

EOC NEWS

USE SOCIAL MEDIA RESPONSIBLY

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words could never hurt me. It is a popular adage that we know in many ways, is not true. Words have power and we must be responsible with how we wield this power.

This is especially true on social media. In recent times, there has been a surge in offensive behaviour on social media platforms. Chairman of the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC), Ian Roach said it best, "it is easy to write offensive posts on social media but remember, there is a person on the other end of that message, even if you cannot see him/her."

In many ways, due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, persons who traditionally would not be present on social media or use digital tools are now forced to do so. It is critical to understand the role and responsibilities of the EOC in maintaining an environment that is free from prejudice and one that appreciates the diversity of our people.

If you are a recipient of offensive behaviour, you can lodge a complaint at the EOC. 'Offensive Behaviour' is covered under the Equal Opportunity Act. This applies to all acts done in public inclusive of social media that is intended to offend, insult, humil-

iate or intimidate another person or a group of persons because of their gender, race, ethnicity, origin or religion and which is done with the intention of inciting gender, racial or religious hatred.

The EOC investigates all complaints and provides conciliation.



EDUCATING UWI LAW STUDENTS: SEXUAL HARASSMENT

UWI Law students were the recipients of an intense and interactive virtual session that addressed sexual harassment in the workplace. The session, held on 1 April, is part of the Commission's thrust to host virtual educational sessions with private and public sector organisations.

Sexual harassment is unwelcomed sexual advances or requests for sexual favours and could take the form of physical, verbal and non-verbal harassment. The behaviour must be unwelcomed in the sense that the recipient did not solicit or incite the conduct and regards the conduct as undesirable or offensive.

Whether or not the committer believes that he or she sexu-

ally harassed the recipient is not the determining factor.

The 40 odd third year students were well-informed by Joan Furlonge, the Commission's Senior Legal Officer. She pointed out that research has shown that sexual harassment can negatively affect a person's mental and physical health.

Some effects include anxiety and depression, reduced self-esteem and post-traumatic stress disorder. For employers, this can mean low productivity, high turnover of staff and increased absenteeism. She said, "developing and enforcing a sexual harassment policy by the employer can greatly assist in preventing sexual harassment in the workplace".

Course Coordinator, Shalinee Bahadur said, "the session was

educational and insightful. Students greatly appreciated the presentation and were eager to learn more about sexual harassment in the workplace and the role of the EOC".



Joan Furlonge, Senior Legal Officer

New Staff Alert !



Racine Paul
Human Resource
Officer I (Ag.)

GET TO KNOW US

OUR SCOPE

The Equal Opportunity Commission was established by Section 26(1) of the Equal Opportunity Act (EOA) 2000, for the purpose of exercising the jurisdiction conferred upon it by that Act.

The EOA seeks to protect persons against discrimination as it relates four categories:

- Employment
- Education
- Provision of goods and services
- Provision of accommodation.

Under the EOA, persons are entitled to equality and fair treatment for all, despite their status. The seven status grounds covered by the Act are:

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Marital status
- Origin including geographical origin
- Disability
- Sex

VIRTUAL SESSIONS OFFERED BY THE EOC

- What is the Equal Opportunity Commission?
- Discrimination in employment
- Discrimination in education, accommodation, goods & services
- Accommodating persons with disabilities
- The EOC's complaint process and the jurisdiction of the Equal Opportunity Tribunal
- Sexual harassment