

Say No to Discrimination and Stigmatization

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Discrimination and Stigmatization**



Ms. Anna WU, EOC Chairperson

In our campaign against discrimination and stigmatization, we realize there is still a lot to be done, simply because there are many who cannot accept those who are different.

There were 269,500 persons with a disability in Hong Kong¹, and 882,700 persons with a chronic illness², according to a general household survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department in 2000. In total, they constitute 17% of the Hong Kong population.

That means, when we look at our families and friends, we may all know someone who is considered different. That someone may be a grandfather who uses a wheelchair, a sister who is a single parent or a friend who is recovering from a mental illness. Their lives are not easy. Many cannot get jobs, or are last hired, first fired.

Access to insurance services

Through birth, accident, injury or the aging process, many people have no choice but to live with disabilities or chronic illnesses. Besides employment, persons with a disability or chronic illness also face difficulties in other areas such as the provision of insurance service. The EOC has received complaints from persons with a disability or chronic illness that they experience discrimination from insurance companies, in that they are being refused cover, or that their premiums are higher due to their disability, or that their pre-existing conditions are excluded from the coverage.

The EOC is developing a discussion paper on the basis of an earlier Research on Insurance Issues under the DDO, SDO and FSDO3, to collect views from the insurance industry and other stakeholders on the means to achieve good insurance practices.

The DDO gives persons with a disability legal right to fight against discrimination and harassment. They should not be denied insurance, or treated less favourably, unless such treatment can be defended under the law.

The EOC accepts that insurance companies are entitled to exclude certain conditions in order to ensure continuing viability. However, blanket exclusions in respect of mental illness or HIV/AIDS, which are common in Hong Kong, might not be considered reasonable unless the individual circumstances are taken into account. The insurer could provide the cover at a reduced amount or by increasing the premium, after considering all factors. The EOC is campaigning for the needs of persons with a disability not only on the basis of rights but also on the basis of market share. They are customers.

Fighting stigmas

To foster a culture respecting differences and individual rights, we need to challenge stereotyping, stigmatization and conventional thinking, as discrimination often stems from ignorance and false assumptions. Recent EOC surveys of students and textbooks reveal that students perceived persons with a disability as deviant, accident prone and only appropriate for repetitive work. This is worrying indeed, as it simply does not reflect the reality. This world would be a lesser place if individuals such as Franklin D. Roosevelt, Stephen Hawking - both wheelchair users, Beethoven who has a hearing impairment, and Steven Spielberg who has a specific learning disability - dyslexia, were not given the opportunity to achieve.

Our survey findings further show that students perceived persons with mental illnesses to be deviant and violent and they draw their impressions mainly from the media. But studies have shown that only a small group of persons with severe and persistent mental illnesses is at risk of becoming violent. With proper treatment and care, persons with mental illnesses can lead a normal life. What deter people from seeking treatment are often stigma-related fears.

Accepting persons with mental illnesses

Census and Statistics Department finds that there are about 50,000 people with mental illnesses in Hong Kong in 2000. The reality is, however, there may be a much higher occurrence of mental illness among the general public. A recent survey⁴ finds that over one fifth of patients attending primary care clinics were actually mentally ill. Patients may bring various physical symptoms to their doctors, not recognizing that there may be psychological causes for their physical symptoms.

The results of a joint project by the EOC and the Department of Psychiatry of the CUHK reveal the experiences of mental health service users in the workplace, in the family and with friends, as well as difficulties they experience in medical and social services. We hope to release these findings shortly and make recommendations to promote understanding and acceptance of persons with mental illnesses.

We hope that extensive discussion about the illnesses would help understanding and prevention, and encourage treatment. An environment in which those with mental illnesses fear discrimination and stigmatization will not encourage those at risk to seek medical help.

1 The 269,500 persons had one of more or the following types of disability: restriction in body movement, seeing difficulty, hearing difficulty, speech difficulty, mental illness and autism.

2 The three most commonly cited diseases that required long-term medical treatment lasting for at least 6 months were hypertension (41.6%), diabetes (18.8%) and heart diseases (13.6%).

