



**EQUAL
OPPORTUNITY
TRIBUNAL**
Trinidad & Tobago

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

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Newsletter

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25th Anniversary of the Proclamation of the **Equal Opportunity Act**

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Celebrating 25 Years of Advancing Equality in Trinidad and Tobago

In 2026, the Equal Opportunity Tribunal proudly marks a significant milestone, 25 years since the proclamation of the Equal Opportunity Act. This anniversary is more than a celebration of longevity; it is a powerful reflection of the country's commitment to upholding the dignity and rights of all its people.

Established under the Equal Opportunity Act, the Tribunal serves as a vital institution in safeguarding citizens against discrimination on the grounds of status, race, ethnicity, and religion. Over the past two and a half decades, the Tribunal has stood as a beacon of justice, ensuring that individuals who experience discrimination have access to a fair, impartial, and effective system of redress.

Why This Milestone Matters

The 25th anniversary represents a moment of national reflection. It underscores how far Trinidad and Tobago has come in strengthening its legislative and institutional frameworks to protect human rights. The Equal Opportunity Act is not just a piece of legislation, it is a declaration of national values rooted in inclusion, respect, and equal treatment.

The Tribunal's work has helped to:

- ⇒ Foster greater awareness of rights and responsibilities among citizens
- ⇒ Provide a safe and structured avenue for resolving complaints of discrimination
- ⇒ Contribute to shaping a more equitable society

At a time when societies around the world continue to grapple with inequality and division, this milestone reinforces Trinidad and Tobago's commitment to unity in diversity.

The Power of the Act and the Tribunal

The Equal Opportunity Act empowers individuals by giving them a voice and a path to justice. The Tribunal, in turn, operationalizes this power, translating law into meaningful outcomes that impact real lives.

Through its decisions and proceedings, the Tribunal not only resolves disputes but also sets important precedents that influence behavior across workplaces, institutions, and communities. It plays a critical role in promoting accountability, fairness, and respect for human dignity.

Commemorating the Occasion

To mark this historic milestone and as part of its forward-looking vision, the Tribunal is working towards the establishment of a Legal Clinic as well as a Sub-Registry, which is a transformative step toward increasing access to justice.

Looking Ahead: The Future of Equality

As the Equal Opportunity Tribunal enters its next chapter, the focus remains clear, innovation, accessibility, and national impact.

The public can look forward to:

- Expanded access to services through initiatives like the Legal Clinic and Sub-Registry.
- Increased public education and awareness campaigns with a social media campaign.
- Continued modernization of systems to improve efficiency and accessibility.
- Strengthened partnerships with institutions, communities, and stakeholders.

The Tribunal is committed to evolving with the needs of the society it serves, ensuring that justice is not only upheld but also accessible to all.

COURT SCHEDULE

MAY 12	E.O.T No. 0001 of 2024 Dr. Raymond Ramcharitar v. Trinidad Express Newspapers Limited and Professor Emeritus Theodore Lewis
MAY 12	E.O.T No. 0001 of 2021 Samuel Johnson v. Tobago Regional Health Authority
MAY 19	E.O.T No. 0001 of 2025 Dr. Kerlene Kennedy v. North Central Regional Health Authority
MAY 19 & 21	E.O.T No. 0006 of 2020 Daryl Dillon v. Yara Trinidad Limited
MAY 21	E.O.T 0002 of 2024 Corinne Gregoire v. Cipriani College of Labour & Co-operative Studies
MAY 26	E.O.T No. 0001 of 2019 Dr. Raymond Ramcharitar v. The University of the West Indies
JUNE 23	E.O.T No. 0006 of 2016 Sean Ocho v. Water and Sewerage Authority

COURT SCHEDULE

JUNE 23 | E.O.T No. 0001 of 2026 Anderson Sooparlie v. Trinidad and Tobago Securities and Exchange Commission

JUNE 23 | E.O.T No. 0002. of 2026 Anderson Sooparlie v. Trinidad and Tobago Securities and Exchange Commission

JUNE 23 | E.O.T No. 0003 of 2026 Anderson Sooparlie v. Trinidad and Tobago Securities and Exchange Commission

JUNE 23 | E.O.T No 0004 of 2026 Anderson Sooparlie v. Trinidad and Tobago Securities and Exchange Commission

JUNE 23 | E.O.T No. 0005 of 2026 Anderson Sooparlie v. Trinidad and Tobago Securities and Exchange Commission

JUNE 23 | E.O.T No. 006 of 2026 Anderson Sooparlie v. Trinidad and Tobago Securities and Exchange Commission

JUNE 25 | E.O.T No. 0005 of 2017 Nigel Meltz v. Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service

JUNE 25 | E.O.T. No. 0004 of 2017 Coreen Isaac v. The North Central Regional Health Authority

JULY 1, 2, & 3 | E.O.T. No. 0011 of 2017 Nicole Cowie v. Employer's Consultative Association of Trinidad & Tobago

**To view the full Court Schedule, you can visit
www.equalrightscourt.org**

Stories of Justice: Matters Before the Equal Opportunity Tribunal This Quarter

Behind every matter before the Equal Opportunity Tribunal is a story of individuals seeking equal opportunity.

This quarter (January - April), the Tribunal continued its important work in hearing complaints of alleged discrimination and victimisation across several protected grounds, including religion, origin, race, and sex. These matters arose within diverse settings, reflecting the wide reach of the Equal Opportunity Act and the real-life impact of its protections.

The cases brought forward touched on issues such as access to equal opportunity and impartiality within organisational systems. In each instance, the Tribunal provided a space where concerns could be raised, responses heard, and evidence examined in a structured and impartial setting.

