressed in traditional Indian attire, adding colour and warmth to the occasion.

Supporting Equal Opportunity During the 2025 Recruitment Drive



The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) was proud to participate in Phase I of the National Recruitment Drive 2025, an initiative aimed at connecting citizens with over 20,000 job opportunities across Trinidad and Tobago.

Held from October 27th to October 31st the EOC was represented by Communications Manager Mr. Choy Felix, Senior Legal Officer, Ms. Maria Rodrigues-Fields and BOAIL, Amrita Gangadeen who in addition to providing information on three EOC vacancies, they also shared the Commission's mandate to promote equality and prevent discrimination in employment, education, services, and accommodation. Visitors were informed about their rights and how the EOC can assist with workplace and service-related concerns, ensuring that recruitment and employment practices are fair and inclusive.

EOC can assist with workplace and service-related concerns, ensuring that recruitment and employment practices are fair and inclusive.





SPOTLIGHT ON EOT



Understanding the Difference: EOC & EOT explained

The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) and the Equal Opportunity Tribunal (EOT) are two separate but connected institutions under the Equal Opportunity Act. While they work towards the same goal of promoting equality and eliminating discrimination, their roles are distinct.



Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC):

- Receives and investigates complaints of discrimination.
- Seeks to resolve matters through conciliation (a process similar to mediation).
- Conducts public education and outreach to promote equality and good relations among communities.
- Cannot make binding legal decisions, but can refer unresolved matters to the Tribunal.

Website: www.equalopportunity.gov.tt



Equal Opportunity Tribunal (EOT):

- A superior court of record with powers similar to the High Court.
- Hears and determines complaints referred by the EOC.
- Can make binding legal decisions and orders, including compensation.

Website: www.equalrightscourt.org

Together, the EOC and EOT provide citizens with avenues to seek redress and ensure that the principles of fairness and equality are upheld.



Why Timing Matters

As a popular television personality always says “Timing is everything”. One of the most important and sometimes misunderstood aspects of bringing a discrimination complaint is timing. Even where a concern feels ongoing, deeply personal, or rooted in years of frustration, the law sets clear deadlines for when a complaint must be formally lodged.

A recent decision of the Equal Opportunity Tribunal (EOT No. 0002 of 2022, Kamal Mangaroo v Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force highlights why acting promptly is essential and how the Tribunal approaches the issue of late complaints.

The Complainant, a former member of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, alleged that he was discriminated against on the grounds of race in relation to his employment. His concerns included:

- An alleged administrative error in 1999 that excluded him from a training cadre, which he said affected his seniority and chances for promotion.
- The non-restoration of his seniority even after later completing training.
- The alleged failure to conduct a pre-release medical examination, which he claimed was afforded to others.

He sought a range of remedies, including declarations, damages, recognition of a higher terminal rank, and associated benefits.

Before the Tribunal could consider the substance of these claims, the Respondent applied to have the matter struck out, arguing that the complaint was out of time.

What Does the Law Say About Time Limits?

Under the Equal Opportunity Act, a complaint of discrimination must generally be lodged with the Equal Opportunity Commission within six (6) months of the alleged discriminatory act.

This time limit is not a technicality. It goes directly to the Tribunal’s jurisdiction, its legal authority to hear and determine a matter. If a complaint is filed outside the prescribed period, the Tribunal can only accept it if exceptional circumstances are proven.

When Does Time Start Running?

In this case, the Tribunal carefully examined when the alleged discrimination could be said to have last occurred.

Although the Complainant’s grievances stretched back many years, the Tribunal identified May 2017 as the last operative act capable of grounding the complaint. This was the point at which an earlier recommendation relating to his position was rescinded.

The Tribunal found that:

- The formal complaint was lodged with the Commission on 8 June 2018. However, time started to run from May 2017.
- An earlier “approach” to the Commission in 2017 did not amount to lodging a complaint under the Act.
- Subsequent correspondence in 2018 did not restart or extend the limitation period.

Even where issues may appear to form a continuing course of conduct, the law does not allow time to run indefinitely. The six-month clock runs from the last actionable decision or omission, not from when the effects are still being felt.

The Tribunal’s Decision

The Tribunal concluded that the complaint was filed outside the six-month statutory period and that no exceptional circumstances had been established to justify accepting it late.

As a result:

- The Tribunal declined jurisdiction.
- The complaint was struck out without the Tribunal determining whether discrimination had, in fact, occurred.

Importantly, the Tribunal acknowledged the Complainant’s long service and the personal toll of prolonged processes, but reaffirmed that it must apply the law as it stands.

Key Takeaways for the Public

This decision offers important guidance for anyone considering bringing a complaint under the Equal Opportunity Act:

- Act early. Do not wait until a matter feels unbearable or is fully resolved elsewhere before seeking advice.
- Know the difference between making informal enquiries and formally lodging a complaint.
- Ongoing impact is not the same as ongoing discrimination. Time usually runs from the last decision or act, not from the continued effects.
- Conciliation does not override the law. Participation in the Commission’s process does not waive the statutory time limits.

