

## LETTERS

## Ghosts in URP not only now

**THE EDITOR:** Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) jobs were designed as a temporary work for our very poor and underprivileged, until they could do better for themselves and their families.

But, over the years, those in charge of creating URP crews and collecting monies with which to pay URP workers, paid little to them and pocketed the majority of the money for their services.

The workers were bullied and intimidated by internal and external forces, and most names on the roster were fake or "ghost workers," as the politicians call them. These people never came to work at all but got paid! Some of their relatives studied in university thanks to this ghost employment.

It's not now that ghosts haunt the URP.

Years ago, I was told by many housewives that their housemaids would come in late to work daily as they first had to go to the URP office every morning to "sign in," and they left their maid's job early every afternoon, to go in once again at the URP office, to "sign out," as having worked in the programme that day.

But they never did a day's work at URP, they collected the URP salary though all the while, mopping and cleaning their legitimate employer's house!

TT's children would have grown up observing all this deceit and fraud and no doubt their bad behaviour in schools is probably a result of them witnessing this dishonesty planned and formed in their own homes and environment by their parents and adult friends.

PARICIA BLADES  
Cocorite,

NEWSDAY welcomes letters from our readers and we invite you to write us on any subject. We ask, however, that letters be kept short and to the point, and that your name, address and phone number be included. In order to ensure credibility, we do not publish letters without names. Personal information will not be published. Letters should be sent to [letters@newsday.co.tt](mailto:letters@newsday.co.tt)



**HORSING AROUND:** A horse of Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment makes a whinny at preparations for the carriage procession at Combermere Barracks in Windsor, England on September 15, ahead of the state visit of US President Donald Trump. AP PHOTO

## Politicians and photo ops

**THE EDITOR:** The people deserve ministers who focus on their work and not politicians who treat every issue as a photo opportunity.

Senator Phillip Edward Alexander is a junior minister of housing. Yet in recent days, he has been busy hosting a flood meeting in Goodwood Gardens, touring a wildflower park with the agriculture minister and posting about everything from gangs to international relations and the Monroe Doctrine.

The floodwaters didn't recede, but the photos came out crisp.

It is hard to avoid the impression that Alexander is still campaigning. He lost against Stuart Young in Port of Spain North/St Ann's West, but behaves like a self-appointed shadow MP, popping up in constituencies he never won and declaring, "when UNC wins, everybody wins."

All this sound and fury, while housing remains stalled, families still waiting for allocations – as they have been for years – projects dragging, costs climbing.

Nobody expects miracles in a few months, but we do expect a minister to stay in his lane. TT does not need another politician as minister of everything and master of nothing.

MICHAEL EDMUND DHANNY  
Four Roads

## International Literacy Day: Building equality through education

EACH year on September 8, the world celebrates International Literacy Day, a reminder that literacy is more than just reading and writing, it is a foundation for dignity, opportunity, and inclusion.

Established by UNESCO in 1967, this day highlights the importance of literacy as a driver of human rights, social progress, and sustainable development.

For TT, literacy has long been a point of pride. Our education system has produced scholars, writers, scientists, and leaders of global renown. Yet, even as we celebrate these achievements, we must also confront the inequalities that remain.

Literacy is not equally accessible to all, and for some groups, barriers to education continue to limit their full participation in society.

The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) recognises that education is one of the four broad areas covered under the Equal Opportunity Act, alongside employment, the provision of goods and services, and accommodation. Discrimination in education, whether direct or indirect, has lifelong effects.

When a child is denied access to quality education because of race, religion, disability, sex, or any other protected ground, it is not only that child who suffers. Our nation loses the potential contributions they could have made.

### The Literacy and Equality Link

International Literacy Day provides a chance to reflect on how inequality and discrimination affect learning outcomes. For instance, children with disabilities may be excluded from classrooms if schools lack accessible facilities or trained teachers.

Students from minority religious or ethnic groups may face stereotyping or bullying, which undermines their confidence and willingness to learn. Girls and women, while having made sig-



nificant progress in access to education, can still be subject to societal pressures that affect their ability to continue schooling.

These are not abstract issues. They affect real families, real futures, and the overall development of our nation. Literacy is not just about learning to read, it's about having the tools to participate fully in economic, social, and political life. When barriers exist, they create cycles of disadvantage that are hard to break.

### EOC Mandate in Action

The mandate of the EOC is clear: to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. In the area of education, this means addressing situations where students are denied fair treatment because of their background or personal characteristics.

It also means raising awareness, through workshops and public education, about the importance of inclusive practices in schools and learning institutions. We stress that inclusion is not just about physical access to classrooms, but about ensuring meaningful participation in the learning process. This requires a cultural shift, where schools see diversity not as a burden, but as a strength.

### National Responsibility

The National Pledge of Trinidad and Tobago

reminds us of our duty to work together with our "fellowmen of every creed and race, for the greater happiness of all."

This includes ensuring that every child, regardless of background, has the opportunity to learn and grow.

International Literacy Day is not just for governments and educators; it is for all of us. Parents, employers, community leaders, and civil society each play a role in promoting literacy and lifelong learning.

Whether it's reading to a child, mentoring a student, or supporting programmes that bring books and technology to underserved communities, small actions make a difference.

### Looking Ahead

As we observed International Literacy Day, let us recommit to breaking down the barriers that prevent people from accessing education. Our nation cannot achieve its full potential if parts of our population are left behind because of discrimination or exclusion.

The EOC will continue to play its part by investigating complaints of discrimination in education, promoting inclusive practices, and providing free workshops that empower organisations to create fairer systems. We believe that equity, literacy and equality go hand in hand. One cannot flourish without the other.

Let us celebrate our progress, acknowledge our challenges and take concrete steps to ensure that every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago has the chance to learn, to grow, and to contribute.

Visit [www.equalopportunity.gov.tt](http://www.equalopportunity.gov.tt), email us at [communications@eoc.gov.tt](mailto: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.