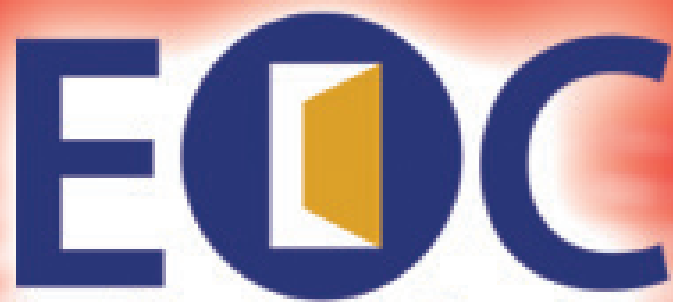




Equal Opportunity Commission
Promoting Equality

ECHO

Magazine

Amplifying Voices For Equal Opportunity

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Message from The Chairman



Mr. Ian Roach

Chairman
Equal Opportunity Commission

As we look towards 2027, the Equal Opportunity Commission prepares to mark a significant milestone — 18 years of service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

For almost two decades, the Commission has worked to advance a simple but powerful principle: every person deserves to be treated with dignity, fairness and respect, and no one should be denied an opportunity because of who they are.

Our 18th Anniversary is therefore more than a celebration of longevity. It is an opportunity to reflect on the progress we have made, recognise the partnerships that have strengthened our work, and renew our commitment to the important work that remains ahead.

Over the years, the EOC has continued to expand its reach through public education, community outreach, stakeholder engagement, research, advocacy and the investigation and conciliation of complaints. We have engaged employers, educators, public institutions, community organisations, young people and members of the wider public, helping to build greater awareness of equality and the protections provided under the Equal Opportunity Act.

Yet, as our society evolves, so too must our understanding of equality.

The challenges facing people today may not always

look the same as they did 18 years ago. New social realities, changing workplaces, advances in technology and evolving conversations around inclusion continue to shape how people experience opportunity and discrimination. This requires us to remain responsive, accessible and willing to have the difficult conversations necessary to create meaningful change.

As we enter this anniversary year, the EOC remains committed to bringing equality beyond the pages of legislation and into the everyday experiences of people — in our workplaces, schools, communities, public spaces and institutions.

We also recognise that the work of promoting equality cannot be achieved by the Commission alone. It requires the commitment of employers, educators, Government agencies, civil society, community leaders, families and individuals. Each of us has a role to play in creating an environment where differences are respected, barriers are challenged and opportunities are accessible to all.

The 18th Anniversary gives us an opportunity not only to look back with pride, but also to look ahead with purpose.

We will continue to strengthen our partnerships, broaden public awareness, support greater understanding of the law and ensure that the voice of equality continues to resonate across Trinidad and Tobago.

On behalf of the Commissioners, Management and staff of the Equal Opportunity Commission, I thank our stakeholders, partners and members of the public for their continued support and engagement.

Eighteen years is a milestone. The next chapter is an opportunity.

Together, let us continue building a Trinidad and Tobago where equality is not simply a principle we recognise, but a value we practise and a reality we experience.

Meet our Executives



MR. H.R. IAN ROACH
Chairman



MS. DENISE DUNCAN
Vice Chairman



MR. JOHN ARNOLD
Commissioner



MR. 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.



A New Chapter of Collaboration: EOC Welcomes Minister of Justice Devesh Maharaj MP

The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) warmly welcomes The Honourable Devesh Maharaj, MP, in his capacity as Minister of Justice and Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General, and looks forward to building a strong and meaningful working relationship with him in advancing equality, fairness, dignity and non-discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago.

Minister Maharaj was elected to the House of Representatives as the Member for Aranguez/ St. Joseph in the 13th Republican Parliament in April 2025 and subsequently appointed Minister of Justice and Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General.

Importantly for the EOC, Minister Maharaj serves as the Commission's line Minister, with formal responsibility for matters relating to the Equal Opportunity Commission, the Equal Op-

portunity Tribunal and several other bodies within the justice portfolio. This responsibility was assigned with effect from 3 October 2025.

The EOC therefore welcomes this new chapter of engagement with the Minister and the Ministry of Justice, recognising the important opportunity it presents for closer collaboration, greater institutional coordination and the continued advancement of the national equality agenda.

Advancing Equality Through Partnership

The work of the EOC is grounded in the Equal Opportunity Act, which provides a framework for addressing discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity in Trinidad and Tobago.

Through its mandate, the Commission investigates complaints of discrimination, facilitates conciliation, promotes equality and undertakes public education, outreach and sensitisation to increase awareness of rights and responsibilities under the law.

Yet the advancement of equality cannot rest on one institution alone.

It requires partnership, coordination and a shared commitment across Government, statutory bodies,

EOC Welcomes Minister Maharaj (Cont'd)

civil society, employers, educational institutions, community organisations and the wider public.

As the EOC's line Minister, Minister Maharaj occupies an important position in supporting the Commission's continued contribution to this national objective. The EOC looks forward to engaging with him and the Ministry of Justice on opportunities that can strengthen awareness of the Equal Opportunity Act, enhance public access to information and services, promote inclusive practices and reinforce the importance of dignity and equal treatment.

A Strategic Partnership for the Future

The EOC's work is guided by its Strategic Plan, which provides a framework for strengthening the Commission's effectiveness, expanding public education and outreach, enhancing stakeholder engagement and increasing awareness of equality and non-discrimination throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

At the heart of this strategic direction is the recognition that partnership is essential to impact.

The EOC's relationship with its line Ministry is therefore an important part of its broader institutional development. Through constructive engagement and

collaboration, the Commission can continue to strengthen its programmes, extend its reach and ensure that its work remains responsive to the needs of the people it serves.

The EOC is committed to working with Minister Maharaj and the Ministry of Justice to identify opportunities for collaboration that support the Commission's strategic priorities and contribute to a stronger culture of equality across Trinidad and Tobago.

This includes continued public education on discrimination and the protections available under the Equal Opportunity Act; greater engagement with organisations and communities; strengthened stakeholder partnerships; and initiatives that encourage persons to understand, respect and exercise their rights.

A Legal Professional With a Commitment to Community

Minister Maharaj brings extensive legal and professional experience to his role as Minister of Justice. He was called to the Bar in 1995 and founded Devesh Maharaj and Associates, his own law practice. He pursued his legal education at the University of the West Indies, attending the St. Augustine and Cave Hill campuses, before completing his professional legal training at the Hugh Wooding Law School.

His experience also extends beyond the legal profession into community and social development. Minister Maharaj has served as Chairman of the International "Love All Serve All" Initiative, including involvement in humanitarian efforts such as meal distribution to homeless persons in Port-of-Spain. He has also served as an advisor to President Dr. Louis Nurse of the Trinidad and Tobago 1st Capital Committee and as an advisor to the Casablanca Steel Orchestra.

His background in law, combined with his involvement in community initiatives, provides a broad perspective on the importance of institutions serving people and communities.

For the EOC, this emphasis on service and community engagement aligns closely with the Commission's own commitment to ensuring that equality is understood not merely as a legal principle, but as something that should be reflected in people's everyday experiences.

Equality and Justice: A Shared Responsibility

The relationship between justice and equality is an important one.

For the EOC, access to justice must include the ability of persons to understand their rights, to know where they can seek assistance and to have their con-

cerns addressed fairly and without discrimination.

The Equal Opportunity Act provides an important avenue for persons who believe they have experienced discrimination, while the EOC's education and outreach programmes seek to prevent discrimination by promoting greater understanding of equality and rights.

This work complements the broader objectives of the justice sector and presents opportunities for meaningful collaboration.

As the Commission continues to implement its Strategic Plan, the EOC remains committed to working alongside its line Ministry and other stakeholders to strengthen institutional partnerships and advance initiatives that place dignity, fairness and equal treatment at the centre of public service.

