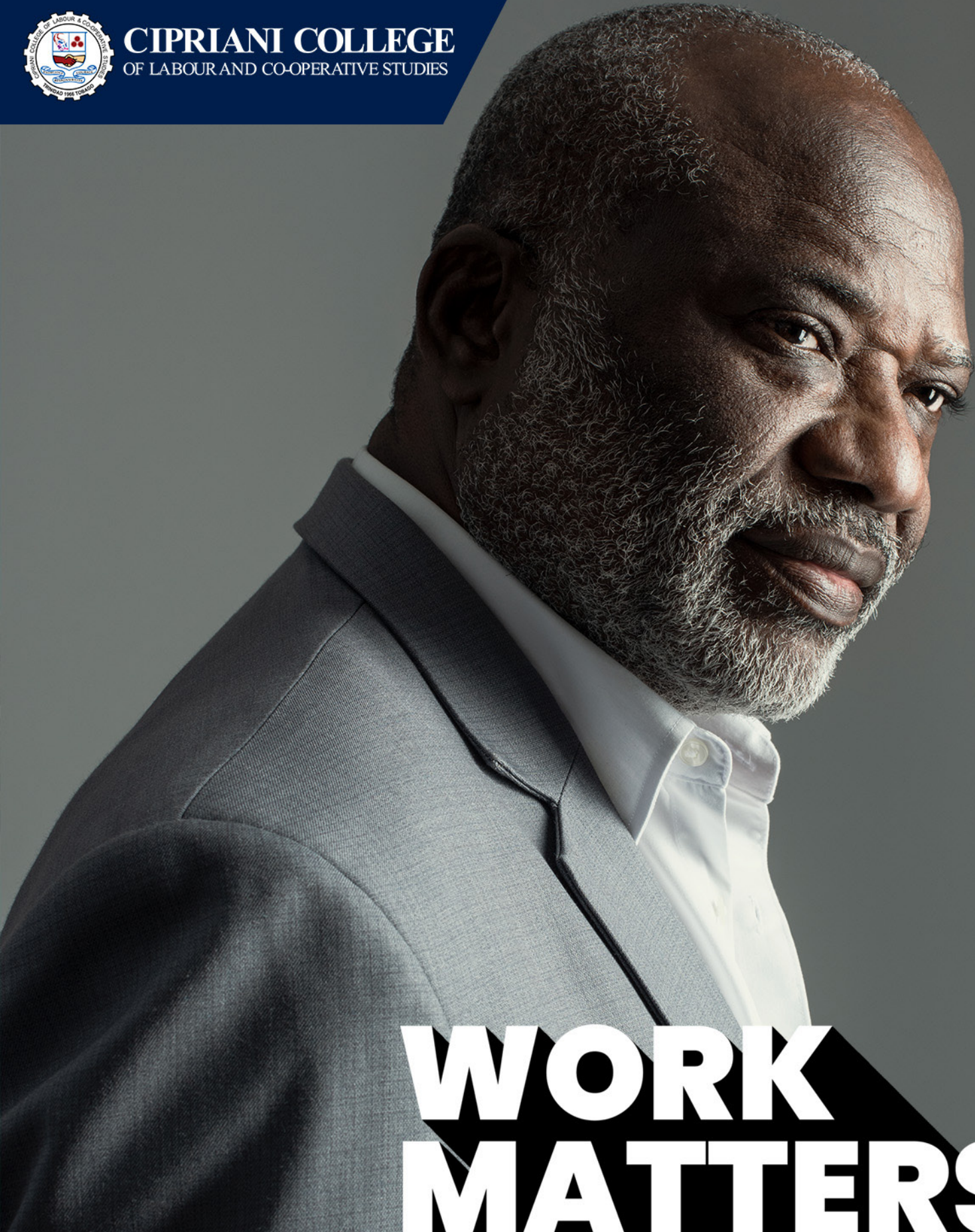




**CIPRIANI COLLEGE**  
OF LABOUR AND CO-OPERATIVE STUDIES



# **WORK MATTERS**

**August 2024**

**COLUMN**

# Age Discrimination on the job.

Wisdom comes with age, as it is developed from an accumulation of life experiences. “The older the wiser” we can all attest to this saying, as we often become more situationally aware, focused, versed (the list goes on) as we age. If the experience acquired by age makes for an efficient worker, why then do older workers fall victim to Ageism in the employment line and workplace? Ageism, a term originally coined by Dr. Robert N. Butler, includes but is not limited to, any bias against individuals and groups based on their age. Ageism, as defined by the World Health Organization, refers to stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination towards others based on age.

Age discrimination often has severe impacts on the lives of senior citizens as it affects their employment, healthcare and societal interactions and prospects. As it relates to employment opportunities, senior citizens are plagued with challenges in advancing their careers and even finding employment due to discrimination based solely on their age. They often encounter hiring biases in the employment line, as panels often opt to hire younger candidates as they are often deemed as more suitable as they assume that they are more energetic, adaptable to technology, or less likely to retire soon in comparison to their senior competitors.

According to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) research on “Age Discrimination Among Workers Age – 50 plus” fourteen percent of adults aged fifty and over have reported that they were not hired for a job because of their age, where preference was given to their younger competitors. Interestingly, the same study finds that two-thirds of adults ages fifty plus in the labour force believe that older workers are more subjected to age discrimination in the workplace in comparison to their younger counterparts, where ninety percent of respondents indicated that age discrimination against older workers, is the norm at the workplace.

In the USA, there are specific legislations in place which serves to protect the older sector of the workforce, such as “The Age Discrimination in Employ-

ment Act” (ADEA) which forbids age discrimination against people who are age forty and older. While in Trinidad and Tobago there is implemented legislation of a broader spectrum “The Equal Opportunity Act” (2000/2001) which forbids any form of discrimination. However, there is a dire need to create specific anti-age discrimination legislation which renders support and protection to our ageable work force.