The Equal Opportunity Tribunal exists to provide access to justice in discrimination matters. However, access to justice also depends on certainty, fairness, and adherence to the legal framework established by Parliament. Understanding and respecting timelines ensures that complaints can be properly heard, evidence can be fairly tested, and all parties can have confidence in the process.

To read the full judgement please visit www.equalrightscourt.org and click on the tab labelled judgment.

STAY TUNED!

The image shows the cover of a spiral-bound magazine titled 'ECHO Magazine'. The cover has a blue background with a wavy, water-like texture. At the top, the 'EOC' logo is displayed in blue, with the full name 'Equal Opportunity Commission' written in smaller text below it. The word 'ECHO' is prominently featured in large, bold, yellow letters with a black outline. Below 'ECHO', the word 'Magazine' is written in a smaller, yellow, cursive-style font. At the bottom of the cover, the tagline 'Amplifying Voices For Equal Opportunity' is written in a yellow, italicized font. The magazine is set against a background of colorful fireworks exploding in the night sky.

EOC Equal Opportunity Commission

ECHO

Magazine

Amplifying Voices For Equal Opportunity

The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) is pleased to announce the successful launch of its quarterly stakeholder magazine, EOC Echo, which has now been delivered to over 500 key stakeholders across Trinidad and Tobago and regionally.

EOC Echo is designed to inform, engage, and strengthen partnerships, providing updates on the Commission's activities, recent outreach initiatives, and key developments in promoting equality and inclusion. The magazine also highlights success stories, upcoming events, and insights on best practices for advancing equal opportunity in workplaces, education, and service provision.

The publication reinforces the EOC's commitment to transparency and stakeholder engagement, ensuring that partners, organisations, and community leaders are equipped with the information needed to collaborate effectively in promoting human rights and equity nationwide.

Stay tuned for the next edition coming out in March 2026

Celebrating Excellence and Service Among Commissioners

The Equal Opportunity Commission is delighted to share and celebrate two remarkable achievements by our colleagues.

On 18 November 2025, our Commissioner, 'Dr' Peter Elias, was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts by the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT). As a Commissioner, Dr Elias combines a creative vision with a steadfast commitment to fairness and inclusion, strengthening the Commission's work in public engagement and advocacy. This prestigious recognition honours not only his influence in the fashion industry but also his dedication to uplifting Caribbean creativity and showcasing Trinidad and Tobago's talent on the global stage. The Equal Opportunity Commission extends warm congratulations to Dr Elias on this outstanding accomplishment.

We also extend heartfelt congratulations to Dr Krystal-Jane Verasammy, who was recently recognised with the Service to Vulnerable Populations Award at the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Psychologists' Mental Health Conference. This award honours her tireless dedication to equity, dignity, and inclusion, particularly in advocacy for persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. Dr Verasammy's commitment to ensuring that no one is left behind exemplifies the core values of the Commission.

The Equal Opportunity Commission is proud to celebrate the achievements of Dr Elias and Dr Verasammy, whose contributions continue to inspire excellence, inclusion, and advocacy in Trinidad and Tobago.



This month, we proudly extend our congratulations to Mr. Navindra Narine, our Information Technology Infrastructure Specialist within the IT Unit, on achieving his Master of Science in Cyber Security from the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) in 2025—a remarkable academic milestone. This achievement reflects Navindra's unwavering dedication to advancing expertise in safeguarding digital ecosystems. He remains committed to applying his knowledge and skills to strengthen organizational resilience, protect critical infrastructure, and ensure the security of sensitive data through the implementation of sustainable controls and policies within the Equal Opportunity Commission.



MANDATE OF THE COMMISSION



The mandate of the EOC is to promote and advocate for mutual respect between groups based on understanding and appreciation of diversity and on shared respect for equality and human rights.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1

To secure effective legislative and regulatory framework for equality and human rights.

2

To build a society without prejudice, promote good relations and foster a vibrant equality and human rights culture.

3

To promote understanding and awareness of rights and duties and deliver timely and accurate advice and guidance to individuals and employers.

4

To build an authoritative and responsive organisation.

THE VIEW FOR EVERYONE.

THE PROBLEM: THE BARRIER.



THE "EQUALITY" SOLUTION:
THE SAME FOR EVERYONE.



THE RESULT: STILL NOT FAIR.



THE "EQUITY" SOLUTION:
WHAT EACH PERSON NEEDS.



THE RESULT: EVERYONE CAN PARTICIPATE.



THE ULTIMATE GOAL: JUSTICE & LIBERATION.