Looking Ahead

The EOC extends a warm welcome to Minister Maharaj and looks forward to a productive and collaborative relationship with him in his capacity as the Commission's line Minister.

The Commission stands ready to contribute its expertise, experience and mandate to the shared national goal of promoting equality and strengthening the protection of persons from discrimination.

As Trinidad and Tobago contin-

ues to move forward, the EOC believes that collaboration will be essential to turning the principles of equality into meaningful experiences for all.

Through education, engagement, partnership and collective action, we can continue building a society where every person is treated with dignity, fairness and respect, and where equal opportunity is not simply an aspiration, but a lived reality.

The EOC looks forward to working with Minister Maharaj and the Ministry of Justice as it continues its strategic work of advancing equality, combating discrimination and promoting a more inclusive Trinidad and Tobago.



Minister of Justice The Honourable
Devesh Maharaj MP

Chairman Meets with Staff:

Strengthening Communication, Motivation and the EOC's Mission

The Chairman of the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC), Mr. Ian Roach, recently met with members of staff as part of the Commission's continued efforts to strengthen internal communication, encourage collaboration and keep staff connected to the organisation's mission.

The meeting provided an opportunity for the Chairman to engage directly with staff, share perspectives and discuss matters that are important to the continued development and effectiveness of the Commission.

A key focus of the engagement was staff motivation and morale. The Chairman encouraged employees to recognise the value of their individual contributions and the important role each person plays in supporting the EOC's mandate to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good relations among people of different statuses.

Discussions also focused on policies, procedures and the work of the Commission, providing an opportunity for staff to better understand organisational priorities and how their respective responsibilities contribute to the wider objectives of the EOC.

The open dialogue allowed staff to raise questions, share ideas and reflect on ways in which the Commission can continue to improve its operations and the services it provides to the public.

The engagement comes at an important time for the EOC as the Commission continues to strengthen its public education, outreach, stakeholder engagement and internal capacity. With the Commission approaching its 18th Anniversary in 2027, opportunities for meaningful staff engagement will remain important in ensuring that everyone is moving forward with a shared understanding of the EOC's purpose and priorities.



Staff listens attentively to Chairman

The Chairman emphasised the importance of teamwork, professionalism and commitment, reminding staff that the work of the EOC ultimately impacts real people and their ability to access opportunities and be treated fairly and with dignity.

The meeting reflected the Commission's commitment to fostering a workplace culture where communication is encouraged, staff are valued and everyone understands their role in advancing the EOC's mission.

As the EOC looks towards its 18th year, continued engagement between leadership and staff will be essential to building a stronger organisation and ensuring that the Commission remains responsive to the needs of the people it serves.

Bringing Justice to the Community: Equal Opportunity Commission Joins Eastern Lawyers Association Legal Clinic

On Saturday, May 16, 2026, the bustling Trincity Mall Atrium near Detour and Ferreira transformed into a beacon of civic support as the Eastern Lawyers Association hosted its Free Legal Clinic. Running from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM, the initiative offered members of the public direct access to vital advice, confidential consultations, and guidance across a wide range of legal issues.

Among the key organizations present was the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC), represented by Legal Director Mr. Haran Ramkaransingh. Working alongside fellow partner institutions including the Office of the Ombudsman, the Children's Authority, the Council of Legal Education Hugh Wooding Law School Legal Aid Clinic, the Legal Aid and Advisory Authority (including the Public Defenders Office), and the Police Complaints Authority, the EOC helped provide accessible guidance to citizens seeking to protect their rights.

Bridging the Gap in Access to Justice

For many citizens, navigating complex legal procedures can feel overwhelming and costly. The Eastern Lawyers Association, a non-profit organisation uniting legal practitioners from eastern Trinidad districts such as Tunapuna, Mayaro, Arima, Sangre Grande, and Rio Claro designed this outreach event to tackle those exact hurdles. By prioritizing community outreach, social cohesion, and practical legal



Legal Director - Haran Ramkaransingh meets with attendees

support, the ELA welcomed walk-ins from all walks of life.

Throughout the five-hour clinic, attendees received free legal consultations from practicing attorneys on critical matters including:

**Land Disputes, Property, and
Landlord/Tenant Law
Family Law, Divorce, Custody, and
Maintenance
Estates and Wills
Debts and Contracts
Employment Issues
Personal Injury
Standing for Equality and Fairness**

The participation of the Equal Opportunity Commission underscored the critical relationship between public awareness and human rights. Under the leadership of Legal Direc-

tor Mr. Haran Ramkaransingh, the EOC delegation provided attendees with insights into discrimination, equality in the workplace, and avenues for redress under the law.

By meeting members of the community directly on the ground in a high-traffic, accessible venue like Trincity Mall, the EOC reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring that every individual, regardless of background, understands their rights and has a voice.

Events like the ELA Free Legal Clinic showcase the power of legal practitioners and public bodies joining forces. Through collaborative outreach, community empowerment becomes more than an ideal, it becomes a practical reality for everyday citizens.

Equipping Young Minds for Success: EOC Back to School Collection Drive Exceeds Goals

Demonstrating a strong commitment to social responsibility and youth empowerment, the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) successfully concluded its Back to School Collection Drive in support of the FM100.1 Back to School Charity Drive. Held from Monday, August 3rd through Thursday, August 20th, 2024, the initiative brought together staff and supporters to gather essential learning supplies for students in need.

A Community Effort with Lasting Impact

The collection point, located at the Communications Unit on the 1st floor of the EOC building, saw steady contributions throughout the three-week period. Generous donors contributed three full boxes of stationery, helping ease the financial burden for families preparing for the upcoming academic year.

In addition to collecting donations, the EOC directly contributed key branded items to the cause:

50 Pull-String Bags

100 Pens

50 Water Bottles

Beyond these targeted contributions, the community helped collect a wide range of essential student gear, including book bags, lunch kits, copy books, notebooks, pencil cases, folder pages, and personal care items.

Building Brighter Futures Through Equality

Access to basic educational tools plays a fundamental role in ensuring equal opportunity for every child. By equipping young learners with the supplies needed to feel confident and prepared in the classroom, the initiative actively reinforced the EOC's core mission of promoting fairness and inclusion across society.

The EOC extends its gratitude to everyone who contributed to making this drive a resounding success, proving that meaningful community impact begins with collective action.



A poster for the EOC Back to School Collection Drive. It features the EOC logo and the text 'Let's come together to support our community!'. The main title is 'EOC BACK TO SCHOOL COLLECTION DRIVE'. Below this, it says 'The EOC is proud to support FM100.1's Back to School Charity Drive by collecting much-needed school essentials for children in need.' A list of items collected is provided: Book Bags, Lunch Bags, Stationery (pens, pencils, crayons, etc.), Lunch Bowls, Pencil Cases, Folder Pages, Copy Books, Notebooks, and Personal Care Items. It also mentions that the EOC will contribute 50 EOC Branded Pull String Bags, 100 Pens, and 50 Water Bottles. The collection period is from Monday 4th August to Friday 23rd August, 2024. The drop-off location is the EOC building. The poster ends with the slogan 'Promoting Equality BEGINS WITH US.' and a thank you message: 'Every item donated helps build a brighter future for our young ones. Thank you for your generosity and support!'.

EOC and UWI Renew Research and Collaboration Partnership

The Equal Opportunity Commission ('EOC') and The University of the West Indies ('the UWI'), have renewed their Memorandum of Understanding ('MOU') for Research and Collaboration, reaffirming their shared commitment to advancing research, knowledge and public understanding on issues of equality, inclusion and social justice in Trinidad and Tobago.

