

Message from the Chairperson – Creating a Gender Friendly Environment

Creating a Gender Friendly Environment



Mrs Patricia Chu, EOC Chairperson

In the last few years, before the start of every school year, happenings at our university orientation camps have managed to hit the headlines. Last month, the controversy erupted again as many students, parents and academics all added their voices to the widely reported activities.

When Fun Becomes Harassment

In 2002, a student from one of the universities brought the issue of sexual harassment to the attention of the EOC and the media, because she felt offended by the shouting of sexually charged slogans and the display of humiliating banners at an orientation event involving over a thousand students. She felt the slogans created a sexually hostile environment for her and other students.

Although some students regarded the activities as just fun games, others joined in, they said, because of peer pressure. Feeling uncomfortable or distressed, they nevertheless played along, as those who complained or refused worried about facing isolation from their peers.

Say No

Slogans and posters with sexual contents create a sexually hostile environment on campus. While a sexually hostile environment in relation to the workplace is unlawful, there is at present no legal provision outlawing sexually hostile environment at or in relation to an educational establishment. The EOC recommended to the Government in 1999 to amend the Sex Discrimination Ordinance, so that educational establishments are responsible for the prohibition of a sexually hostile learning environment. The EOC is awaiting the Government to take action on our proposal for this legislative amendment. Meanwhile, universities are mindful of the price of sexual harassment, whether or not it amounts to unlawful discrimination. Indeed, several university presidents and vice-chancellors have expressed concern over the incidents. Obviously a more proactive approach is needed but for the aggrieved students to feel sufficiently safe to lodge complaints with the university, they have to be aware of the university's sexual harassment policies, as well as the complaint channels and procedures. These channels should ensure that complainants will not be viewed as troublemakers; after all, it takes courage to openly oppose your peers.

Around the world, most progressive educational institutions have sexual harassment policies and are committed to the creation of a campus environment that is safe and respectful. For a policy to be effective, it has to be vigorously promoted and enforced. After the incident in 2002, the university established a New Student Orientation Advisory Committee and launched a series of public educational activities, including sexual harassment workshops and a video on sexual harassment. The EOC, in collaboration with the Women's Commission, organized a forum in August with eight universities to discuss ways of preventing sexual harassment on campus. The participants, including university management/academics and students

agreed that sexual harassment policies need to be well publicized, before they can be effective. There was also a consensus that collaboration among all sectors in the community is instrumental in addressing the problem of sexual harassment.

Stereotyping Leads to Harassment

Sexual harassment stems from stereotypical perceptions of women and men. The traditional male stereotypes encourage men to be aggressive and tough, while traditionally women are often perceived to be submissive and caring. Aggression and violence stemming from gender prejudice are sometimes manifested in the forms of dating violence, spousal abuse, sexual assault and harassment. A Survey on Dating Violence conducted by Harmony House and the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Group in February 2004 interviewed 1,067 secondary students. Over 45% of the respondents said that their dating partners had verbally insulted them. For instance, 32% said that their dating partners had joked about their physical appearance such as their body shape or weight. About 26% reported that they had been harassed by telephone or stalked by ex-partners. Over 12% said they were or had been disturbed by dating violence.

Working Towards Gender Equality

One of the solutions to ending sexual harassment and gender-based violence is promoting gender equality. There will be less harassment and discrimination if women and men have gender roles that are equally valued.

Notwithstanding the offence and humiliation, there is a positive side to the orientation camps. The media's widespread coverage has enabled students, the faculty members and even the public learn more about sexual harassment. I think many individuals have now come to realize the importance of respect for both genders. The growing awareness among students that they have the right to study in an environment free of harassment is encouraging. Long-term efforts are required to confront gender stereotyping. Equal opportunity concepts must be incorporated into the educational process to change attitudes and behaviours. There are calls for collaboration among all stakeholder groups including universities, NGOs, the Women's Commission and the EOC. The aim must be to mainstream equal opportunities values in systems and policies. We have to identify the barriers, evaluate the impact of policies and consider redistribution of resources.