EOC ECHO Magazine

WORD SEARCH

A	J	E	B	N	A	R	A	E	N	T	E	E	N	T	E	G
O	P	P	O	R	T	U	L	S	T	I	C	E	F	U	U	L
J	U	S	T	I	C	E	R	E	S	P	E	C	T	R	S	P
S	T	A	T	U	S	A	C	C	O	U	N	T	A	B	I	L
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F	A	I	R	N	E	S	S	O	N	R	E	H	E	A	T	H

OPPORTUNITY	JUSTICE	TRAINING	OFFENCE
ACT	RESPECT	SEXUALITY	GROUND
PROMOTE	STATUS	INVESTIGATION	RELIGION
ELIMINATE	PROMOTE	VICTIMISATION	EMPOWERMENT
DISCRIMINATION	EMPLOYMENT	HEARING	ACCOMMODATION
EQUALITY	PREVENT	PROHIBIT	FAIRNESS
GENDER	OUTREACH	EQUALITY'	OFFENCE
PROMOTE	INCLUSION	PREGNANCY	



Ring in the New Year: Traditions from Around the World

As the calendar turns and we welcome a new year, people across the globe mark the occasion with a wide variety of customs and celebrations. While the essence of New Year's is universal, a time for reflection, gratitude, and hope, each culture adds its own unique flavour.

Spain: At the stroke of midnight, Spaniards eat 12 grapes, one for each chime of the clock, to bring luck for the coming year.

Japan: Families celebrate Ōmisoka, cleaning their homes and visiting shrines to welcome good fortune and drive away bad spirits.

Scotland: Known as Hogmanay, New Year's Eve involves singing Auld Lang Syne, exchanging gifts, and the tradition of first-footing, where the first visitor after midnight brings luck.

Brazil: In coastal areas, people wear white clothing and jump over seven waves while making wishes for the new year.

Denmark: Danes smash old dishes against friends' doors as a symbol of friendship and to ward off bad spirits.

Philippines: Round fruits are displayed on the dining table to attract wealth and prosperity, while families also make lots of noise to welcome the new year.

Trinidad and Tobago: It is commonly believed that black eyed-peas, whether in a delicious pelau or cooked with some tasty pigtail, will bring prosperity and good luck for the New Year.

These rituals, whether playful, spiritual, or symbolic, all carry the same intention: to start the year with positivity, hope, and good fortune. They remind us that while traditions differ, the desire for renewal and joy is a truly universal human experience.

Reminder of your right to equal opportunity Monday 12th December 2025

AT THE start of a new year, many of us reset our goals, review our priorities, and make plans for what lies ahead. At the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC), the beginning of 2026 is also a good moment to gently remind the public of something we've shared before, but which remains just as important today: your right to equal treatment under the law.

Over the years, the EOC has spoken extensively about discrimination, equality, and inclusion. We've held workshops, written columns, visited communities, and engaged workplaces across Trinidad and Tobago. Yet, discrimination continues to show up in everyday situations, sometimes quietly, sometimes openly. That's why this reminder matters.

What the EOC continues to do

The EOC's mandate under the Equal Opportunity Act has not changed. We are responsible for addressing discrimination and victimisation in four main areas of public life: employment, education, the provision of goods and services, and accommodation.

The act protects individuals from discrimination based on sex, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, marital status, and disability. Disability includes physical, intellectual, and mental health conditions.

Beyond handling complaints, the EOC continues its work in education, public awareness, and advocacy, because preventing discrimination is just as important as responding to it.

Discrimination still happens

Despite increased awareness, many people still experience discrimination and are unsure whether what they've faced is covered by the law.

Consider Jane Doe. Jane applies for a promotion at work and is told she is qualified, but later learns the role was given to someone else because management felt a man would be "better suited" for leadership. Jane may not immediately label this as discrimination, but it could fall under sex discrimination.

Then there is John Doe. John lives with a mental health condition and requests flexibility at work so he can

attend medical appointments. Instead, he is treated differently, excluded from meetings, and eventually disciplined for issues linked to his condition. This may amount to disability discrimination and victimisation.

These examples are not unusual. They reflect situations the EOC continues to see and address.

Making a complaint does not have to be daunting

Another reminder worth repeating is that contacting the EOC does not automatically mean going to court. Many people avoid reaching out because they assume the process will be confrontational or complicated.

In reality, the EOC focuses heavily on conciliation. Once a complaint is received and assessed, the commission investigates and, where appropriate, facilitates a confidential process aimed at resolving the matter fairly and respectfully. Outcomes can include apologies, changes to policies, reasonable accommodations, or training to prevent future issues.

For Jane, this might mean her employer reviewing its promotion practices. For John, it could result in workplace adjustments that allow him to continue working without fear of unfair treatment.

If conciliation is not successful, matters may be referred to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal, which operates independently and has the authority to make binding decisions.