The partnership was first formalised through an MOU signed on 01st September 2020. Following the conclusion of the initial agreement, the parties entered into a new MOU on 01st September 2026, providing for a further three-year period of research and partnership. The renewal reflects the value both institutions place on evidence-based research and the continued exchange of knowledge and expertise.

Importantly, the partnership has already yielded tangible research outcomes. Drawing on the Commission's experience and case data, research undertaken through the partnership has contributed to a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of persons with disabilities and the barriers they continue to face in Trinidad and Tobago.

Among the publications emerging from this research partnership are "Falling Short of Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities in Trinidad and Tobago: Evidence



from Equal Opportunity Commission Case Files" and "From the Equal Opportunity Commission Case Files: Experiences among Persons with Disabilities in Trinidad and Tobago." These works were authored by Dr. Bephyer Parey, Dr. Elisabeth Kutscher and Hannah Enightool.

These publications demonstrate the value of combining the Commission's practical experience in receiving, investigating and conciliating complaints of discrimination with the UWI's academic and research expertise. In doing so, the partnership has helped transform information arising from the Commission's work into research capable of informing public discussion, policy development, and amendments to legislation and future approaches to equality and inclusion.

Under the renewed MOU, the EOC and the UWI will continue to pursue a broad research agenda encompassing areas such as poverty,

inequality and social exclusion; labour, social justice and decent work; health, ageing and disability; children and youth development; gender-based violence prevention and protection; intersectionality and anti-discrimination; inequities in the criminal justice system; and place of origin and class under the Equal Opportunity Act.

The MOU also provides opportunities for joint research initiatives, conferences, workshops, seminars and training programmes, research and extension projects, as well as cooperative and mentorship programmes. These activities provide further avenues for the sharing of expertise and the development of research that responds to issues of national importance.

The renewal of the MOU therefore represents more than the continuation of an institutional agreement. It strengthens the connection between research and practice, allowing the Commission's work and experience to contribute to a growing evidence base on discrimination, equality and social justice in Trinidad and Tobago. Through its continued partnership with the UWI, the EOC is also able to support education, public awareness and informed national dialogue in keeping with its mandate to promote equality of opportunity and good relations among persons of different status.

Empowering Youth Through Knowledge: EOC Supports UNDP Youth Forum Graduation



The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) joined the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Trinidad and Tobago Multi-Country Office (TT-MCO) in celebrating the achievements, voices and leadership of young people at the Youth Forum Graduation Ceremony 2026.

Held on Friday, 31 July 2026, at the NAPA UTT Auditorium, the ceremony brought together young people who participated in the UNDP Youth Forum Capacity Building Series, celebrating their commitment to becoming agents of positive change across Trinidad and Tobago.

Representing the EOC at the graduation ceremony was Legal Officer Ms. Adele Ramgoolam, whose participation reflected the Commission's continued commitment to engaging and empowering young people through education and awareness.

The 2026 Youth Forum was held under the theme, "Youth Voices to Youth Action: From Discontent to Positive Change and Beyond: Youth are Redefining the Rules of Engagement." The theme highlighted the growing role of young people in shaping conversations, challenging systems and contributing to positive change within their communities and wider society.

The EOC was invited to participate in the initiative following its involvement in the UNDP Youth Forum Capacity Building Series on Gender, Justice and Security. As part of this collaboration, the Commission facilitated a virtual public education session entitled "The EOC and Discrimination Law."

The session provided participants with an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the EOC's mandate and the legal framework surrounding discrimination. It also encouraged young people to recognise the importance of equality, fairness and respect in creating safer and more inclusive communities.

For the EOC, engaging young people is an important part of its public education mandate. Young people are not only beneficiaries of a more equal society; they are also important voices in helping to shape one.

By providing young people with knowledge about their rights and the laws that protect against discrimination, the



*Legal Officer Adele Ramgoolam
attended the event*

Commission helps to equip them to recognise inequality, challenge discriminatory practices and advocate for fairness in their schools, workplaces, communities and everyday interactions.

The partnership with UNDP demonstrates the value of collaboration in advancing these objectives.

Initiatives that combine youth leadership with education, awareness and practical knowledge can help transform concern about social issues into meaningful action.

As the EOC continues to expand its outreach and public education efforts, partnerships such as these remain vital to building a generation

that understands the importance of equality and is prepared to promote it.

The Commission congratulates the graduates of the UNDP Youth Forum 2026 and commends their willingness to use their voices, experiences and leadership to contribute to positive change in Trinidad and Tobago.



What We Do

We investigate complaints and conciliate discrimination in categories of:

- Employment • Education
- Provision of Goods and Services
- Provision of Accommodation

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!
Email us at: communications@eoc.gov.tt
call 1-868-672-0928 ext. 206

The EOC's Voice Goes Digital: Equality Conversations Continue Online



The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) continues to find new ways to bring conversations about equality, fairness and inclusion to the public.

Following the closure of the Newsday newspaper, where the Commission previously published its fortnightly column, the EOC has transitioned its column series to digital platforms, ensuring that the conversation does not stop—it simply reaches audiences in a new way.

For years, the EOC's columns provided readers with accessible and practical information on discrimination, equal opportunity and the protections available under the Equal Opportunity Act. The articles explored issues affecting people in their everyday lives, from discrimination in employment and education to disability inclusion, gender equality, literacy, mental health and the importance of respecting diversity.

The move online provides the Commission with an opportunity to expand this work and connect with an even wider audience.

The digital columns are being shared through the EOC's website and social media platforms, allowing members of the public, stakeholders, employers, educators, students and community organisations to ac-

cess information wherever they are.

The transition also gives the EOC greater flexibility in how it communicates. Topics can be explored in a timely manner and supported by digital content such as graphics, animations and other educational resources, creating more opportunities for the public to engage with important issues surrounding equality and non-discrimination.

At the heart of the column series remains the EOC's commitment to public education and awareness. The Commission recognises that knowledge is an important part of preventing discrimination. When people understand their rights, understand what discrimination can look like and know where to seek assistance, they are better equipped to advocate for themselves and others.

The digital columns also provide an opportunity to continue bringing the Equal Opportunity Act into everyday conversations. Rather than viewing equality solely as a legal or institutional issue, the articles demonstrate how the principles of equal treatment apply in our workplaces, schools, communities, businesses and public spaces.

The EOC's online presence has therefore become an important extension of its public education mandate, bringing information directly

to the public in formats that are accessible, relevant and easy to share.

As the Commission approaches its 18th Anniversary in 2027, the move to digital communication represents another step in its ongoing evolution. While the platform may have changed, the purpose remains the same: to inform, to educate, to encourage dialogue and to promote a society where everyone has a fair opportunity to participate and thrive.

The EOC invites the public and its stakeholders to continue following the Commission online, reading the latest columns, sharing the information and joining the conversation.

The column has moved but the conversation on equality continues.

A Tribute to the Birdy

The Sparrow Has Flown, But His Voice Remains.



The Equal Opportunity Commission joins Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean and the wider world in mourning the passing of Slinger Francisco, the legendary Mighty Sparrow, who died on 27 September 2026 at the age of 91.

For more than seven decades, Sparrow did more than make us sing and dance. He made us think.

Through calypso, he spoke about the society around him, challenging inequality, questioning injustice and giving voice to the experiences of ordinary people. His music explored social conditions, politics, race, class, education, relationships and the realities of Caribbean life.

In "Education," Sparrow delivered a simple but powerful message about the importance of learning and preparing young people for the future. He even brought that message directly to students during his performances and encouraged them to pay attention to the lessons within his songs.

In songs such as "The Slave" and "Capitalism Gone Mad," he confronted questions of inequality, power and the conditions experienced by people in society. His music often gave a voice to those whose experiences might otherwise have gone unheard.

And throughout his career, his music reflected something deeply Caribbean: our interconnectedness. His work travelled across borders, cultures and generations, helping to remind us of the shared experiences that connect Caribbean people.