3 The three anti-discrimination ordinances in Hong Kong are Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO), Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO) and Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (FSDO).

4 The survey results were released in 1999 by the Departments of Psychiatry and Community and Family Medicine of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. See details at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/ipro/990205.htm>

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Feature Story Interview with Equal Opportunities Ambassador - HUI Chi-on



**"Put Prejudice Away,
Make the World A Better Place"**

HUI Chi-on
(Equal Opportunities Ambassador)

Everyone in Asia knows HUI Chi-on. Voted as this year's "Most Popular Male Singer", he is an accomplished actor and a regular on radio and TV. Adored by the youth throughout Asia for his looks, his personality and, above all, his voice, HUI Chi-on is without doubt one of the most influential artistes in Hong Kong. The Equal Opportunities Commission is honored that he is willing to serve as our Ambassador and he is willing to lend us his renowned voice to sing our theme song, A World Without Discrimination.



In an exclusive interview with EOC News, HUI Chi-on reveals his thoughts about equal opportunity in Hong Kong - why he supports the commission, how he intends to promote equality and his own feelings towards discrimination.

Why did you agree to be the Equal Opportunities Ambassador?

As a pop singer, my work is rather self-centered. My time is mainly spent recording my music and promoting myself. So, I wanted to do something more beneficial to society, such as to work with non-profit making organizations like the Equal Opportunities Commission. I believe that every singer should contribute more to improving our society, especially through publicizing events and supporting community programmes.

I also find the concept of equal opportunities very meaningful. I hope to raise awareness of our rights and the existence of the Equal Opportunities Commission, so that people can take advantage of this resource and achieve their full potential.

What do you think the term 'Equal Opportunity' means?

Equal opportunities run hand in hand with a successful society. We need to create a level-playing field for every individual by providing citizens with equal access to education, employment, services, facilities and participation in community life, so that everyone can achieve their full potential. With less dependent and more able citizens, Hong Kong will flourish and will become a truly cosmopolitan city.



Have you ever witnessed or experienced discrimination? How did you feel about it?

Luckily, I have not seen nor been the subject of any flagrant acts of discrimination. However, as the EO Ambassador, I role-played ten real life cases where people faced discrimination, and learnt a lot about real acts of discrimination in the process. I think that unless you experience discrimination firsthand, you will not know how awful it feels, but I did feel very sorry for the victims and slightly ashamed that such inequality exists in Hong Kong. I am glad that the Equal Opportunities Commission managed to address their grievances in all the cases. Discrimination should not play any role in an international and dynamic city like Hong Kong. We must all stand up for equal opportunities so that our home can live up to its name.



How can equal opportunities benefit Hong Kong?

Firstly, equal access to education will allow Hong Kong's youth to fully utilize their abilities and achieve their full potential. Secondly, when the best and most capable person is selected for a job, the work done will be of a higher quality. Thirdly, businesses that adopt equal opportunity policies project a good image of themselves, which is a valuable PR tool.

Let me give you an example. If a company employs a wheelchair-bound computer expert some may look down on the company for hiring a person with a disability. However, many will admire the company's willingness to give opportunities to persons with a disability. Besides, the fact that the wheelchair-bound person cannot walk does not mean that he/she is unable to do tasks that do not require that ability.

How do you manage to avoid discriminating against others?

I think that if you place yourself in the victim's shoes and make yourself aware of their feelings, you will feel obliged to abandon your discriminatory habits. I try to avoid being discriminatory by placing more emphasis on merit and ability. For example, when I create an album, I usually record one to two hundred songs and choose the 10 songs that I like most. Under these circumstances, it is easy to choose the songs arranged or written by someone I know or by my friends. To avoid this, I would not look at the list of composers and arrangers and simply choose the ones I think sound best.

You recently performed a song for the Equal Opportunities Commission. Can you tell us about it?