Why reminders like this still matter

Even with years of public education, many people still don't report discrimination. Some worry about backlash, others feel their experience isn't "serious enough," and some simply don't know where to turn. But discrimination, when left unchallenged, becomes normalised. Each complaint brought to the EOC helps strengthen accountability and promotes fairer practices across society.

As we move through 2026

This is not new information. It's a reminder that equality is protected by law and help is available because no one should have to accept unfair treatment as "just the way things are."

If you believe you have been discriminated against, or if you want to better understand your rights and

responsibilities, the Equal Opportunity Commission remains here to support you.

Equal opportunity is not just a principle we talk about; it's something we must continue to protect, together.

For more information, to request a free sensitisation session, or to make a complaint,

www.equalopportunity.gov.tt,

E-mail communications@eoc.gov.tt,

or call 672-092

Equality in focus: Reflections on year that was Monday 29th December 2025

AS THIS year draws to a close, it is fitting to pause and reflect on the conversations we the EOC have shared through this column and the purpose they continue to serve. Throughout 2025, the Equal Opportunity Commission has written consistently more than 13 fortnightly columns in the Newsday and has used this space to speak directly with the public about equality, dignity and fairness, not as abstract ideals, but as everyday realities that affect real lives.

Over the past months, our columns have explored a wide range of issues that sit at the heart of the Equal Opportunity Act and our national values. We addressed discrimination in education, reminding readers that a child's right to learn must never be compromised by race, religion, disability, culture or appearance. We spoke about natural hair and identity, literacy and access, and the responsibility of institutions to ensure that policies uplift rather than exclude. We also examined the often difficult but necessary conversations around mental health. Through discussions on men's mental health, disability and psychosocial conditions, and workplace inclusion, we highlighted that mental well-being is a human rights issue. Equality cannot exist where stigma silences people or where fear prevents them from seeking support or fair treatment.

Our columns marked important international observances, including International Literacy Day, World Mental Health Day, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Human Rights Day, Mandela Day and Public Service Day. Each observance gave us an opportunity to connect global principles to local realities, and to show how international human rights standards align with the protections already en-

shrined in our law.

We reflected on diversity and unity during Divali and Christmas, celebrating the cultural and religious richness of Trinidad and Tobago, while reinforcing the importance of mutual respect. We examined public health and human rights through discussions on immunisation, and revisited the core role of the commission itself, explaining what we do, why it matters, and how the public can access our services.

Taken together, these columns tell a clear story. Equality is not confined to courtrooms or legislation. It is present in classrooms, workplaces, hospitals, public offices and homes. It shows up in how policies are written, how decisions are made, and how people are treated when they speak up or ask for fairness.

I wish to commend the EOC team, our legal officers, communications staff and contributors, for their thoughtful research, clarity and commitment throughout the year. Writing about equality requires care, balance and courage. This team has consistently met that responsibility, ensuring that our messaging is accurate, accessible and rooted in empathy.

To our readers, thank you for engaging with these discussions, sharing them, questioning them and reflecting on them. Public education is most effective when it becomes a conversation rather than a lecture, and your continued interest strengthens that exchange.

As we look ahead to the new year, the commission remains committed to continuing this column and to deepening these conversations. Discrimination does not stand still, and neither can our efforts to challenge it. We will continue to inform, to advocate and to encourage dialogue that promotes understanding and inclusion.

On behalf of the dedicated and motivated commissioners, management and staff of the Equal Opportunity Commission, I extend warm season's greetings to all our readers and citizens, and best wishes for a safe, peaceful and fulfilling New Year. May the year ahead bring renewed commitment to fairness, respect and equal opportunity for all.

HR Ian Roach is the chairman of the Equal Opportunity Commission

Everyday essentials, rights: A call to equality

Monday 15th December 2025

TRINIDAD and Tobago joined the global community to honour Human Rights Day, which was celebrated on December 10. This significant day acknowledges one of the world's most influential commitments to dignity and equality – the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

UDHR was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on December 10, 1948, which established for the first time a collective understanding that all human beings are entitled to fundamental rights and freedoms, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, disability, belief, or social background.

This year, the UN theme, “Human Rights: Our Everyday Essentials,” is a reminder that human rights are not merely reserved for international conventions or legal textbooks, but rather are a part of our daily lives and experiences.

Human Rights in its simplest form determine the adequacy of foods we eat, the air we breathe, how we are treated at school or in the world of work, the opportunities we have to succeed, and our right to protected dignity. Human rights establish shared human values which create the basis for fair treatment, safety, justice and equality.

Human rights are positive, essential and attainable. According to the UN, human rights uplift and not merely protect. They create a sense of happiness, security and belonging which people ought to experience in their everyday lives. For example, these rights guarantee that children can learn without prejudice, prospective employees receive fair assessments based on their qualifications instead of stereotypes, and people with disabilities can access public services independently and with dignity.