These themes resonate with the work of the Equal Opportunity Commission.

Our mandate is to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people of different statuses. We do this through investigation, advocacy, research, conciliation and, importantly, public education.

Sparrow understood the power of education too. He understood that a song could teach. That entertainment could provoke conversation. That art could challenge attitudes. And that a voice, when used courageously, could help a society see itself more clearly.

As we remember the Mighty Sparrow, we also remember the lessons within the music.

Learn. Question. Respect. Include. Stand against discrimination.

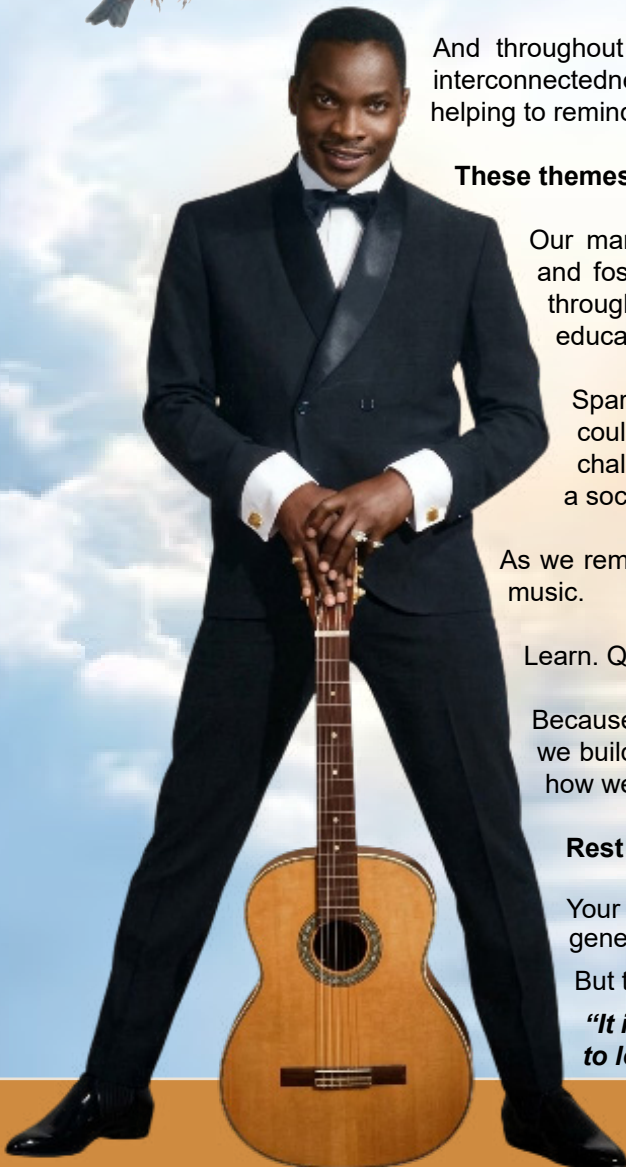
Because equality is not simply something written in legislation. It is something we build through how we treat one another, how we educate our children and how we choose to live together.

Rest peacefully, Mighty Sparrow.

Your music made generations move, but more importantly, it made generations think. **The Sparrow has flown.**

But the voice remains. □

"It is a miracle all these different people can dwell so well... educated to love and forget hatred." — The Mighty Sparrow, Our Model Nation



EOC Staff Strengthen Mental Health First Aid Skills

The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) continues to recognise the importance of creating a workplace where employees are supported, respected and equipped to respond to the needs of their colleagues.

In June 2026, Human Resource Officer I (Ag.) Mr. Abnab Mohammed and Administrative Officer IV (Ag.) Mrs. Ria Ralph-Watson represented the EOC at a Mental Health First Aid Training Workshop organised through the Personnel Department.

The training was designed to equip Human Resource personnel with the skills to recognise key indicators of crisis situations and identify behavioural patterns that may suggest that an employee requires additional support in the workplace.

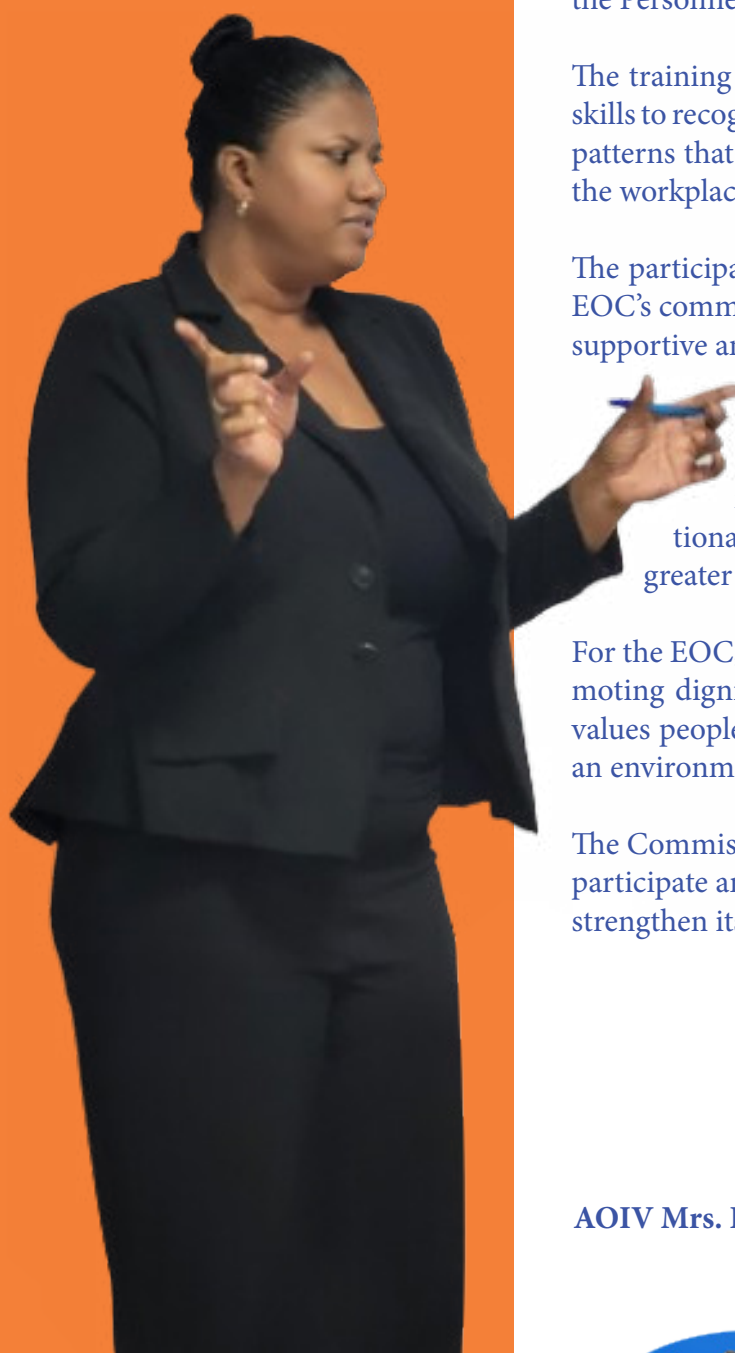
The participation of Mr. Mohammed and Mrs. Ralph-Watson reflects the EOC's commitment to strengthening its internal capacity and promoting a supportive and people-centred workplace environment.

Mental health and employee wellbeing are important components of a healthy workplace. Recognising when a colleague may be experiencing difficulty and understanding when additional support may be needed can help organisations respond with greater care, awareness and sensitivity.

For the EOC, the training also complements its wider commitment to promoting dignity, respect and equal opportunity. A workplace culture that values people and encourages appropriate support is essential to fostering an environment in which employees can perform at their best.

