



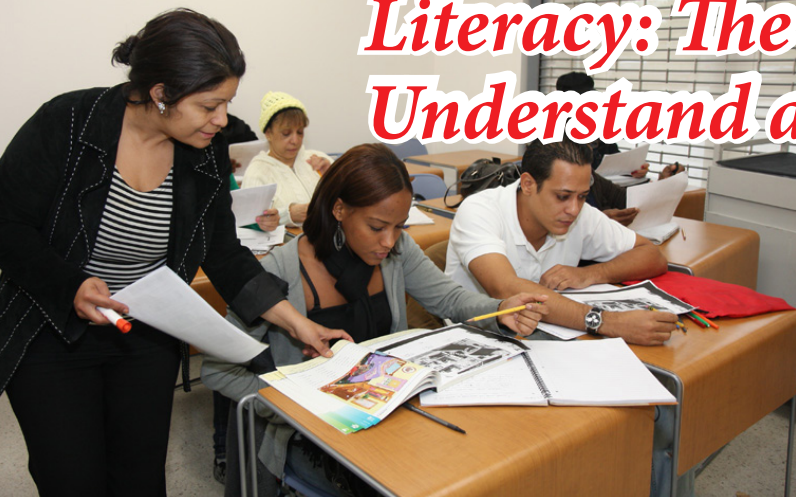
Equal Opportunity Commission
Promoting Equality

SEPTEMBER

EQUALITY ONLINE FORTNIGHTLY COLUMN

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Literacy: The Power to Read, Understand and Know Your Rights



Every year on 8 September, the world observes International Literacy Day, reminding us of the importance of literacy in building stronger individuals, communities and societies.

When we hear the word literacy, we often think about the ability to read and write. While these are essential skills, literacy means much more. It is about having the ability to understand information, communicate effectively, make informed decisions and participate meaningfully in society.

For the **Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC)**, **literacy is also closely connected to equality and opportunity.**

Why?

Because knowing how to read a document is important—but understanding what it means can be life-changing.

A person who understands their rights is better equipped to recognise when they may be experiencing discrimination, ask questions, seek assistance and make informed decisions. In this way, literacy can help em-

power individuals to participate more fully in society. The Equal Opportunity Commission was established under the Equal Opportunity Act to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations among people of different backgrounds.

An important part of achieving this mandate is education.

People cannot exercise rights they do not know they have.

That is why public education and awareness are central to the work of the EOC. Through outreach programmes, educational initiatives, publications, social media, workshops and other communication channels, the Commission seeks to make information about equality, discrimination and the Equal Opportunity Act easier for everyone to understand.

Literacy also plays an important role in accessing opportunities.

Consider applying for a job, completing an application form, understanding an employment contract, accessing educational opportunities, applying for accommodation or understanding information about goods and services. The ability to understand written and digital information can make the difference between someone being able to participate fully or being left behind.

This is why **equality and literacy go hand in hand.**

An inclusive society must ensure that information is not only available but also understandable and accessible to the people who need it.

We must also recognise that literacy takes many forms in today's world. Digital literacy, for example, has become increasingly important. People use digital platforms to access education, employment opportunities, government services, financial information and other essential resources. Ensuring that people can confidently navigate and understand information in the digital environment is another part of creating equal opportunities.

International Literacy Day therefore gives us an opportunity to ask an important question:

Are we making information accessible to everyone?

As we continue to promote equality in Trinidad and Tobago, we must ensure that no one is excluded simply because they lack access to information or cannot easily understand it.

At the EOC, we believe that education is a powerful tool for breaking down barriers. When people are informed, they are better able to understand their rights, recognise discrimination and make informed choices.

This International Literacy Day, let us celebrate literacy not simply as the ability to read and write, but as a pathway to knowledge, empowerment, participation and equality.

Because literacy gives people the ability to understand the world around them.

And knowing your rights gives you the power to take your place in it.

Visit www.equalopportunity.gov.tt, email 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.