Matters that came before the Tribunal include:

- ⇒ E.O.T No. 0005 of 2017 Nigel Meltz v. Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service.
- ⇒ E.O.T No. 0005 of 2020 Parasram Heerah v. Trinidad Cement Limited.
- ⇒ E.O.T No. 0006 of 2016 Sean Ocho v. Water and Sewage Authority of Trinidad and Tobago.
- ⇒ E.O.T No. 0001 of 2021 Samuel Johnson v. Tobago Regional Health Authority.
- ⇒ E.O.T 0002 of 2024 Corinne Gregoire v Cipriani College of Labour & Co-operative Studies.
- ⇒ E.O.T No. 0001 of 2025 Dr. Kerlene Kennedy v. North Central Regional Health Authority.
- ⇒ E.O.T. No. 0004 of 2017 Coreen Isaac v. The North Central Regional Health Authority.

While each matter is unique, collectively they highlight ongoing conversations in our society about equality and inclusion. They also underscore the importance of having a dedicated judicial body to carefully consider these issues and ensure that the law is applied fairly and consistently.

The Tribunal remains steadfast in its commitment to the just and timely determination of matters, reinforcing public confidence and advancing the principle that everyone is entitled to equal opportunity under the law.



Why Timing Matters

As a popular television personality always says “Timing is everything”. One of the most important and sometimes misunderstood aspects of bringing a discrimination complaint is timing. Even where a concern feels ongoing, deeply personal, or rooted in years of frustration, the law sets clear deadlines for when a complaint must be formally lodged.

A recent decision of the Equal Opportunity Tribunal (EOT No. 0002 of 2022, *Kamal Mangaroo v Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force* highlights why acting promptly is essential and how the Tribunal approaches the issue of late complaints. The Complainant, a former member of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, alleged that he was discriminated against on the grounds of race in relation to his employment. His concerns included:

- An alleged administrative error in 1999 that excluded him from a training cadre, which he said affected his seniority and chances for promotion.
- The non-restoration of his seniority even after later completing training.
- The alleged failure to conduct a pre-release medical examination, which he claimed was afforded to others.

He sought a range of remedies, including declarations, damages, recognition of a higher terminal rank, and associated benefits. Before the Tribunal could consider the substance of these claims, the Respondent applied to have the matter struck out, arguing that the complaint was **out of time**.

What Does the Law Say About Time Limits?

Under the Equal Opportunity Act, a complaint of discrimination must generally be lodged with the Equal Opportunity Commission **within six (6) months** of the alleged discriminatory act.

This time limit is not a technicality. It goes directly to the Tribunal’s jurisdiction, its legal authority to hear and determine a matter. If a complaint is filed outside the prescribed period, the Tribunal can only accept it if exceptional circumstances are proven.

When Does Time Start Running?

In this case, the Tribunal carefully examined when the alleged discrimination could be said to have last occurred.

Although the Complainant’s grievances stretched back many years, the Tribunal identified May 2017 as the last operative act capable of grounding the complaint. This was the point at which an earlier recommendation relating to his position was rescinded.

The Tribunal found that:

- The formal complaint was lodged with the

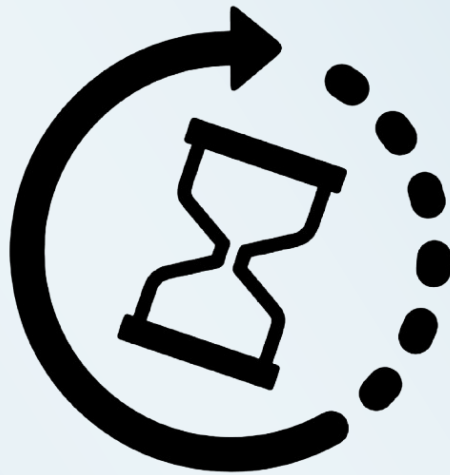
Commission on 8 June 2018. However, time started to run from May 2017.

- An earlier “approach” to the Commission in 2017 did not amount to lodging a complaint under the Act.
- Subsequent correspondence in 2018 did not restart or extend the limitation period.

Even where issues may appear to form a *continuing course of conduct*, the law does not allow time to run indefinitely. The six-month clock runs from the last actionable decision or omission, not from when the effects are still being felt.

The Tribunal’s Decision

The Tribunal concluded that the complaint was filed **outside the six-month statutory period** and that no exceptional circumstances had been established to justify accepting it late.



As a result:

- The Tribunal declined jurisdiction.
- The complaint was struck out without the Tribunal determining whether discrimination had, in fact, occurred.

Importantly, the Tribunal acknowledged the Complainant’s long service and the personal toll of prolonged processes, but reaffirmed that it must apply the law as it stands.

Key Takeaways for the Public

This decision offers important guidance for anyone considering bringing a complaint under the Equal Opportunity Act:

- **Act early.** Do not wait until a matter feels unbearable or is fully resolved elsewhere before seeking advice.
- **Know the difference** between making informal enquiries and formally lodging a complaint.
- **Ongoing impact is not the same as ongoing discrimination.** Time usually runs from the last decision or act, not from the continued effects.
- **Conciliation does not override the law.** Participation in the Commission’s process does not waive the statutory time limits.

The Equal Opportunity Tribunal exists to provide access to justice in discrimination matters. However, access to justice also depends on certainty, fairness, and adherence to the legal framework established by Parliament. Understanding and respecting timelines ensures that complaints can be properly heard, evidence can be fairly tested, and all parties can have confidence in the process.

To read the full judgement please visit www.equalrightscourt.org and click on the tab labelled judgment.



<http://www.equalrightscourt.org>



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