The Commission thanks the Personnel Department for the opportunity to participate and looks forward to applying the knowledge gained to further strengthen its support for staff

AOIV Mrs. Ria Ralph-Watson



The PM Emancipation Day message: A Call for Unity, Respect and Equality

As Trinidad and Tobago commemorated African Emancipation Day 2026, the nation was reminded not only of the significance of freedom from slavery, but also of the responsibility we share to build a society founded on dignity, respect and equality.

In her African Emancipation Day address on 30 July 2026, Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC emphasised the importance of national unity and urged citizens to reject racial division, hostility and disrespect.

The Prime Minister reflected on Trinidad and Tobago's history, noting that the nation was built through the triumph of enslaved people and enriched by the many communities that followed. She highlighted the country's diversity as one of its greatest strengths and encouraged citizens to see our differences not as reasons for division, but as part of what makes Trinidad and Tobago unique.

Her call for unity and mutual respect speaks directly to principles at the heart of the Equal Opportunity Commission's mandate.

The Equal Opportunity Commission works towards the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations among people of different statuses. This includes fostering greater understanding and respect among communities

and challenging attitudes and behaviours that can contribute to discrimination and division.

Our history reminds us that equality cannot be taken for granted. The legacy of Emancipation is not only about looking back at the injustices of the past, but also about considering the society we want to create today and the responsibilities we have to one another.

Racial and ethnic division can weaken communities and create barriers to meaningful participation and opportunity. When people are judged, excluded or treated differently because of their race, ethnicity, origin, religion or other protected status, the principles of equality and dignity are undermined.

This is why the language we use and the way we treat one another matter.

The Prime Minister's call to reject rhetoric that sows racial discord and lowers the standard of public discourse is also a reminder that building a more inclusive society requires action from all of us. Respectful dialogue does not mean that we must always agree. It means that differences can be discussed without dehumanising, humiliating or diminishing others.

For the EOC, promoting equality goes beyond responding to complaints of discrimination. It also involves public education, advocacy and encouraging good relations



Kamla Persad-Bissessar
Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago

among people of different backgrounds.

African Emancipation Day therefore provides an important opportunity to renew our collective commitment to a Trinidad and Tobago where diversity is respected, differences are valued and every person is afforded dignity and a fair opportunity to participate in society.

Our history has shaped who we are. Our choices today will shape who we become.

As we continue the journey towards a more equal and inclusive society, let us choose unity over division, respect over hostility and understanding over prejudice.

Emancipation reminds us of the value of freedom. Equality reminds us of our responsibility to ensure that freedom and opportunity are meaningful for all.

A National Call for Respect, Unity and Equality

Throughout 2026, national messages from Her Excellency Christine Carla Kangaloo O.R.T.T., President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, have repeatedly highlighted values that lie at the heart of building a fair, inclusive and cohesive society: respect, unity, equality and responsibility.

From her New Year's Day address to her messages marking Indian Arrival Day and African Emancipation Day, the President has encouraged citizens to reflect on how we treat one another and the role each of us plays in strengthening the nation.

In her New Year's Day address, President Kangaloo called on citizens to stand "side by side" as the country faced its challenges, emphasising unity of purpose, mutual respect and individual responsibility. Her message encouraged every citizen to consider their contribution to society and the part they can play in building an inclusive Trinidad and Tobago.

That message of shared responsibility continued in her Indian Arrival Day message, where the President called for greater restraint and mutual respect in the way citizens engage with one another and cautioned against a public culture in which speech can move faster than reflection.

She also emphasised that Trinidad and Tobago's strength lies in its abil-



Christine Kangaloo
President of Trinidad and Tobago

ity to embrace its diverse faiths, origins and traditions without hostility. Her call for citizens to choose unity over division reinforced the importance of maintaining respectful relationships across the many communities that make up our nation.

The theme of equality and social justice was particularly evident in the President's African Emancipation Day message. She called for an active intolerance of all forms of discrimination and division, while acknowledging that although slavery has ended, remnants of injustice,

inequality and discrimination continue to exist.

Her call for continued action towards equality, social justice and courtesy towards our fellow citizens carries an important message for every individual and institution.

These national reflections align closely with the work of the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC).

Under its mandate, the EOC works towards the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations among people of different statuses. This work recognises that legislation is an important foundation for equality, but meaningful change also requires awareness, respect and a willingness to challenge prejudice and discriminatory attitudes.

Trinidad and Tobago is a diverse society, shaped by people of different races, ethnicities, religions, origins, cultures and experiences. Our diversity is one of our greatest strengths. However, diversity can only truly flourish where people feel respected, valued and able to participate without facing discrimination or hostility.

The messages delivered throughout the year serve as an important reminder that good relations are everyone's responsibility. The way we speak to one another, the assumptions we make about others and the manner in which we respond to dif-

ferences all contribute to the society we create.

For the EOC, promoting equality therefore extends beyond addressing discrimination after it occurs. It also means encouraging conversations that build understanding, challenging stereotypes and sup-

porting environments where differences can exist without becoming barriers to opportunity.

As Trinidad and Tobago continues to navigate its social challenges, the call is clear: unity does not require uniformity, and diversity should never be a reason for division.

The work of building a fairer society belongs to all of us. Through respect, responsibility and a commitment to treating others with dignity, we can help ensure that equality becomes more than an ideal; it becomes part of how we live and interact with one another every day.

Building Skills: EOC Staff Strengthen Their Excel Skills

The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) continues to invest in the professional development of its employees, recognising that a skilled and confident workforce is essential to delivering effective services to the public.

In April 2026, the Commission hosted an Excel Training for Beginners session for members of staff who expressed an interest in strengthening their knowledge of Microsoft Excel.

The two-day training was held on Wednesday 22 April and Thursday 23 April 2026 in the EOC's Training Room. Sessions were arranged to accommodate staff members across the different shifts, ensuring that employees had an opportunity to participate while maintaining the Commission's daily operations.

The training was particularly beneficial for new members of staff and employees who were less familiar with Microsoft Excel. It provided

an opportunity for participants to build their confidence and develop practical skills that can be applied to their day-to-day responsibilities.

The initiative was facilitated by ICT Support Officer Mr. Avinash Ramdass, following an initial staff interest poll to determine the level of interest in the training.

While Excel is a technical workplace tool, developing proficiency in applications such as these can contribute to greater efficiency, organisation and accuracy across the Commission's operations. Continuous learning also allows staff to enhance their existing skills and adapt to the evolving demands of the modern workplace.

The training forms part of the EOC's broader commitment to staff development, capacity building and organisational strengthening. As the

Commission continues to advance its mandate of eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity, having a capable and well-equipped workforce remains essential.

By creating opportunities for employees to learn, improve and share knowledge, the EOC is strengthening not only individual staff capabilities but also the organisation's overall capacity to serve the public effectively.

The Commission looks forward to continuing to provide opportunities for professional development as it builds a knowledgeable, confident and high-performing team.

Strengthening the Culture Within: EOC Staff Engage in Interactive Workplace Dynamics Workshop



Hosted and facilitated by Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) Commissioner Dr. Krystal-Jane Verasammy, members of the EOC team recently gathered for an empowering one-day internal workshop titled “Building Strong Relationships in the Workplace.” Utilizing core training insights from Therapeutic Spaces Counselling & Psychotherapy, the interactive session provided staff with practical framework tools to cultivate psychological safety, mutual respect, and collaborative harmony.

Understanding Workplace Conflict The session opened with an interactive check-in exploring how workplace friction manifests. Dr. Verasammy emphasized that high-performing, diverse teams naturally generate differing perspectives. When handled constructively, these differences spark creativity; however, unmanaged stress and communication breakdowns can erode psychological safety, trigger anxiety, and hinder organisational progress.