Human rights operate as fundamental necessities, that is, the right to be safe, to express ourselves without fear, to participate in decisions affecting our lives, and to access various opportunities free from bias, stigma and discrimination. During uncertain times, these universal rights remain a reliable foundation.

Notably, human rights are attainable. They start with individual actions which include treating others fairly, fighting stigma and discrimination, listening to oth-

ers, and respecting differences between people of different backgrounds. Human rights depend on collective action, which requires nations to work together to protect equality and fight against injustices.

Human rights and mandate of the EOC

In TT, the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) operates as a guardian of these everyday essentials. Created by the Equal Opportunity Act (EOA), the EOC has a mandate to prohibit discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and inclusive practices across the public and private sectors.

It is also responsible for receiving, investigating, and, as far as possible, conciliating allegations of discrimination lodged with it. The EOC's mandate aligns closely with the principles of the UDHR, that is, equal treatment under the law, protection from discrimination, respect for dignity, participation in society, and access to justice.

The EOC continues its work to make human rights a practical reality and not merely a theoretical concept in various settings, including homes, workplaces, schools, religious institutions, and public services.

Promoting non-discrimination and equality in everyday life

Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, sex, disability, marital status or origin diminishes the very essence of human rights. It hinders access to employment, limits educational opportunities, and excludes individuals from participating equally in society.

The EOC addresses discrimination by providing free investigative and conciliatory services for members of the public who believe they have been subjected to discrimination; educating and sensitising the public on their rights and obligations under the EOA; collaborating with employers, schools, and service providers to build inclusive and respectful environments; and advocating for policies and practices that promote equal access, consequently removing systemic barriers.

Human rights as everyday essentials in TT

Human rights manifest itself in ordinary expectations such as being treated fairly in the recruitment process when applying for a job; accessing education without discrimination; receiving goods and services free from bias or prejudice; ensuring public spaces are accessible to people with disabilities; and being protected from hate, harassment, or unequal treatment because of



Equal Opportunity Commission
Promoting Equality

FAQ?

Can an organisation
or company make
a complaint?



Yes. Both individuals and organisations can lodge complaints if they believe discrimination has occurred.



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one's background or beliefs.

These “everyday essentials” are not extraordinary demands but basic requirements for people to thrive in society.

Building society of respect and dignity

While legal protections such as the EOA are key deterrents to discrimination, human rights ultimately depend on having a culture of fairness which can only be created through daily individual actions. Every person has a part to play in developing such an environment. This can be done by speaking up when witnessing unfair treatment or discriminatory practices, respecting differences, and fostering inclusive environments.

The EOC continues to champion this cultural shift through nationwide outreach, training, advocacy, and sensitisation programmes. Human Rights Day gives us an opportunity to recognise that equality requires continuous work and efforts, and that progress is not only achieved through legislative reforms and policies, but through shifts in mindsets.

As we reflect on Human Rights Day 2025, this year's theme urges us to recognise that human rights touch every aspect of our lives and that protecting them is a shared responsibility.

While organisations such as the EOC exist to uphold these rights, true equality is only achieved when institutions, citizens and communities work together to firmly reject discrimination and embrace inclusion.

This article is intended solely for educational and informational purposes and does not constitute legal advice. Readers seeking further information or assistance on matters relating to discrimination complaints can contact the Equal Opportunity Commission at 1-868-672-0928, e-mail us at communications@eoc.gov.tt, or visit our website at www.equalopportunity.gov.tt

Inclusion: Path to social progress

Monday 1st December 2025

TRINIDAD and Tobago will join the global community in celebrating International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) on December 3. This year's UN theme, “Fostering disability-inclusive societies for advancing social progress,” calls nations to address existing social inequalities by creating accessible spaces which enable all people to participate with dignity.

The theme emerged from the Second World Summit for Social Development, which took place in Doha in November, as leaders recognised disability inclusion as essential to poverty eradication, social integration, and employment opportunities.

The summit demonstrated that social development becomes unattainable as disability discrimination continues to disproportionately affect people with disabilities through poverty and employment barriers, insufficient social support, inaccessible environments and restricted personal freedoms.

Globally, there are 1.3 billion people with significant disabilities, representing one-sixth of the world's population. According to a 2011 report from the Central Statistical Office, approximately 52,244 people in TT lived with a disability. Who is a person with a disability? These are people who experience long-term, continuous physical, mental, neurological, intellectual or sensory impairments.

Research demonstrates that people with disabilities face poorer health experiences, shorter life spans, limited educational and work opportunities, and other barriers when accessing public health services. The existing social inequalities result from ableist systems and discriminatory practices, stigma, exclusion and limited access to essential services.