Sexual harassment is conduct of a sexual nature that is not welcomed, whether it be physical, verbal or written. This behaviour could reasonably be expected to make a person feel offended, intimidated or humiliated. Though the "games" at orientation camps might mean different things to different people, a line must be drawn somewhere, so that every student can feel free to learn in a gender friendly environment.

EO Expo 2004 – “Reaching Out for Equal Opportunities” Kicks Off!

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The EO Expo 2004 kicks off on 17 October, with more than 20 activities planned for the public. In October and November, you will be able to learn more about equal opportunity and diversity through this exciting line-up of programmes: talks, workshops, exhibitions, recreational activities and visits.



Community Outreach –4 Roadshows in Different Districts

Organized in conjunction with Commercial Radio 1, the roadshows put the spotlight on our outstanding mentors in Career Challenge 2004 (see page 7). They come from a wide spectrum of professions, all having to break down stereotypes to succeed in their chosen fields. You will also meet popular artistes and win prizes at game booths set up by our community partners! Mark your diary now!

Island Resort Mall (Siu Sai Wan) Sun 2:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Metroplaza (Kwai Fong) 6/11/2004 Sat 2:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Tuen Mun Town Plaza 30/10/2004 Sat 2:00 - 3:15 p.m.

Ma On Shan Plaza 13/11/2004 Sat 2:00 - 5:00 p.m.



Stay Tuned - EO Expo Radio Programme on Commercial Radio

Beginning every Saturday from 23 October, a series of 4 radio shows on Commercial Radio 1 (9:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.) will capture highlights of Career Challenge 2004, and a docu-drama series based on real life cases of sex discrimination, disability discrimination and family status discrimination.

EO Through Your Eyes - Photo Competition

To be launched in November, this photo competition allows enthusiasts to show different aspects of inclusion and diversity in everyday life. There are three categories:

- Youth Group - those age 18 and under
- Open Group - those age 19 and above
- Professional Photographer Group

Outstanding photographs by winners and finalists will be featured in our posters, post cards, e-cards and our on-line gallery. Check the EOC website for the competition rules and prizes in November.



You can visit the EOC website for more details and updates of all EO Expo activities.
<http://www.eoc.org.hk>



無定型新人類 2004

一個以突破定型觀念為主題的青少年師友計劃，歡迎全港中學生報名參加，成功入圍就可以與嘉賓導師見面！
 Join the EOC youth mentorship programme to break down the barriers of "stereotyping"! ALL secondary students are welcome to apply. You will be able to meet your mentors.



Career Challenge 2004

截止報名日期 Entry deadline
7-12-2004



嘉賓導師 Mentors:

- 張偉良 Benny Cheung**
香港傷殘青年協會理事會主席
Chairperson of Board of Directors
Hong Kong Federation of Handicapped Youth
- 何嘉麟 Ho Ka-lai**
前香港劍擊隊代表
Ex-member
Hong Kong Fencing Team
- 鄧少明 Simon Kwok**
華莎國際控股有限公司主席及行政總裁
Chairman & CEO
Sa Sa International Holdings Limited
- 林奕華 Edward Lam**
「非舞林奕華」藝術總監
Artistic Director
Edward Lam Dance Theatre
- 劉麗明 Alice Lau**
稅務局局長
Commissioner of Inland Revenue
- 廖秀冬博士 Dr. Sarah Liao**
環境運輸及工務局局長
Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works
- 劉國柱 Liu Guozhu**
中華廚藝學院總幹事
Chief Instructor (Food Preparation)
Chinese Cuisine Training Institute
- 施曉綺 Bonnie Smith**
警務處新界地區指揮官
Regional Commander NTS
Hong Kong Police Force
- 黃源嘉 James Wong**
國際插花藝術學校校長
Headmaster
International School of Flower Arrangement
- 阮蘇少媚 Betty Yuen**
中華電力有限公司商務董事
Managing Director
CLP Power Hong Kong Limited

由10月23日至11月13日逢星期六晚上九時至十時，雷電881商業一台(FM88.1-89.5)將播出嘉賓導師的訪問，留意收聽。

Radio interviews with mentors will be broadcast on Commercial Radio 1 (FM 88.1- 89.5) every Saturday from 23 Oct to 13 Nov 2004, 9-10 pm.