The song is called "World without Discrimination". It describes and endorses a world without discrimination. When filming the MTV, I tried to show that prejudice impedes one's full vision of the world by covering one eye with my hand, therefore limiting my vision. I then removed the hand to show that when one puts aside his/her prejudices, he/she will be able to see a complete and beautiful world. This gesture really came from my heart and while I acted it out, I genuinely felt like I was throwing aside all my previous preconceptions, to embrace a beautiful and fair world.

As a youth idol, is there any advice you would like to give to your fans?

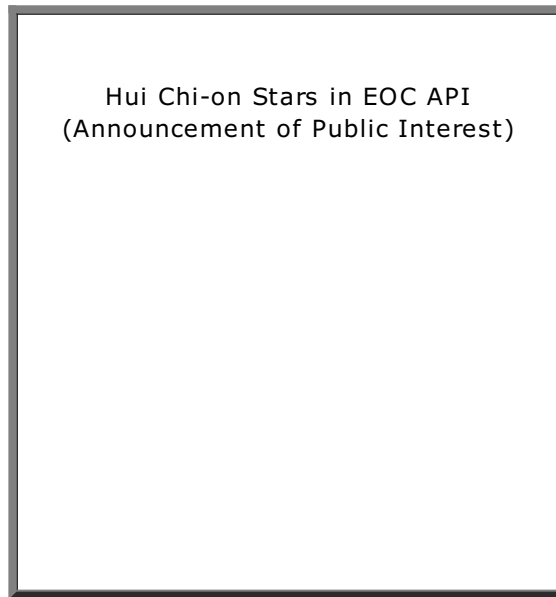
I would like to stress the importance of treating everyone equally, regardless of their race, gender and disability. Everyone should respect each other and work together to benefit our society. If our younger generation embrace this idea and spread it around, my dream of achieving a world without prejudice should be realized soon.



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Equal Opportunities Union 2002

API (Announcement of Public Interest)



Hui Chi-on Stars in EOC API
(Announcement of Public Interest)

Equal Opportunities Files

Tune in to "The Equal Opportunities Files " Jointly Produced by the EOC and Metroshowbiz

The 10-episode radio docu-drama series highlights real life cases of sex discrimination, disability discrimination and family status discrimination. Staring Mr. HUI Chi-on, Ms. NG Wing-mei and Mr. Cheung Kai-tai, the programme kicked off the EOC's summer project, "Equal Opportunities Union 2002".

* This programme is broadcast in Cantonese

[Please click here to listen to the docu-drama](#)

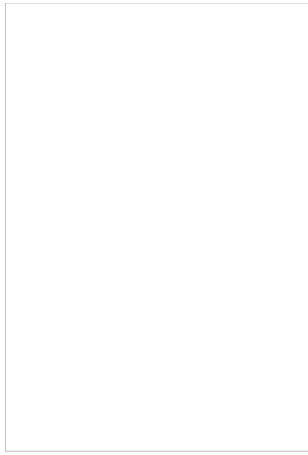


EOC Theme Song

EOC Theme Song - "A World Without Discrimination"

lyrics(chinese only)

Win a HUI Chi-on Poster



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Disability Discrimination Case -Equal Access to ATM Services...

Disability Discrimination Case



Equal access to ATM services...

"Many illiterate people and the elderly use chops. Are they denied ATM cards as well?"

"He told me that I could not apply for an ATM card, as people who operate their accounts using a chop are not allowed to apply. However, I knew that other banks do not have such unreasonable requirements. Besides, many illiterate people and the elderly use chops. Are they denied ATM cards as well?"

The complaint

Peter was born with a slight visual impairment, which gradually deteriorated to a total loss of sight. Despite his disability, he managed to live a normal life, working as a telephone operator and residing with his parents. As he could not see, he was unable to sign documents and used a chop to operate his bank account.



Having heard about the benefits and convenience of using ATM cards, Peter decided to apply for one. He went to the bank and asked the staff for an application form. To his dismay, he was told that for safety purposes, customers who operate their accounts using a chop were not allowed to apply for an ATM card. The bank was acting under the assumption that disabled people could not manage their own finances.