The United Nations maintains that disability inclusion is an essential requirement for achieving its Sustainable Development Goals. The UN Disability Inclusion Strategy highlights specific measures to achieve healthcare equity, access to social protection, employment opportunities, and participation in public life for all people.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) requires that all member states ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to all



services that others receive. TT signed onto the CRPD in September 2007 before formal ratification in June 2015.

In advancing inclusion in TT, the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) has a pivotal role in promoting equality for people with disabilities. The commission has a mandate to prohibit discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and inclusive practices across the public and private sectors. The Equal Opportunity Act (EOA) prohibits discrimination on the grounds of disability in key areas, including employment, education, the provision of goods and services, and the provision of accommodation.

The EOC provides people with disabilities access to justice through its investigative and conciliatory functions, and by engaging the public in awareness programmes so that people can access redress when faced with discriminatory occurrences. The commission actively collaborates with employers, schools, public authorities, and civil society organisations to raise awareness of their responsibilities and ensure compliance with the EOA.

These EOC initiatives echo global recommendations that underscore the need for sensitisation and awareness programmes, accessibility standards, and inclusive employment practices.

The goal is to ensure a society in which every person feels a sense of justice and belonging. The observance of IDPD demonstrates that inclusion is not solely the responsibility of those with disabilities but requires a collective effort from all governmental organisations, employers, service providers, civil society organisations and the wider public.

To ensure a disability-inclusive TT, reform must include establishing accessible physical spaces, digital platforms, and communication channels, and implementing fair employment procedures and reasonable workplace accommodations.

Further, inclusive educational programmes, robust social protection systems, equal access to healthcare and public services, and disability representation in national policymaking and legislation should be of paramount importance. Ultimately, TT will only achieve these reforms if society at large adopts a mindset and cultural shift that outrightly rejects stigma and embraces diversity.

These are not abstract ideals. The practical measures will establish communities that demonstrate improved social unity, strength, and resilience. Consequently, the development of inclusive communities leads to higher national productivity and social equality, which drive national development forward.

As we observe IDPD 2025, the EOC reaffirms its commitment to ensuring the protection, equality, and full inclusion of all people in TT. This day not only honours people with disabilities but also renews the call to action to eliminate barriers that impede access, enhance systems, and establish environments that enable every individual to succeed.

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Men's Mental Health Month: Equality conversation we need to have

Monday 17 November 2025

NOVEMBER IS often called Movember, a month dedicated to raising awareness about men's health, especially mental health, suicide prevention, and prostate and testicular cancer. It's a time to remind ourselves that men's well-being is not just a personal issue; it's a social one that affects families, workplaces, and entire communities.

Around the world, men face unique mental health challenges, often in silence. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that men are about three times more likely to die by suicide than women, yet are far less likely to seek therapy or emotional support.

In TT, the situation is just as concerning. Ministry of Health data shows that between 2020 and 2023, 83 per cent of all suicide deaths were men, four out of every five cases. While women are generally more likely to seek help, men often struggle quietly, weighed down by the pressure to appear strong.

Where equality fits in

At the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC), our work centres on fairness, dignity, and inclusion. The Equal Opportunity Act protects people from discrimination in employment, education, accommodation, and access to goods and services. Importantly, it also recognises mental health conditions as a disability, meaning that those living with depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder are entitled to fair treatment.

When men hide their struggles because they fear being judged, sidelined, or labelled as weak, that's not just stigma, it's a barrier to equality. And when workplaces fail to support employees with mental health challenges, they reinforce that inequality.

Addressing men's mental health, then, isn't only about awareness. It's about ensuring that systems, policies, and social attitudes give men the same freedom to seek help and healing as anyone else.

A shared responsibility

Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, in her message for International Women's Day 2025 in March, made a point worth repeating: "Men are not our enemy...there is no gender domination in Trinidad and Tobago." She encouraged women and men to work together toward national progress.

That sentiment matters here. Promoting gender equality doesn't mean focusing on one group over another, it means recognising that everyone benefits when both men and women are supported. True equality calls for empathy on both sides, and part of that empathy is acknowledging men's mental health as a legitimate and urgent issue.

Breaking the silence

For generations, men have been told to "man up" or "don't cry." These messages teach boys to bury their emotions and equate vulnerability with failure. Over time, this emotional bottling-up can lead to aggression, substance abuse, depression, and even suicide.

We have to change that culture. Men should feel safe expressing their emotions and accessing mental health resources without fear of ridicule or rejection. Equality means recognising that emotional openness is a human right, not a gendered one.

Creating supportive workplaces

Employers play a key role in promoting mental wellness. Encouraging the use of mental health days, providing access to employee assistance programmes and fostering a culture of empathy make a real difference.

At the EOC, we continue to advocate for workplaces that treat mental wellness as part of employees' rights. When staff feel supported, productivity rises and the organisation as a whole becomes healthier.

Mental health awareness should be built into equality policies, not treated as an afterthought. No one should fear losing a job, promotion, or credibility for admitting they need help.