查詢Enquiry

電話 Telephone: 2106 2253

網址 Website: www.eoc.org.hk

An Early Start – EO Education Module

An Early Start – EO Education Module



"If young people today embrace equal opportunities and diversity, they will be less likely to discriminate against other people when they grow up. We shall be able to rely on them to build a world without prejudice," renowned singer and EO Ambassador Hui Chi-on explained his support for the new educational module "A Mission for Equal Opportunities - Student Forum", jointly developed by the EOC and RTHK.

The module is a useful tool for teachers and students to learn about the impact of discrimination, and how to prevent it. Speaking at the launching ceremony, EOC Chairperson Mrs Patricia Chu stressed that the module aims at transforming students to become agents in combating traditional misconceptions and prejudice.

The educational module consists of 4 VCDs, with the award-winning TV docu-drama series "A Mission for Equal Opportunities III", a user manual with synopses of the stories and FAQs, as well as a CD-Rom.

After testing and using the new training package, Mr Au Kin-kwan, School Principal of Po Kok Secondary School agrees that the educational module is user-friendly and interesting. "It is specifically designed for the classroom situation, to stimulate discussion on discriminatory issues many face in everyday life. It enables teachers and students to understand much more about the principles of equal opportunities," said Mr Au.

You can now view the educational module at http://www.eoc.org.hk/eoc/otherproject/chi/color/youthcorner/eo_module/stu_forum_b.html (Chinese version). Workshops will be organized for teachers on the use of the module in November. More details will be available on the EOC website.





EOC Chairperson Mrs Patricia Chu (left) and Controller of Educational TV, RTHK Mr Dai Kin-man (right) jointly present a special edition of the new educational module to renowned singer and EO Ambassador Mr Hui Chi-on.



Officiating guests and students follow the "Put Prejudice Away" gesture, calling upon everyone to cultivate an equal opportunity environment at school.

Forum on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Universities

Forum on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Universities

Dealing with sexual harassment is no easy matter, as some participants at the "Forum on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Universities" discovered. Co-organized by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and the Women's Commission (WoC) last August, the forum was attended by about 40 representatives of Hong Kong's tertiary education institutes, university students and non-governmental organizations. Many participants agreed that it provided a valuable opportunity to discuss measures of preventing sexual harassment on campus. There was a general consensus that sexual harassment was not a minor breach of social etiquette, but an unacceptable behaviour in all circumstances.



EOC Chairperson, Mrs Patricia Chu defines this serious matter: "Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination based on sex. It can be a demand for a sexual favour, or an unwelcome comment of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment may be direct or indirect, physical or verbal. Sexual harassment often causes stress and anger, and more often than not, women are targeted by this unlawful behaviour."

Study Results



In 2003, following intense media coverage of university orientation camps, the EOC conducted a study on sexual harassment in local universities, which showed that students' awareness of sexual harassment was low, and many treated the activities as a game. Students who were under peer pressure to shout slogans containing derogatory sexual comments were reluctant to lodge complaints, for fear that others would consider them as troublemakers. Some students did not have knowledge about channels for complaint.

Professor Catherine Tang of the Chinese University of Hong Kong shared the results of her study, "Survey on Sexual Harassment in Local Tertiary Institutions" (2001) at the Forum. Among the 2,495 respondents from eight tertiary institutes, 28.3 % had experienced sexual harassment by their peers, but more than half of them (53%) reacted by passively ignoring the harasser. To address the issue, Professor Tang recommended more educational programmes on prevention of sexual harassment, promotion of a sexual harassment policy and more transparent complaint handling procedures.

Breaking Down Gender Stereotypes

Ms Margaret Wong, Executive Director of Harmony House, put forward her views at the Forum, attributing the underlying causes for sexual harassment to social conditioning of men to be "the tough guy", striving for power, and the social conditioning for women on the other hand, to be nice and caring, "wanting to be liked, not powerful".

She pointed out that while women are perceived as vulnerable, men are permitted to be the aggressor. This kind of gender stereotyping is perpetuated by popular magazines, TV programmes and advertisements emphasizing the traditional gender roles and women's physical appearance. She underlined the need to free men and women from the rigid sex role stereotypes, and empower both sexes to express their feelings and stand up for their rights. "When women and men feel strong and secure in their respective identities, they can relate to each other in more meaningful ways without resorting to sexual harassment or any form of violence," concluded Ms Wong.

