

# MEDIA RELEASE

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*For Immediate Release*

## EOC and TTFA Target Racism in Sports.

In a bid to address racism in sports and its personal impact on athletes, the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) will partner with the Trinidad and Tobago Football Association (TTFA) to host a virtual roundtable discussion entitled, ‘**Racism in Sports: The Hard Conversation**’ and launch the “**Pass the Ball Challenge**”.

Data at the EOC shows that over the last five years, the status grounds of race and ethnicity were the most lodged complaints at its offices. The EOC actively looks for opportunities to partner with stakeholders in different sectors to amplify their calls to end racism, support their programmes and include proactive and inclusive messages within the EOC’s public education efforts.

The treatment of the Senior Men’s Trinidad and Tobago Football team in its Gold Cup 2021 game against Mexico, coupled with EOC’s data were the catalyst for the initiative. Fans of the Mexico team shouted derogatory terms at the T&T players and later took to social media with racist attacks.

EOC Chairman Ian Roach said, “racism in sports is a relevant and real problem that we should address. Sport is a microcosm of society and we saw during that Gold Cup game is symptomatic of a larger societal problem. Sports are supposed to bring people of different backgrounds together and addressing racism via this platform is a critical conversation to explore. The Pass

the Ball Challenge will ensure that this conversation continues and that we share experiences of those athletes in different disciplines.”

TTFA Acting General Secretary Amiel Mohammed echoed EOC Chairman Roach’s comments and stated, “The recent incidents at the 2021 Gold Cup have put the issues of discrimination and racism in sport into full focus, especially from a Trinbagonian perspective. The TTFA is really pleased to partner with the EOC to continue to push these constructive dialogues and encourage more action-oriented approaches to addressing these issues. Sport is a unifying agent, so let’s “Pass the Ball” to stoke the fires of positive change.”

This platform will allow the players to share their personal experience at the game and highlight that racist slurs, whether at a game or on social media, impacts them as individuals. It is hoped that this goes a long way in addressing the personal and societal impacts of racism and encourages persons to be more inclusive and to hold their personal circles/network accountable.

The “**Pass the Ball Challenge**” will be launched and issued to other sporting bodies to continue to address this hard conversation headfirst. The challenge invites sporting bodies to pick up the mantle of publicly addressing racism in sport and then nominate other sporting bodies to do the same. It is hoped that this challenge will continue to provide a platform to raise awareness on the racism faced by athletes, management teams and accompanying contingents.

The panel discussion and launch will be hosted live on Zoom on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> August at 5:30pm and streamed live via the EOC and TTFA’s Facebook pages.

The panel will feature:

- Kenwyne Jones, Retired National Footballer
- Marvin Phillip, Goalkeeper, T&T Senior Men’s Football team
- Alvin Jones, Footballer, T&T Senior Men’s Football team
- Naomie Guerra, Footballer, T&T Senior Women’s National Football team
- Dr. Krystal-Jane Verasammy, Commissioner, Equal Opportunity Commission

In the coming weeks, the EOC will reach out to stakeholders in other sectors to have consultations on how the EOC can continue to work together to address racism.

Interested attendees are asked to visit the TTFA and EOC Facebook pages to register via Zoom.

There are limited spots available.

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For digital publications: Link to register on Zoom:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_Vkh5MQySQL2MTi8VyVGKpw](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Vkh5MQySQL2MTi8VyVGKpw)

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## About the EOC

The primary task of the EOC is to oversee implementation of the Equal Opportunity Act Chapter 22:03, which prohibits certain kinds of discrimination and seeks to promote equal opportunity between persons of different status.

- The Act is concerned with discrimination in four broad categories - employment, education, provision of goods and services, and provision of accommodation - where someone has suffered less-favourable treatment:
  - Because of their status, that is, because of one of the following personal characteristics: race, ethnicity, religion, sex, marital status, origin or disability;
  - Or by way of victimisation, that is, in retaliation for doing certain actions that are protected under the Act, for example, lodging a complaint with the Commission or giving evidence in support of someone who has lodged a complaint.
  - The Act also applies to a third category of conduct known as ‘offensive behaviour.’
- A person who believes that they have been subjected to discrimination in any of the above areas may lodge a complaint with the EOC. The EOC is mandated to receive, investigate and as far as possible conciliate complaints.
- If the matter is unresolved, the complaint can be referred to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal (the ‘EOT’). The EOT is a superior court of record and its mandate is to hear and adjudicate on matters referred to it by the EOC. The EOT has the power to make orders, declarations and awards of compensation as it determines to be appropriate.

The EOC urges all persons to be mindful of these provisions and to refrain from discriminatory practices, which infringe the human rights of others.

For more information, please visit [www.equalopportunity.gov.tt](http://www.equalopportunity.gov.tt).