But Peter knew he was perfectly capable. "Look," he said, "I travel by myself on public transport, I go to work by myself, I earn my own money, and I know I can use an ATM card properly. People tend to stereotype persons with disabilities, often assuming that we are unable to manage our own affairs. This is not fair. Each person should be seen as a unique individual, and each should have his/her disability assessed on a personal basis." Peter then lodged a complaint with the EOC.

What the EOC did

Upon receipt of the complaint, the Commission contacted the bank and inquired about its service. The respondent explained that the rejection was merely a misunderstanding, and that the junior staff member had not read the updated bank guidelines on handling customers with visual impairment. To clarify the situation, the bank suggested an early conciliation, where it explained the risks and liabilities of having an ATM card to Peter before issuing one to him.

What the law says

Under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance, it is unlawful for a service provider to refuse goods, services and facilities to persons with a disability, unless the provision of which will cause unjustifiable hardship to the provider.



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Sex Discrimination Case - Just a Regular Check-up?

Sex Discrimination Case



Just a Regular Check-up?

"He did not even check my lungs, my chest or my back. He did not even check my pulse or my respiratory system. He only checked my breasts! I entered the clinic with a minor headache and some cough. I left the clinic feeling much worse, realizing that I had been sexually harassed."



The complaint

Ah Fa visited a doctor, as she felt unwell. A nurse escorted her into the doctor's office, and then left her alone with the doctor. Initially, he proceeded to perform a regular checkup. He asked Ah Fa to describe her symptoms, checked her throat, then requested to examine her chest. Having had check ups before, Ah Fa knew the routine, so she yielded to the request and unbuttoned part of her vest. However, what surprised her was the doctor's next move. He turned towards her, edging closer. Placing his stethoscope on her right breast, he repeatedly touched her breast with his fingertips. Shocked and embarrassed, Ah Fa opened her mouth, but was unable to speak as he performed the same action on the left side of her chest. She sat there, dazed and confused. When he removed his hand from her shirt, the doctor winked at Ah Fa and said to her, "You'll be fine." Ah Fa quickly buttoned up her shirt and stumbled out of the clinic.

Utterly humiliated, shaken and upset, Ah Fa returned to work and discussed with her colleagues what she could do. They told her that she had a few options * sue the doctor, complain to the medical council or contact the EOC to settle the matter by conciliation. Knowing that the advantage of conciliation is its relative speed in comparison with other forms of redress, Ah Fa decided to lodge a complaint with the EOC. Apart from being a free service, the fact that the Commission's conciliation procedures involves fewer people and therefore facilitates confidentiality also helped Ah Fa reach her decision.



What the EOC did

Upon receipt of the complaint, the EOC contacted the doctor and carried out the investigation. The doctor insisted that he did not deliberately touch Ah Fa's breast and that what he performed was just a regular chest examination. He claimed that when working with a stethoscope, some contact with the patient's skin was unavoidable. However, he felt sorry for the misunderstanding, which had led to Ah Fa's distress, and he wanted an opportunity to clarify his intention and action with her.

The EOC arranged a conciliation meeting during which both parties agreed to resolve the complaint. Other than expressing apology in writing, the doctor agreed to pay Ah Fa an amount of money as a kind of compensation for injury to her feeling. He also promised to ensure that in future, his patients understand his intent before carrying out any physical examinations.

What the law says

Under the Sex Discrimination Ordinance, it is unlawful for a person to sexually harass another person in the course providing goods, facilities or services. The doctor should not have conducted any unwelcome sexual behaviour which makes his patients feel offended, humiliated or intimidated, as a reasonable person would anticipate that the victims would have such negative feelings.

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Around the World



Around the World



Afghan girls return to school

After the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan, girls are finally being brought back to school and reintegrated into society. The Afghan government recently enacted legislation allowing girls to seek education. It has also launched a Back-to-School program, designed to encourage parents to enroll their children, especially girls, in schools. Although much remains to be done and change appears to be slow, the program has brought about a dramatic increase in the number of students throughout Afghanistan. An assessment conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) determined that there are currently 143,000 male and female students in the Kandahar region, a dramatic increase from the 17,000 boys under Taliban rule. Throughout Afghanistan, 4,593 schools have been established, providing education to 1.7 million children.

