

EOC TV show spotlight, 'Different in Ability, Not Capability'

EOC TV show spotlight, 'Different in Ability, Not Capability' One of the biggest barriers for people with disability is how society disables them. Stereotyping, stigma, and discrimination are challenges people with disability face every day and much of the disabled community face exclusion from various parts of society.

These sentiments were expressed by members of a panel on the second episode of the EOC's TTT programme, "The Hard Conversations: Let's Talk Equality". The speakers got candid as they addressed on the topic "Different in Ability, Not Capability". The programme was meant to provide a platform to people with disabilities and advocates for the community to share their experiences and voice their concerns to inspire a change in behaviours and attitudes toward persons with disabilities.

The panel included:

- **Mr. Kenneth Suaratt:**
Executive Officer, Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association
- **Mr. Stephen Dookhran:**
Vice President, Trinidad and Tobago Association for the Hearing Impaired
- **Mr. Glen Niles:**
Founder and Chairman, Down
- **Mr. Joseph O'Brien:**
Managing Director, Joe Brien Media

Despite each speaker having a different type of disability, similar sentiments were echoed by the collective panel, providing viewers with an opportunity



Dike Rostant on the TTT programmer

Mr. Kenneth Suaratt: Executive Officer, Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association
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Mr. Glen Niles: Founder and Chairman, Down Syndrome Family Network
Mr. Joseph O'Brien: Managing Director, Ms. Raeanne Hutton-Interpreter

to reflect on the discerning points. The issues ranged from employment opportunities to the need for drafting policies with persons with disabilities in mind. The panel also lamented that the education system needed to be revamped to accommodate people with disabilities, with all speakers agreeing that a child with a disability should be accommodated at a "regular" school for several reasons. Calls for all teachers to receive proper training and teaching strategies to assist all students were also recommended.

One crucial point highlighted was legislation that safeguard persons with disabilities. In 2007, Trinidad and Tobago signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

and ratified it in 2015, but it was not adopted into domestic laws. Specific legislation can remedy many difficulties experienced by people with disabilities, as the onus is not on individuals or businesses to implement the necessary inclusive measures and policies. To view the episode, watch us on ttt network and EOC social media



SHELLY DOLABAILLE
Editor - in - Chief:
shelly.dolabaille@eoc.gov.tt

EWAN HEADLEY
Writer:
ewan.headley@eoc.gov.tt

LEON BAIN
Graphic Designer:
leon.bain@eoc.gov.tt

EOC Contributes to Sexual Harassment Bill



The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) participated in a stakeholder consultation on the Sexual Harassment Bill 2022, convened by the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs (AGLA).



The meeting, which took place on Wednesday 26th November, 2022 was attended by the EOC's Chairman Ian Roach, Director of Legal Services, Haran Ramkaransingh and Legal Officer I, Cheryl-Ann Peters. They joined other active and invested stakeholders in the fight against sexual harassment to present key recommendations to strengthen the draft Bill.





Breast cancer awareness month

October was breast cancer awareness month and EOC staff came out in their pink wear to raise awareness on early detection and offer support to those who have been diagnosed. Staff shared a meaningful and positive day modelling on the pink catwalk and writing personalised notes in cards, which were mailed to a cancer ward.

The activities were conceptualised by Racine Paul, HROI Ag.



EOC TV Show Addresses The Hard Conversations

Many young people from “hot spot” areas are productive and hardworking members of society and their employment opportunities should not be limited based on where they live or grew up. Not only can this potentially work against an organisation, but it is also unlawful.

This was the main message taken away from the television series, ‘The Hard Conversations: Let’s Talk Equality’, as a young panel of go-getters from stigmatised areas came together to discuss discrimination in employment.

The series is a collaboration between the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) and Trinidad and Tobago Television (TTT) Limited.

The show is meant to give a platform to those who are affected by discrimination to raise their voice to dispel the stereotypes that threaten to confine and define them and others in their community. First-hand accounts from those affected are the conversations that matter because humanising the impact on individual lives can be one part of the solution to stigma and prejudice of a broad community.

David Roberts, the CEO of TTT Ltd appeared on the panel to discuss the topic, which is near and dear to his heart. Roberts, who grew up in Maloney Gardens is a proud product of the area and a testament to the CEO-potential that can come from stigmatised areas, if given the chance. Speaking on his experience of applying for jobs at the start of his career, he said, “when I entered the job market, of course, Maloney would have been seen as a high needs community and there were a lot of negative articles stories issues happening about the community. I heard people speaking about issues around getting employment because of where they reside. So, in terms of being proactive, I utilized my cousin’s address on my resume for a very long time due to fear of not getting an opportunity



Speakers for the episode (L-R) David Roberts, Obrina Wickham, Aaliyah Abdulwudud inserted is Martha Rodney she joined the episode as a speaker via Zoom, pose with host of the programme Dike Rostant (extreme right).

that I would have been qualified for.” While we may face discrimination or unfair treatment because of where we live, he affirmed, “It is important for residents within the community to know that it is possible, and I am not special in the sense that it can’t be done by someone else. You have to put in the work, and you have to make difficult decisions.”