Moving forward

A truly equal society is one that values mental health as much as physical health. This Movember, let's make space for men to speak, seek help, and heal without shame. Strength is not silence, it's honesty, courage, and self-awareness.

Because equality isn't just about balancing genders; it's about creating a TT where everyone, including men, can live and work with dignity, understanding, and support.

If you or someone you know needs help, contact the National Suicide Prevention hotline at 800-5588, or reach out to the Equal Opportunity Commission at communications@eoc.gov.tt or 672-0926 for information on your rights or to request a sensitisation session.



Immunisation and human rights

Monday 10th November 2025

'NOVEMBER 10 (today) is World Immunisation Day. This is not to be confused with World Immunisation Week which the World Health Organization observes on the last week of April every year. Both events have the same focus, which is to spread awareness about how vaccines prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Whichever is the correct day, it is useful to consider vaccinations in the broader context of discrimination.

This was very topical during the covid19 pandemic. People who chose to be unvaccinated often felt they were discriminated against. For example, in 2021 an individual complained to the commission that they were told that they will not be allowed to sit an exam, as at that time the centre will only allow vaccinated candidates into the room.

Also in 2021, another individual complained that they needed to show proof of vaccination to access a venue that was a "safe zone." Recall that starting October 11, 2021, businesses and venues in the leisure and entertainment sector (such as bars, restaurants, cinemas, gaming and betting houses, among others) were allowed to operate as safe zones, where, among other things, all employees and patrons needed to be fully vaccinated, and show proof of same. This requirement came to an end on April 4, 2022. The starting point of any conversation is that vaccination is a fundamental component of primary healthcare. Vaccines prevent illnesses that can be fatal or lead to long-term complications. In the modern world, diseases like measles, mumps and rubella (MMR), polio and smallpox have been almost eradicated because of global immunisation efforts. Apart from protecting the individual, when the rate of vaccination in a community is sufficiently high, it creates herd immunity, reducing the spread of diseases in that community, and creating a barrier against outbreaks.

Finally, prevention is cheaper than cure: the cost of vaccination is considerably less than the financial and emotional cost to the healthcare system and to the individual and/or their families to treat with the disease.

Another equally relevant point is that vaccinations are voluntary. The state cannot forcibly inject you or your child without your consent. However, it is permissible for the state to say that if you (on your own behalf and/or on behalf of your child) choose not to be vaccinated, then

certain things can be denied to you. For example, it is common in many countries that children who are unvaccinated are not allowed to enter schools.

The case of *Vavříčka and Others v the Czech Republic* (47621/13), a decision of the European Court of Human Rights from April 2021, concerned a challenge to laws in the Czech Republic that mandated that children must be vaccinated against nine diseases including MMR, polio, hepatitis-B, tetanus, and diphtheria. The main question in this case was whether this law breached Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights which provides:

1. Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.
2. There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

Note that the right at Article 8(1) is similar to the right enshrined at section 4(c) of our Constitution, which is: "the right of the individual to respect for his private and family life."

The court said that the compulsory vaccines administered by Czech health authorities were in line with the "best interests" of children. They concluded that "the measures could be regarded as being necessary in a democratic society" and that the government has not exceeded their reasonable discretion as to what was necessary. The objective was to protect every child against serious diseases. This was achieved by children receiving the full schedule of vaccinations during their early years. Those to whom such treatment could not be administered were indirectly protected against contagious diseases if the requisite level of vaccination coverage was maintained in their community; in other words, their protection came from herd immunity.

It is noteworthy that it was recognised that there might be cases where it may be possible, perhaps for medical reasons, that someone cannot be given a certain vaccine. Returning to the cases of people

who did not take the covid19 vaccine, if it was that these people did not do so, on the advice of a medical doctor that taking the vaccine is likely going to exacerbate a pre-existing medical condition, then it is possible that they could claim discrimination on the basis of a disability.

The Equal Opportunity Commission is empowered to receive complaints of discrimination that are covered by the Equal Opportunity Act; in turn, this act is concerned with discrimination in four broad categories – employment, education, provision of goods and services and provision of accommodation – where someone has suffered less favourable treatment:

- Because of their status, that is, one of the following personal characteristics: race, ethnicity, religion, sex, marital status, origin or disability.
- Or by way of victimisation, that is, in retaliation for doing certain actions that are protected under the EOA. For example, lodging a complaint with the commission or giving evidence in support of someone who has lodged a complaint.

For general information, the act also applies to an unrelated third category of conduct known as “offensive behaviour.”

Regrettably, the commission could not assist people who were unvaccinated by choice (that is, vaccine hesitancy). While we recognise the right of every individual to choose what they put into their bodies, this freedom of choice does not fall within one of the above grounds on which the commission is empowered to act. However, if there was a verified medical basis for their choice, then it might have been possible for them to complain that they were being discriminated against because of a disability. This applies to any mandatory vaccination regime.