The Way Ahead

Under the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO), there are two types of sexual harassment. "The first type is any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature directed at the victim, such as unwelcome sexual advance or gestures, and conversations with sexual meaning," explained Mr Herman Poon, EOC's Assistant Legal Advisor at the Forum. "The second type is any conduct of a sexual nature creating a sexually hostile work environment. Examples are the display of pornographic material and general sexual jokes among staff. Such conduct is unlawful in the workplace. However, the concept of a sexually hostile environment does not apply to harassment in educational establishments." That means, shouting obscene slogans or displaying posters with sexual contents on campus may have created a sexually hostile environment, but there is at present no legal provision outlawing it.



The EOC has recommended amendment of the SDO to cover this type of sexual harassment. At the forum, the government was urged to speed up the process of amending the SDO, to prohibit a sexually hostile environment in the educational setting.

After a full day of discussion, the participants agreed that more work needs to be done. Both the EOC and the WoC pledged to continue their support for future collaboration with the educational institutes. "We firmly believe that there should be an ongoing effort among all parties concerned to improve policy implementation to reduce sexual harassment more effectively, mainstream gender issues and change the mindset of students in order to bring about a visible and sustainable impact," Mrs Chu concluded.

社區活動巡禮

Events Calendar

- 拉闊平等路 — 廣告短片創作比賽

“Creating a Level Playing Field”

Video Clips Production Competition

截止日期：15/11/2004

Deadline for Submission: 15/11/2004

- 拉闊平等路 — 試映會暨頒獎禮

“Equal Opportunities” Film Show

5/12/2004

路德會雍盛綜合服務中心

Yung Shing Lutheran Integrated Service Centre

2697 2098

- 平等博愛嘉年華

Equal Opportunities Carnival

16/12/2004

馬鞍山聖若瑟小學

Ma On Shan St. Joseph's Primary School

2642 9186

- 「平平無歧」社區教育計劃

“Say No to Discrimination”

Community Educational Project

- 和諧行動 — 少數族裔人士社區關懷計劃

“Operation Harmony”

— Project for Ethnic Minorities

09/2004-01/2005

明愛香港仔社區中心

Caritas Community Centre - Aberdeen

2552 4211

- 2004「精神健康月」

Mental Health Month 2004

10-12/2004

精神健康月籌備委員會

Organizing Committee of the

Mental Health Month

<http://www.hwfb.gov.hk>

- 「平等社會」話劇創作比賽

“Equal Society” Drama Competition

- 「共建平等」海報標語設計比賽

“Equal Opportunities” Poster & Slogan
Design Competition

- 「平等」遊戲設計比賽

“Equality” Game Design Competition

- 「平等社會」16格漫畫設計比賽

“Equal Society” Comic Design Contest

15/10/2004-15/11/2004

飛雁幼稚園

Fei Ngan Kindergarten

2354 7003

- 男士會 (粉嶺) - 心聲分享

Men's Club (Fanling) - Sharing Sessions

由現在至12/2004

Now to 12/2004

- 男士成長課程

“Life Breakthrough” Course

5/11/2004 - 3/12/2004

明愛粉嶺家庭服務

Caritas Family Service - Fanling

2669 2316

- “I Seek Me”服務計劃

“I Seek Me” Service Plan for Persons

With and Without Disabilities

由現在至 6/2005

Now to 6/2005

香港復康力量

Hong Kong Rehabilitation Power

3471 7000

Sex Discrimination Case – No Pornography Please

Sex Discrimination Case

No Pornography Please!