Participants unpacked real-world scenarios through group discussions and roleplay activities, focusing on how to maintain professionalism and emotional well-being

By investing in continuous professional development and internal team wellness, the Equal Opportunity Commission continues to model the values of fairness, empathy, and equity from the inside out.

Building Awareness, Advancing Equality: EOC Sensitisation Session with CTTRC

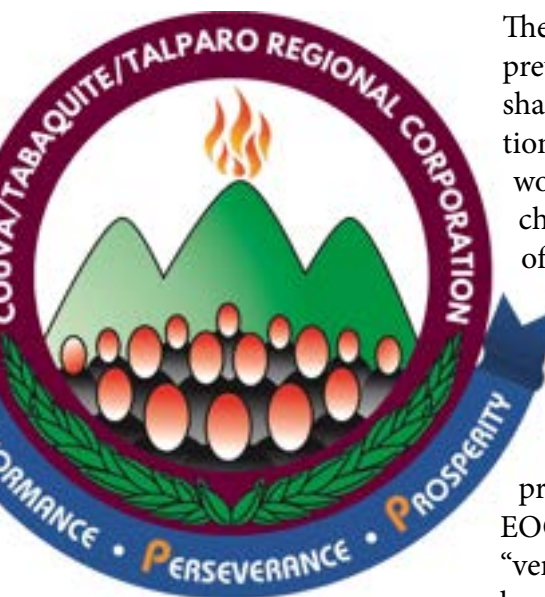
Creating workplaces where equality, dignity and respect are understood and upheld requires more than policies; it requires awareness, meaningful dialogue and a commitment to putting those principles into practice.

On Tuesday, 16 June 2026, the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) facilitated a General Sensitisation Session for members of the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation (CTTRC). The session formed part of the Commission's ongoing public education and outreach efforts aimed at increasing awareness of equality and non-discrimination in workplaces across Trinidad and Tobago.

The engagement followed a request from the CTTRC for the EOC to provide sensitisation for its Council Members and Heads of Department. Following discussions and coordination between both organisations, the session was confirmed and successfully facilitated.

The interactive session provided participants with greater insight into the role and functions of the EOC and its responsibility to promote equality of opportunity and address discrimination in accordance with the Equal Opportunity Act.

Among the key areas explored were discrimination in the workplace, sexual harassment, victimisation,



workplace policies and the importance of creating an environment where employees are treated fairly and with dignity.

Participants were also introduced to the Commission's processes for addressing complaints, including its investigative and conciliation functions. These discussions helped to clarify the avenues available to persons who may experience discrimination and reinforced the importance of understanding both individual rights and organisational responsibilities.

For employers and leaders, knowledge of equality and non-discrimination principles is particularly important. Managers and heads of departments play a critical role in establishing workplace cultures where inappropriate conduct is recognised, concerns are addressed responsibly and employees feel safe to raise issues.

The session also highlighted that preventing discrimination is a shared responsibility. While legislation provides an important framework for protection, meaningful change depends on the willingness of organisations and individuals to understand their responsibilities and actively promote fairness and inclusion.

The CTTRC subsequently expressed its appreciation to the EOC, noting that the session was "very informative and well received by staff." The Corporation also indicated that participants gained valuable insights into the Commission's role and functions, as well as important matters relating to equality and non-discrimination in the workplace.

The positive feedback demonstrates the value of bringing the EOC's message directly to workplaces and institutions. Through sensitisation sessions such as this, the Commission is able to move beyond simply informing the public about the law and create opportunities for dialogue, learning and practical application.

The EOC's engagement with the CTTRC is also reflective of the Commission's broader commitment to strengthening partnerships with public-sector bodies and other stakeholders. These partnerships are essential to building greater aware-

ness of equality rights and responsibilities throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Ultimately, an equal and inclusive workplace does not happen by accident. It is built through knowledge,

accountability, respectful conduct and a willingness to recognise and address discrimination when it occurs.

Through continued outreach and education, the Equal Opportunity Commission remains committed

to bringing equality to workplaces, communities and institutions across Trinidad and Tobago—one conversation at a time.

UNFAIRLY TREATED?

What We Do

We investigate complaints and conciliate discrimination in categories of

- Employment
- Education
- Provision of Goods and Services
- Provision of Accommodation

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!!!

EOC

Equal Opportunity Commission
Promoting Equality

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

DON'T STAY SILENT.

What Is Discrimination?

Unfair treatment based on your:

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

Examples:
A manager refusing promotion because of 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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call 1-868-672-0928 ext. 206

Contact Us

Visit: www.equalopportunity.gov.tt
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Office Address: 55-57 Manic Street, Chaguanas
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Taking Equality to the People:

The EOC's Free Workshops Empower Communities

Taking Equality to the People: The EOC's Free Workshops Empower Communities

Knowledge is power—and when it comes to equality and non-discrimination, knowing your rights can make all the difference.

The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) continues to take its message of equality directly to organisations, workplaces, schools, community groups and other stakeholders across Trinidad and Tobago through its free public education and sensitisation workshops.

Most recently, the EOC hosted a free workshop with the Co-operative Development Division, Staffside at the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies. The session provided participants with an opportunity to learn more about equality, discrimination, their rights and the role of the Equal Opportunity Commission.

For the EOC, these workshops are an important part of fulfilling its mandate.

The Equal Opportunity Act provides a framework for promoting equality of opportunity and addressing discrimination. However, legislation can only be effective when people understand it.

People need to know their rights in order to recognise when those rights may have been infringed.

This is why public education is such an important part of the EOC's work.

During sensitisation sessions, participants are introduced to the role and functions of the Commission and learn more about the protections available under the Equal Opportunity Act. They also have an opportunity to ask questions, discuss real-life situations and better understand what they can do if they believe they have experienced discrimination.



*Jamika Wiggins Investigating Officer
(centre) chats with participants*



*Legal Officer 1 Lorelei Wong
gives her feature presentation*

The workshops are designed to make information accessible and practical.

Rather than simply presenting legal terminology, the EOC encourages participants to consider how equality and discrimination can affect everyday life—from the workplace and educational institutions to accommodation and access to goods, facilities and services.

This approach is particularly important because discrimination is not always obvious.

Sometimes, individuals may not realise that a particular experience could constitute discrimination. In other instances, organisations may not be fully aware of how certain practices or decisions could create barriers to equal opportunity.

Education can help address these gaps.

By creating spaces where people can ask questions and have open conversations, EOC workshops help participants become more informed about their rights and responsibilities. They also encourage organisations to examine their own policies, practices and workplace cultures and consider how they can promote fairness and inclusion.

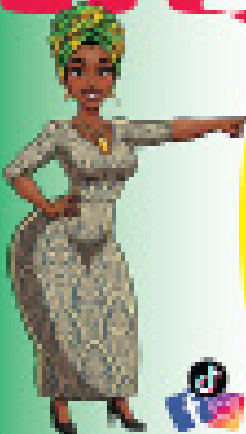






FAQ?

Does the EOC visit Tobago?



Yes, the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) regularly visits Tobago to meet with the public, receive complaints, and conduct outreach and sensitisation sessions.

Our team is committed to ensuring that persons in Tobago have equal access to our services. Stay tuned to our social media pages for upcoming visit dates and locations.

Phone: (868) 672-0928

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



Equal Opportunity Commission
Promoting Equality

JULY

EQUALITY ONLINE FORTNIGHT COLUMN

004

Finding Common Ground: How Conciliation Helps Resolve Discrimination Complaints

Finding Common Ground: How Conciliation Helps Resolve Discrimination Complaints

When people hear that a complaint has been filed, they often imagine a lengthy legal battle, heated disagreements, and a winner and a loser. However, not every dispute needs to end in a courtroom. In many cases, issues can be resolved through open dialogue, mutual understanding, and a willingness to find common ground.