Celebrating our diversity, strengthening our unity **Monday 27th October 2025**

AS THE GLOW of deyas lit our streets last week and now the sounds of parang fill the air, Trinidad and Tobago once again finds itself in the middle of our most festive time of year. The Divali and Christmas seasons remind us not only of faith and tradition, but also of what it means to live in a society where many cultures, beliefs, and histories intertwine to form one national identity.

Every few months our calendar reflects the beautiful diversity that defines us. We celebrate Divali, Christmas, Eid-ul-Fitr, Hosay, Emancipation Day, Phagwa, Spiritual Baptist Liberation Day, and Indian Arrival Day, among others. Each occasion brings its own rituals, colours, and meaning, but all share a common thread; they unite us as a people. In workplaces, schools, and communities we share in one another's celebrations, tasting the food, exchanging greetings, and learning about traditions that may not be our own. That openness is what keeps the fabric of our nation strong.

At the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC), this spirit of inclusion and respect is at the core of our work. The Equal Opportunity Act, Chapter 22:03, was established to promote equality of opportunity and to eliminate discrimination based on seven protected status grounds: race, ethnicity, origin, religion, marital status, sex, and disability. The act recognises that everyone, regardless of background or belief, should have an equal chance to participate fully in the life of the nation, whether in employment, education, access to goods and services, or accommodation.

When we celebrate each other's festivals, we practise the very principles that the act upholds. A workplace that recognises Divali by allowing staff time to observe the festival, or one that shares a Christmas lunch inclusive of all faiths and dietary needs, demonstrates equality in action. Respecting diversity doesn't mean merely acknowledging it; it means creating spaces where differences are valued and no one feels excluded or disadvantaged because of who they are or what they believe.

The EOC continues to promote this message through public education, sensitisation sessions, and advocacy across TT. These efforts help citizens and organisations

**UNFAIRLY
TREATED?**



Equal Opportunity Commission
Promoting Equality

**DON'T STAY
SILENT.**

What We Do

We investigate complaints and
conciliate discrimination in
categories of
• Employment
• Education
• Provision of Goods and Services
• Provision of Accommodation

**TALK TO US
We Are Here
To Help**

**All our services are
100% FREE.**

**Opening Hours
Monday - Friday
8:00am - 4:00pm**
Except Public Holidays

About the EOC

The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) is a statutory body established to promote equality and eliminate discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago through public education, investigating, and conciliating complaints of discrimination.

Yes, Tobago
you could access
our services too!!!

What Is Discrimination?

Unfair treatment based on your:

- Race
- Religion
- Sex
- Disability
- Origin
- Marital Status
- Ethnicity

Examples:

A manager refusing to promote an employee because of their religion.

A store denies service because of your disability.

Please note all matters must be investigated to confirm that persons were discriminated against.

Free Workshops for Your Organisation

Want to create a more inclusive workplace or community?

The EOC offers free educational workshops on topics such as:

- Understanding Discrimination
 - Promoting Equal Opportunity
 - Sexual Harassment in the work place
 - Creating Inclusive Policies
- Available for: Schools • Businesses
• NGOs • Government Agencies
• Community Groups

Book a session today!

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understand how discrimination can occur, sometimes unintentionally, and how to build environments that reflect fairness and mutual respect. For example, ensuring that religious observances are accommodated reasonably in the workplace, or that cultural symbols are treated with sensitivity, contributes to a more harmonious society.

As we move from Divali into Christmas, it's worth pausing to appreciate how unique our national experience is. Few countries can claim such a rich blend of cultures co-existing peacefully. It is not by accident but by a collective choice to respect and learn from one another. That spirit of mutual respect is also what the Equal Opportunity Act seeks to protect.

The commission's role is not only to address complaints of discrimination but also to encourage understanding before conflict arises. By fostering awareness and dialogue, we aim to prevent the kinds of divisions that can emerge when people feel unseen or disrespected.

So, as the lights of Divali fade and Christmas decorations go up, let's celebrate with renewed appreciation for our differences and what they represent; the freedom to believe, to express, and to belong. Every festival is an opportunity to live out the values of equality, empathy, equity and unity that the EOC promotes every day.

In TT, diversity is not a challenge to overcome; it is our greatest strength. When we embrace it fully, we create a society where everyone feels included and valued, a true reflection of the vision behind the act.

From all of us at the Equal Opportunity Commission, may the seasons of light, love, and togetherness inspire us to continue building a nation where equal opportunity is more than a law; it's a way of life.

Visit www.equalopportunity.gov.tt, e-mail us at communications@eoc.gov.tt, or call 1-868-672-0928 to book a free workshop for your organisation, report discrimination or victimisation, or get support. You can also follow us on social media.





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