The complaint

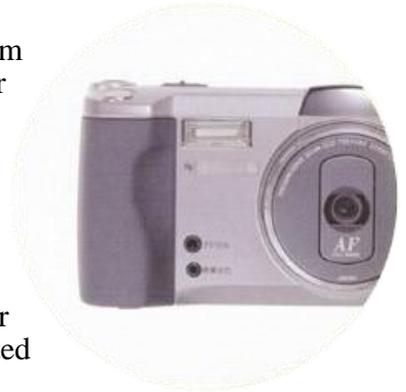


"I was a site clerk and the only female employee in a small construction company. My daily work included ordering and receiving construction materials, and stock taking. The site manager, who is also the owner of the company, was responsible for sales and monitoring the progress of construction work. Usually he would include digital photos taken from the construction sites in his progress reports to clients. Occasionally he stared at these photos in a lewd way but I did not know why he acted like this until...

One day, he asked me to save some digital photos taken from a construction site in the computer. Without suspecting anything, I did as I was instructed. To my dismay, I found three photos of naked buttocks and private parts. I was very angry and humiliated. I could not work with him any more and I quit on the spot," said the complainant.

What the EOC did

The EOC investigator looked into the complaint and sought information from both parties. The employer denied all allegations, stating that he had never taken or seen the photos. However, he was willing to resolve the matter by early conciliation. Early conciliation offers an alternative means to settle the case within a shorter time frame, and could be conducted at any stage before or during the process of investigation. The complainant, who did not want the case to drag on, also welcomed this approach. The settlement terms included a monetary compensation approximately equal to one-third of the complainant's monthly salary and a letter of apology. The employer also agreed to display anti-sexual harassment policy and materials adapted from the EOC's publications on the office notice board.



What the law says

Sexual harassment is often dismissed by those not suffering from it as "just a bit of fun". In reality, it is a very specific form of sex discrimination and is against the law. Under the Sex Discrimination Ordinance, sexual harassment in employment is unlawful. Sexual harassment includes any unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature which a reasonable person regards as offensive, humiliating or intimidating. Acts of sexual harassment may be direct or indirect, physical or verbal. Examples of such acts could be indecent or suggestive remarks, the display of pornography, the circulation of obscene materials, inappropriate touching and requests or demands for sexual favours etc.



Disability Discrimination Case – Taken for a Ride?

Disability Discrimination Case

Taken for a Ride

The complaint



"When I joined my company's insurance package scheme, the agent made all kinds of promises. He even showed me a brochure about the Disability Income Protection Scheme, covering expenses for permanent or temporary disability. After I joined the plan, it was a totally different story."

The disability rider was added to David's insurance policy in 2002. Later, he discovered that he had developed a rare syndrome related to an immune disorder. In March 2003, David was informed by his insurer that his disability income benefit has been cut from the maximum of HK\$30,000 which he had expected, to HK\$10,000 per month. David consulted a medical specialist to find out if the insurance company's decision was justified. The doctor advised that there was no statistics available to suggest that David ran a higher risk of contracting rheumatoid arthritis, a disease associated with David's rare syndrome."

What the EOC did

An EOC case officer investigated the complaint lodged by David against the insurance company. The company argued that according to its underwriting guidelines and the medical advice of the company's specialist, it was concluded that there was an unacceptable risk and therefore David's income protection benefit had to be downwardly adjusted to HK\$10,000 per month.



David and the insurance company hold different medical opinions on his condition. The EOC officer explained to the insurance company the Disability Discrimination Ordinance in relation to provision of goods and services i.e. it would be unlawful to treat someone less favourably because of his/her disability. Later, both parties agreed to resolve the dispute by conciliation. The insurance company agreed to adjust the income protection amount by either capping it at 50% of David's basic salary or HK\$30,000 per month, whichever is lowest. The case was settled amicably.

What the law says

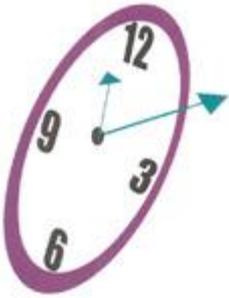
Under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance, it may constitute direct discrimination if an insurance company provides a less favourable term to a person on ground of his/her disability. The anti-discrimination laws recognize that the insurance practice necessarily involves the classification of risk and that premiums and policies are tailored to reflect such risks. The laws permit differential treatment based on actuarial, statistical or other data which is reasonable in itself, and upon which it is reasonable to rely.