That is where conciliation comes in

The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) is responsible for receiving and investigating complaints of discrimination under the Equal Opportunity Act. While some matters may eventually require determination by the Equal Opportunity Tribunal, many complaints can be resolved through the process of conciliation.

Conciliation is one of the most important services provided by the EOC. It offers individuals and organisations an opportunity to discuss concerns, address misunderstandings, and work together to find practical solutions in a confidential and respectful environment.

The Equal Opportunity Act recognises that not every dispute requires formal legal action. In fact,

the Act empowers the Commission to attempt to resolve complaints through conciliation where appropriate. This approach reflects an understanding that many disputes can be settled more effectively through constructive dialogue than through adversarial proceedings.

At its core, conciliation is a voluntary process that encourages communication between the parties involved in a complaint. A Conciliation Officer from the Commission facilitates the discussion, helping each party to express their concerns, understand the perspectives of others, and explore possible solutions.

Importantly, the Conciliation Officer does not take sides, make decisions, or determine who is right or wrong. Their role is to assist the parties in reaching a mutually acceptable resolution.

For a person who believes they have experienced discrimination, conciliation provides an opportunity to have their concerns heard and acknowledged. For the respondent, whether an employer, educational institution, landlord, business, or service provider, it provides an opportunity to respond to those concerns and participate in finding a fair resolution.

One of the greatest benefits of conciliation is that it allows the parties themselves to maintain con-

trol over the outcome. Unlike court or tribunal proceedings, where a decision is imposed by an adjudicator, conciliation encourages the parties to develop solutions that work for their unique circumstances.

Every complaint is different, and therefore every resolution may be different. Depending on the circumstances, outcomes may include an apology, changes to workplace procedures, revisions to policies, staff training, improved communication practices, or other measures agreed upon by the parties.

Confidentiality is another important feature of the conciliation process. Discussions are conducted privately, allowing participants to speak openly and honestly about their experiences and concerns. This confidential setting often creates an atmosphere that is more conducive to understanding and problem-solving.

Conciliation can also help preserve important relationships. In many situations, the parties involved must continue interacting after the complaint has been resolved. This may include employers and employees, colleagues, students and educational institutions, landlords and tenants, or businesses and their customers. By encouraging respectful communication and collaboration, conciliation can help rebuild trust and create a stronger foundation for future interactions.

Some people mistakenly believe that participating in conciliation means that a complaint is not being taken seriously. In reality, the opposite is true. Conciliation is a structured process that acknowledges the seriousness of the concerns raised while seeking to resolve them in a fair, efficient, and respectful manner.

The Equal Opportunity Commission understands that discrimination complaints can be deeply personal and emotionally challenging. Individuals who feel they have been treated unfairly often want more than a legal outcome; they want to be heard,

understood, and treated with dignity. Conciliation provides an opportunity for that to happen.

At the same time, organisations and individuals who are the subject of complaints may welcome the opportunity to address concerns, clarify misunderstandings, and take positive steps towards resolution. In many cases, conciliation can achieve outcomes that benefit all parties while avoiding the stress, time, and expense associated with formal proceedings.

As a society built upon diversity, Trinidad and Tobago benefits when differences are addressed through understanding rather than division. Conciliation supports this goal by promoting respectful dialogue, encouraging accountability, and fostering positive relationships between individuals of different backgrounds and experiences.

Through conciliation, the Equal Opportunity Commission continues to advance its mandate of eliminating discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations among all persons in Trinidad and Tobago.

After all, lasting solutions are often found not in conflict, but in conversation.

Visit:

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communications@eoc.gov.tt,

or call 1-868-672-0928 to book

A FREE WORKSHOP

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Equal Opportunity Commission
Promoting Equality

SEPTEMBER

EQUALITY ONLINE FORTNIGHTLY COLUMN

NO. 11

Taking Equality Beyond Our Walls: The Importance of EOC Outreach

On Wednesday 23 September 2026, the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) took its message of equality, dignity and non-discrimination beyond the walls of the Commission by hosting an informational booth at the Domestic Violence Prevention: Survivor-Focused Sensitisation Session and Toolkit Launch, hosted by the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs at the National Academy for the Performing Arts (NAPA).

The event provided an important opportunity for the EOC to connect directly with stakeholders, share information about its work and highlight the support available to persons who may experience discrimination or unfair treatment.

For the EOC, outreach is much more than attending an event and setting up an information booth. It is about meeting people where they are.

Not everyone will visit the Commission's office. Not everyone will see a social media post, read an online column or know where to find information about their rights. Outreach programmes allow the EOC to take that information directly into communities, workplaces, schools, colleges, institutions and public spaces.

This is particularly important when discussing issues that can affect people in vulnerable or difficult circumstances.

The EOC's mandate, established under the Equal Opportunity Act, is to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations



EOC's Legal Officer 1 Ms. Lorelei Wong answers questions from a member of the public



EOC's Communications Manager Mr. Choy Felix engages the audience.

among people of different backgrounds. Achieving this mandate requires more than responding when a complaint is made. It also requires education, awareness and prevention.

People need to know their rights before they can exercise them.

An informational booth may appear simple, but the conversations that take place around it can be significant. A person may stop to collect a brochure and discover that the EOC can assist with a concern they have been experiencing. Another person may ask a question about discrimination in the workplace. Someone else may simply learn for the first time what the Equal Opportunity Commission does.

These interactions can be the beginning of greater awareness.

The EOC's outreach programmes also provide an opportunity to explain the Equal Opportunity Act in simple, practical terms. Legal language can sometimes feel intimidating or difficult to understand. Public education helps bridge that gap by translating information about equality and non-discrimination into language that people can relate to in their everyday lives.

Outreach also allows the Commission to listen.

When EOC officers engage directly with members of the public and stakeholders, they gain valuable insight into the questions, concerns and experiences affecting people across Trinidad and Tobago. These interactions help strengthen public awareness efforts and ensure that the Commission's educational initiatives remain relevant and accessible.

The EOC recognises that creating an equal society is a shared responsibility. Government agencies, employers, educators, community organisations, civil society, businesses and members of the public all have a role to play in challenging discrimination and promoting respectful and inclusive environments.

Partnerships with other institutions are therefore an important part of effective outreach.

The EOC's participation in the Domestic Violence Prevention: Survivor-Focused Sensitisation Session and Toolkit Launch demonstrates the value of being present in spaces where important conversations about safety, dignity, rights and social justice are taking place. (Special thanks to the Office of the Attorney General for inviting us)



EOC's Communications Manager Mr. Choy Felix provides information about EOC's services to a very attentive audience.

While each organisation may have its own mandate, there are important areas where our collective efforts intersect. Creating a society where people are treated with dignity and respect requires awareness, cooperation and a willingness to address barriers that prevent individuals from fully participating in society.

The EOC remains committed to bringing its message of equality, fairness and respect to people across Trinidad and Tobago.

Through booths, workshops, sensitisation sessions, community engagements, educational campaigns and other outreach initiatives, the Commission continues to make its services and information more accessible to the public.

Because outreach is not simply about telling people what the EOC does.

It is about helping people understand what their rights are, where they can turn for assistance, and why equality matters to everyone.

The EOC will continue to take equality beyond its walls—one conversation, one community and one outreach programme at a time.

Because equality begins with awareness, and awareness begins with reaching people.



Visit www.equalopportunity.gov.tt,
email us at
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Equal Opportunity Commission
Promoting Equality

AUGUST

EQUALITY ONLINE FORTNIGHTLY COLUMN

008

Emancipation:

A Legacy of Freedom, Equality and Human Dignity

Every year on 1 August, Trinidad and Tobago commemorates African Emancipation Day, a day that honours the courage, resilience, and enduring legacy of those who fought against the injustice of slavery and paved the way for future generations to live in freedom.