In the interim as one awaits this legislation, what can employers and employees do to combat age discrimination in the workplace? How can we improve how we feel, think and act towards our seniors to reduce age discrimination at the workplace? In order to create an age-equitable inclusive work environment, facilitators must provide thorough management, coupled with the necessary training of staff which would be further enforced by the implementation of age-inclusive policies.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) training of all stakeholders is crucial in combatting age-discrimination on the workplace. DEI training refers to educational programmes designed to promote understanding, awareness, and skills related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in various contexts albeit gender equity, racial bias or in this instance, ageism. These programmes usually involve workshops, seminars, discussions, and exercises which foster participants’ understanding of the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion. It assists participants in identifying biases and stereotypes, while they simultaneously learn inclusive communication and leadership skills, and develop strategies to create inclusive environments. DEI training based on ageism will equip both employers and employees with the education and awareness as it relates to the consequences of ageism while providing with them with information regarding different stereotypes and misconceptions associated with different age groups so that one may challenge and improve one’s assumptions and ultimately create an age inclusive work environment.

Additionally, stakeholders can do a review of existing



policies as they relates to age-discrimination or even implement new policies which would effectively combat ageism by promoting a culture of inclusivity, fairness, and respect for employees of all ages. These policies should establish comprehensive parameters which interdict age discrimination across all spectrums of employment from recruitment to termination. As such, this implementation will lead to a reduction in age discrimination on the workplace and hopefully an eradication overtime as all stake holders would be mindful about breaching policies to avoid disciplinary actions.

For future instances, when discussing inclusivity at the workplace, let us ensure that we always consider age discrimination. Although it may not be as frequently discussed or highlighted it continues to plague our work force. Wisdom does in fact come with age, and we should always consider that aging is not merely a “lost of youth” but a new stage of opportunity and strength. Let us ensure that we can provide a conducive environment to feed these new opportunities and strengths regardless of one’s age.

**Ezra-Marie Bennett**  
**CCLCS Researcher**