Around the World

Around the World

Work-life Balance Needed in Hong Kong



In Hong Kong, a recent survey on work-life balance conducted by the University of Hong Kong and a non-profit group Community Business has shown that workers clock an average of 55 hours a week leading many on their way to poor health, stress and job dissatisfaction.

Only five respondents out of about 1000 said they were "very happy" with their jobs, compared with 28%, who were planning to switch jobs within the coming year. Another surprise finding, was that nearly one third of those who worked late attributed the reason to the fact that they could not leave ahead of their bosses.

As the majority of workers did not receive overtime pay, 28% of those surveyed said they would take sick leave as a break. The economic cost for all these ills is estimated at \$39 billion on an annual basis, to cover sick leave, staff recruitment and training, plus administrative costs.

Information Source :

<http://www.communitybusiness.org.hk/documents/Work%20Life%20Balance.pdf>

Welcome Aboard the "Listening Bus"



The Listening Bus of UK's National Deaf Children's Society tours around the country, delivering unique technological service to the doorsteps of the nation's deaf children, deaf adults, families, friends and professionals. The purpose built vehicle features examples of latest equipment, such as textphones, videophones, door alerts, subtitled and signed films, which facilitate communication and learning. Supported by HSBC Bank since its launch in 1996, the Bus has visited hundreds of venues, including schools for the deaf, to raise public awareness of childhood deafness.

Information Source :

http://www.ndcs.org.uk/our_services/listening_bus/index.html

More Muslim Women in Olympics



A record number of Muslim women have represented their countries in the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, making history with several firsts.

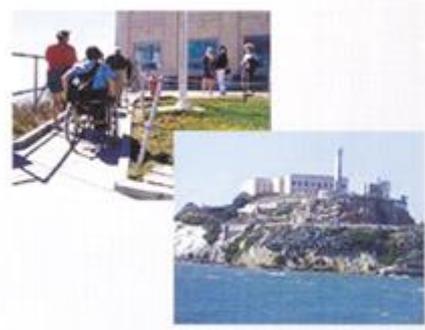
"It is an enormous honour to represent Afghan women in the Olympics. I don't care if I don't get any medals. Just attending the Olympics is a gold medal for me," said 18-year-old Friba Razayee, who practised judo for barely a year and was defeated within a minute in her match. Razayee is one of the two women of the 5-member Afghan Olympic team, along with sprinter Robina Mugimyar. The sprinter said although she was not allowed to leave her home, now she could compete in the 100-meter race.

Other Islamic countries have also sent their women to the Olympics, including the first Egyptian woman rower and the first Pakistani female swimmer.

Information Source:

<http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/1955/context/archive>

Alcatraz Prison Becomes Accessible to Persons with Disabilities



The infamous Alcatraz prison - tourists' favourite on an island in the bay of San Francisco - has been made accessible to wheelchair users. From boarding the ferry at Pier 39 to arriving at the cellblock on the island's summit, anyone with a mobility impairment can enjoy a totally step free experience.

To get people over to the island, a gangway structure that could deal with the tidal fluctuations in San Francisco bay was built. Because the walk from the dock up to the cellblock is so steep, a tram that had been ferrying athletes around during the Paralympics in Atlanta is used to transport people with mobility impairments.

To make the Alcatraz experience accessible for all, not just wheelchair users, staff trained to interact with people with cognitive disabilities and guides for blind visitors are on hand to offer assistance.

Information Source :

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/3638708.stm>

<http://www.nps.gov/alcatraz/>

EO Reaches the Community

EO Reaches the Community



(From left to right) Mrs. Patricia Chu, EOC Chairperson met with Ms Lamis Alami, Commissioner General of Palestine Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights, Ms Diana Temby, Executive Director of Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and Ms Rosslyn Noonan, Chief Commissioner of New Zealand Human Rights Commission at the 9th Annual Meeting of Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions held in Seoul in September, to participate in an exchange in promoting human rights.



Delegates of the Asia Pacific Forum were invited to visit the National Human Rights Commission of the Republic of Korea, in Seoul.



Students suggest ways of preventing sexual harassment in schools after watching "This is Not a Joke" performed by the Forest Union. The interactive play, commissioned by the EOC, explains to students the concept of gender equality and mutual respect.