It is a day of remembrance, reflection, and celebration.

We remember the countless men, women, and children whose strength and perseverance endured one of history's greatest injustices. We celebrate the rich cultural heritage, traditions, and contributions of people of African descent that continue to shape the identity of our nation. Most importantly, we reflect on the values that emancipation represents; freedom, equality, dignity, and justice.

Although slavery was abolished nearly two centuries ago, the ideals of emancipation remain as relevant today as they were in 1838.

Emancipation was about more than the end of physical bondage. It was about recognising the humanity of every individual and affirming that every person deserves to be treated with dignity, fairness, and respect.

These principles continue to guide our society today and

are reflected in the work of the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC).

Established under the Equal Opportunity Act, the Commission is committed to eliminating discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations among people of different backgrounds. While the challenges of today are different from those faced

during the era of slavery, the pursuit of equality remains an ongoing journey.

Discrimination still prevents individuals from reaching their full potential. Whether in employment, education, accommodation, or access to goods, facilities, and services, unfair treatment undermines not only the rights of individuals but also the progress of our nation.



The Equal Opportunity Act seeks to address these challenges by providing legal protection against discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, origin, marital status, and disability.

Its purpose is simple but profound—to help ensure that every person has a fair opportunity to participate fully in society without being disadvantaged because of characteristics that have nothing to do with their abilities or potential.

In many ways, this reflects the enduring spirit of emancipation.

The struggle for freedom did not end with the abolition of slavery. It evolved into the ongoing pursuit of equal rights, equal opportunities, and equal treatment for all people.

Today, that journey calls upon each of us to reject prejudice, challenge discrimination, and embrace inclusion in our everyday lives.

Equality is not achieved by laws alone.

It is built through the decisions we make each day.

It is an employer choosing the most qualified applicant based on merit rather than assumptions.

It is a teacher ensuring every child has an equal opportunity to learn and succeed.

It is a landlord treating every prospective tenant fairly.

It is a business providing respectful service to every customer.

It is neighbours, colleagues, classmates, and communities choosing understanding over division and respect over stereotypes.

These everyday actions may seem small, but together they help build a more just and inclusive society.

As one of the world's first countries to declare African Emancipation Day a national holiday, Trinidad and Tobago has demonstrated its commitment to recognising

the significance of this historic milestone. Our nation's rich diversity is one of its greatest strengths, and the contributions of people of African descent are woven into every aspect of our culture; from music, literature, and art to education, public service, business, sport, and community leadership.

Celebrating African Emancipation Day is therefore not only about honouring the past. It is also about recognising our shared responsibility to build a future where every individual is valued, respected, and given an equal opportunity to thrive.

At the Equal Opportunity Commission, we believe that equality strengthens communities, fairness builds trust, and inclusion creates opportunity. Through public education, outreach programmes, investigations into complaints of discrimination, and conciliation, the Commission continues to promote the principles of equality and mutual respect that are central to the Equal Opportunity Act.

Through African Emancipation Day, let us celebrate not only the freedom won by those who came before us but also our collective responsibility to preserve and advance the values for which they struggled.

Let us continue to build workplaces where merit is recognised, classrooms where every child feels included, communities where diversity is celebrated, and a nation where discrimination has no place.

Because the true legacy of emancipation is not simply the freedom that was gained in the past.

It is the equality we choose to uphold today.

Visit:

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Equal Opportunity Commission
Promoting Equality

AUGUST

EQUALITY ONLINE FORTNIGHTLY COLUMN

009

INDEPENDENCE: Building a Nation Where Everyone Belongs

Every year on 31 August, Trinidad and Tobago pauses to celebrate a defining moment in our nation's history—Independence Day.

It is a time to reflect on where we have come from, celebrate who we are, and look towards the future we want to build together.

Independence is often associated with freedom; the freedom to determine our own future, to shape our own identity, and to build a nation according to our own aspirations. But as we celebrate 64 years of Independence, it is worth asking ourselves: What does freedom mean if everyone does not have an equal opportunity to enjoy it?

A truly independent nation must also be a nation where every person could participate, contribute and thrive.

This is where equality becomes an important part of our national identity.

Trinidad and Tobago is a country like no other. Our society is made up of people of different races, ethnicities, religions, cultures, backgrounds, abilities, and experiences. From the foods we enjoy and the festivals we celebrate to our music, language and traditions, our diversity is woven into the fabric of our nation.

Our differences should not be barriers to opportunity.

They should be part of what makes us stronger.

The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) plays an important role in helping to protect this principle.

Established under the Equal Opportunity Act, the Commission's mandate is to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations among people of different backgrounds.

The Equal Opportunity Act provides protection against discrimination on specified grounds, including race, ethnicity, religion, sex, origin, marital status and disability. These protections apply in important areas of public life, including employment, education, accommodation, and the provision of goods, facilities and services.

Why does this matter to Independence?

Because the strength of a nation is not measured only by its buildings, economy or institutions. It is also measured by how it treats its people.

A country moves forward when its citizens are given a fair chance to contribute their talents and abilities.

Imagine a Trinidad and Tobago where a person is judged on their qualifications rather than their race. Where a student is given an opportunity to succeed regardless of disability. Where a person can seek accommodation without being unfairly excluded because of their ethnicity or religion. Where businesses provide services fairly and respectfully to everyone.



That is the kind of society that reflects the true spirit of independence.

Equality does not mean that everyone is the same. It means that our differences should not be used as a reason to deny someone a fair opportunity.

And building that kind of society is not the responsibility of the EOC alone.

It belongs to all of us.

Employers can promote fairness by ensuring recruitment, promotion and workplace practices are free from discrimination.

Schools and educators can create environments where every student feels valued and could learn and succeed.

Businesses and service providers can ensure that customers are treated with dignity and respect.

Individuals can challenge stereotypes, reject prejudice and become more conscious of how their words and actions affect others.

These may seem like small actions, but together they create something much bigger; a culture of equality.

Our national motto, “Together We Aspire, Together We Achieve,” speaks to the importance of collective effort. We cannot truly achieve together if some members of our society are excluded, discriminated against, or denied opportunities because of who they are.

Independence therefore gives us an opportunity not only to celebrate our past, but also to consider the Trinidad and Tobago we want for the next generation.

What will that nation look like?

Hopefully, it will be one where diversity is embraced rather than feared. Where differences are respected rather than used to divide us. Where every person understands that they have rights, responsibilities and a role to play in building a fairer society.

At the Equal Opportunity Commission, our work is

guided by this vision. Through public education, outreach, investigations into complaints of discrimination, conciliation and the promotion of good relations, the Commission continues to work towards a society where equality is not simply something we speak about—it is something we practise.

As we raise our flags, sing our national anthem and celebrate the achievements of our nation, let us remember that Independence is more than a date in our history.

It is an ongoing responsibility.

The responsibility to protect freedom.

The responsibility to respect one another.

The responsibility to challenge discrimination.

And the responsibility to ensure that every person has an equal opportunity to contribute to the country we call home.

This Independence Day, let us celebrate the diversity that makes Trinidad and Tobago unique and recommit ourselves to building a nation where everyone belongs, everyone matters, and everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Because a truly independent nation is not simply one that is free.

It is one where freedom, equality and dignity are enjoyed by all.



FAIRNESS STARTS HERE.

DISCRIMINATION HAS NO PLACE IN OUR SOCIETY.

Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity, respect and fairness. If you believe you've experienced discrimination, the Equal Opportunity Commission is here to help.



Confidential



Professional



**Our complaint and
conciliation services
are **FREE**.**

Visit: www.equalopportunity.gov.tt

**Together, we can build a more
inclusive Trinidad and Tobago.**