Martha Rodney, a hard-working entrepreneur from Beetham Gardens, also appeared on the programme via Zoom and shared that she worked at an establishment in the past where the manager kept a close eye on her when she found out that she lived in the ghetto. However, Martha said, “I did not allow her behaviour to discourage me and over time, I showed the employees who Martha Rodney is, and my personality. A few weeks after everyone was comfortable with me. What people may think or have heard about the ghetto makes it is uncomfortable at times to say where you live.”

Obrina Wickham, a student at Bronx Community College and former resident of Morvant said, “Normally when

people ask where are you from? I refer to Chaguanas because I tend to avoid the topic - you are from Morvant, have you ever experienced violence? If I do encounter stigma, I answer questions openly. I do not have a problem with anyone asking me if I experienced violence or any sort of neglect, but I still try to avoid it as best as I can.”

Aliyah Abdulwudud, a motivational speaker and social worker shared, “It’s important to speak positively about yourself and your community. When you speak positively or have a positive aura it draws people to you, and it breaks the stigma because you allow someone to see who you are and get the correct perception.”

Speaking on her experience in social work and motivational speaking Abdulwudud said, “My experiences have shaped what I do now because I know how it feels to be invisible, to feel less than and to not have the opportunities that others would have had. So that is why it’s so important for me to continue working in these stigmatized communities supporting youth encouraging them to enrol in programmes that are available by the government.”

The practice of labelling certain areas as hot spots perpetuates a stigma that works against the productive and hard-working members of these communities. Further, it is unlawful under the Equal Opportunity Act to discriminate against someone based on their origin under four categories: employment, education, provision of goods and services and provision of accommodation. Under the Act, persons are entitled to

equality and fair treatment, despite their status. The seven status grounds covered by the Act are race, ethnicity, religion, marital status, origin including geographical origin, disability and sex.

The EOC is committed to working towards the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality and good relations between persons of different statuses.

The next episode in the series will bring together a panel of persons with disabilities to talk about their experience. Further details will be shared on the EOC's social media pages and website.

-  www.equalopportunity.gov.tt
-  communications@eoc.gov.tt
-  complaints@eoc.gov.tt
-  672 0928



Outreach Caravan **TOBAGO**

Roxborough Administrative Complex

Thursday 17th November

Port Mall, Scarborough

Friday 18th November

TIME: 10:am - 5:pm

LOOK OUT FOR THE BLUE TENT!



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EOC support Walk for Sight



Staff of the EOC participated in the Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association's (TTBWA) Walk for Sight in commemoration of World Sight Day 2022 around the Queen's Park Savannah on Sunday 16 October at 7 am.



Members of Staff at the EOC joined the Down Syndrome Family Network for its annual Buddy Walk on Sunday 30 October. The aim of the walk is to bring awareness, while empowering and advocating for inclusiveness of persons with Down syndrome.



Congrats! Dr. Gabrielle Hosein



The Equal Opportunity Commission extends warm congratulations to EOC Vice-Chair Dr. Gabrielle Hosein on her receipt of the Medal for the Development of Women, gold, in the spheres of public education and advocacy. We are proud and elated that our very own Vice Chair received this national award for her contributions to the Caribbean feminist and LGBTI+ movements.

EOC targets blind community

As part of the Equal Opportunity Commission's (EOC) efforts to amp up its advocacy for Blind Awareness Month, the EOC joined a distinguished panel of guests at a Town Hall Meeting hosted by the Council for the Development and Enhancement of the Family (CODE-F). EOC Panellists Ms. Cheryl-Ann Peters, Legal Officer I and Ms. Shelly Dolabaille, Corporate Communications Manager discussed the Equality Opportunity Act, the role of the EOC and how it provides for members of the blind community. This meeting took place at 5:00pm on Tuesday 11 October at the Point Fortin Borough Corporation Town Hall. The panel discussion covered the topic, "Living with visual impairment/blindness and the attending challenges including discrimination."



EOC Panellists, Ms. Shelly Dolabaille, Manager- Corporate Communications (right) and Cheryl-Ann Peters, Legal Officer (left) presents an EOC package to the Mayor of Point Fortin, Her Worship Saleema McCree Thomas.



EOC Manager-Corporate Communications, Shelly Dolabaille chats with attendees at the EOC's information booth at the Town Hall Meeting..



L-R- Kurt Allen (Founder of CODE-F), Dr. Niall Farnon (Optometrist and Head of Faculty of Optometry at the University of West Indies, St. Augustine), Natasha Lake (Moderator), Dr. Franklin Dolly, Senior Consultant and Psychologist, Her Worship Saleema McCree Thomas (Mayor of Point Fortin), Dr. Margaret Nahkid-Chatoor (Psychologist and Professor at the University of Trinidad and Tobago), Mr. Dominic Stoddard (Financial Services Ombudsman of Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago), Shelly Dolabaille (Manager, Corporate Communications, EOC) and Cheryl-Ann Peters (Legal Officer I, EOC)