More Information:

<http://www.unicef.org/noteworthy/afghanistan/>



Inclusion of Persons with a Disability in Commonwealth Games

For the first time in history, athletes with a disability competed on an equal basis with non-disabled competitors. The 2002 Commonwealth Games, held in Manchester, UK, integrated athletes with a disability into the main programme, enabling them to become full members of their national teams and including their victories in the medal table. Facilities have been upgraded to accommodate wheelchair users and persons with a visual impairment, including wheelchair spaces, easy access seats, blue badge parking spaces and private escorts. In addition, hundreds of persons with a disability have been recruited as volunteers. Organisers hope that their success will encourage future hosts of sports events to allow equal participation too.

More Information:

<http://www.disabilitynow.org.uk/>



The 2002 Global Summit of Women

In Barcelona, over 600 businesswomen, female entrepreneurs and government representatives from 78 different countries around the world gathered for the Global Summit of Women in July 2002.

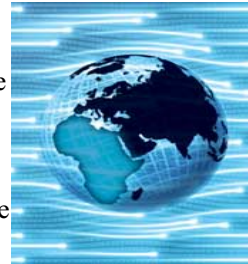
Aiming to attain equal business opportunities for women and to further their own businesses, the participants spent 3 days discussing issues that affect women's development, business strategies, methods to balance work and family life and e-commerce. Now in its twelfth year, the Summit provides an opportunity for women around the world to network, and to establish cross-border businesses and professional relationships. Their achievements include: raising US\$10,000 to be used as micro-enterprise loans by Afghan women seeking to re-enter their country's economy, creating a Technology Committee to develop ways of continuing the sharing of best practices among Summit participants and other women entrepreneurs globally, and an agreement to compile 'corporate best practice codes' to foster equal opportunities for women.

More Information:

http://www.globewomen.com/summit/global_summit02.html

Information Technology for African Women

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has launched a website to provide African women with a forum to discuss gender issues. The Horn of Africa Region Women's Knowledge Network (Hawknet) will enable women to discuss emerging national and women's issues, network, participate in global debates and voice their concerns on national policies regarding information technology. This initiative also aims to boost technological access, knowledge and literacy in Africa. With the support of the World Bank and the African Centre for Women, Information and Communications Technology (ACWICT) the Hawknet will provide Internet networks and resources to women in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Sudan and Somalia.



More Information:

<http://www.acwict.or.ke/Hawknet/default.htm>

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Career Challenge



Officiating guests and EOC mentees join hands to support "Career Challenge".



Officiating guests break down "stereotyping" at the "Career Challenge" programme launch.



A unisex Lion Dance team receives souvenirs from Ms. Anna WU, EOC Chairperson.



(from left) Mentors Ms. Mabel CHEUNG; The Hon. Audrey EU; The Hon. Emily LAU; Ms. Jacqueline LAW and Mr. LO Chi-kin discuss their experiences with mentees and the public.



Young men from St. Francis Xavier's College show off their skills in a floral arrangement performance.

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EO Reaches the Community

EO reaches the community



A novel experience - students of TWGHs Yow Kam Yuen College share fun and games with their peers in wheelchairs. This activity was organized by Hong Kong PHAB Association which promotes the integration of persons with and without a physical disability, and funded by the EOC.



"Look! They're helping each other to reach the top!" Participants learn to support each other during an activity organized by Breakthrough Pathfinding Pavilion, and funded by the EOC.



"Ten Outstanding Issues Selected by Persons with a Visual Impairment" organized by Hong Kong Blind Union and funded by the EOC, raised concerns shared by persons with a visual impairment.



Participants of an accessibility project faced difficulties when they were trying to board a train. This activity was organized by Princess Alexandra Red Cross Residential School, and funded by the EOC.

