

# Platanos College News

Monday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2014

## Equality at Platanos College

Our whole school assembly focused on Equality and Diversity this week. Two of our Equality Champions, Gisela Fernandes and Zara Ahmed, addressed our entire school community with two very informative speeches on the topic.

Should we be treated differently because of our age, gender, class, race or sexual orientation? It's a simple answer: no.

Everyone is different and we should take pride in ourselves.

A group of us attended a 6-week training course recently on Equality. During this training we learnt about many different situations that have occurred related to human rights. For me, it was a real eye opener as I was oblivious to how many problems our society faces today due to human rights issues. We grasped the idea of how to tackle these everyday situations.

This subject has been tackled before by legends such as Martin Luther King Jr, an American activist and leader in the African civil rights movement; John F. Kennedy, an American politician who served as the 35<sup>th</sup> President of the United States; or Emmeline Pankhurst, a British political activist and leader of the British suffragette movement who helped women win the right to vote. There have been many more freedom fighters in the past and we should learn from them.

Age discrimination is also a big issue. All ages can be discriminated against. It affects not only the people who are discriminated against, but also those who lose valuable relationships by judging them based on age. Ageism can occur in the workplace, old and young workers are sometimes both overlooked, but what those employers do not see is experience, knowledge, passion and new ideas.

Sexism, what does it actually mean? The Oxford Dictionary states that sexism is prejudice, stereotyping or discrimination, typically against women. However, sexism can also affect boys. People are different, some might take the issue personally and others might brush it aside. Many people also believe that sexism has been eradicated and women and men have achieved full equality, yet sexual harassment, assault and similar situations still occur.

By acting differently and against these stereotypes it can bring about positive change and we as a school community should lead by example. My aim of speaking at this assembly today was to open your eyes to see how our actions can affect the lives of others.

**Zara Ahmed, Year 10**



The Equality training also gave us an insight into racism, homophobia and classism. That is, believing that one race is better than another and therefore they should be treated differently; having a dislike or prejudice against lesbians, gays, bisexuals or transgenders; and finally, believing that one person is better than another due to the amount of money that they have and/or their social status.

The training opened my mind to new things and to be able to look at different aspects of a problem and its make up in order to decide for myself what I think is right.

I have come to the conclusion that all of humanity deserves the same rights. I have the right to be an individual. I have the right to simply be and live my life any way I like and I believe the exact same for you. Everyone has ownership of their own lives and we should not have to be slaves to other people's ideals. I have a right to be black, and not be looked, or acted, upon differently as if inferior to another race.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people have a right to be with who they want to be with, without being treated badly. People of all ages have a right to equal job opportunities. Both men and women should get the same pay for doing the same job.

In summary, both life inside and outside of these school walls, you will find people with many diverse characteristics. A person with a prejudice against a particular characteristic is sometimes an indication of their insecurity. But we must remember that these characteristics should be protected.

John F. Kennedy once stated: ***"The rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened"***. So look after the rights of your peers and the people around you as you would want them to protect your rights.

**Gisela Fernandes, Year 10**

Zara and Gisela's speeches were indeed very thought-provoking for the diverse, young audience of the modern society. This represents some of the work of the Equality Champions in driving the Equality and Diversity agenda throughout the school community.

**Attitude Determines Altitude**

Platanos College continues to be an active anti-bullying school and remains a School Champion for anti-homophobic bullying for the third year. The work is in partnership with **Stonewall**, a charity that runs educational programmes to tackle homophobic bullying.