Educational seminar "Learning Together: Accommodating Different Needs"

Over 400 participants attended the Equal Opportunities Commission's educational seminar titled "Learning Together: Accommodating Different Needs" on 22 June 2002 to discuss the implementation of integrated education in Hong Kong. Overseas experts, school principals, teachers, parents and education officials participated in the seminar. They exchanged views on ways to implement integrated education to accommodate students with specific learning disabilities. Two overseas speakers shared their experiences on special accommodation in the UK and China.



1. VIPs officiating: (From left) Mr. Matthew CHEUNG, the then Director of Education; Dr. Philippa RUSSELL, UK Disability Rights Commissioner; Dr. CHEN Yun-ying, Head of Special Education Division of the China National Institute for Educational Research and Ms. Anna WU, Chairperson of the EOC.

2. TSANG Koon-chung (left) and LAM Pak-yan, students in an integrated education programme, spoke at the seminar.



The participants did a good job at the event named "My Hand Instead of My Mouth * Equal Participation programme", organized by the Salvation Army and the Hong Kong Association of the Deaf, and funded by the EOC.

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社區活動巡禮

events calendar

「富善姿彩新天地」綜合活動

(親子創作、繪畫大賽、音樂/電影欣賞)
"Life of Persons with an Intellectual Disability"
Parent / Child Arts Programme, Mural Painting Competition, Music / Film Show
7 / 2002 - 2 / 2003
匡智會 - 匡智大埔(南)中心
Hong Chi Tai Po (South) Centre
2651 2889 (吳小姐 Ms Ng)

「平等機會知多D」

青年計劃 工作坊及錄像比賽
"Knowing More About Equal Opportunities" Youth Programme
Workshop and Video Recording Competition
9 / 2002 - 1 / 2003
香港天主教勞工事務委員會
Hong Kong Catholic Commission for Labour Affairs
2772 5918 (畢小姐 Ms But)

「全港第二屆手語朗誦比賽」

The 2nd Annual Sign Language and Speech Competition
22 / 09 / 2002 (截止報名日期) (Deadline for Registration)
05 / 10 / 2002 (初賽) (First-Round Competition)
27 / 10 / 2002 (決賽) (Final Competition)
香港聾人協會
Hong Kong Association of the Deaf
<http://www.hongkongdeaf.org.hk>
2327 2497

「主婦才能多面睇」

講座及繽紛Show
"Discovering Housewives' Abilities"
Seminar and Variety Show
10 / 2002 - 3 / 2003
香港婦女中心協會
Hong Kong Federation of Women's Centres
2386 6256
(劉小姐 Ms Lau)

「視障兒童趣味軟件設計比賽」

Software Design Competition for Children with a Visual Impairment
23 / 10 / 2002
香港失明人協會
Hong Kong Blind Union
<http://www.hkbu.org.hk>
2337 2736

第六屆「香港十大再生勇士」頒獎典禮

Hong Kong Outstanding Warriors of Regeneration Award 2002
Prize Presentation Ceremony to Salute Persons with Chronic Illnesses
9 / 2002 - 3 / 2003
再生會 - 香港崇德社復康資源中心
Regeneration Society
2382 6963 (何小姐 Ms Ho)

「平等齊參與、展智獻社群」

社區教育活動2002 嘉年華會
"Inclusion and Integration"
Public Education Programme 2002 Carnival
12 / 10 / 2002
扶康會
Fu Hong Society
<http://www.fuhong.org>
2896 2543 (黃小姐 Ms Wong)

「同步同心」平等參與活動計劃

遊戲及分享
"To Serve, To Participate in Equal Opportunity" Games and Sharing
10 - 12 / 2002
香港路德會社會服務處-路德會長青群康中心
Cheung Ching Lutheran Centre For the Disabled
2495 0118 (王先生 Mr. Wong)

「平等的天空」訓練營及展覽

"Under the Equal Sky"
Training Camp and Exhibition
11 / 2002 - 3 / 2003
荃灣明愛社區中心
Caritas Community Centre - Tsuen Wan
<http://www.caritas.org.hk>
2493 9156 (原女士 Ms Yuen)

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