



WHAT DOES “RACIAL HARASSMENT” MEAN?

“Racial harassment” means that someone is bothering you, threatening you or treating you unfairly because of your:

- race
- colour
- ancestry

Racial harassment may also be connected to where you were born, where you lived before moving to Ontario, your religious belief, your ethnic background, citizenship, or even your language.

It is against the law for anyone to harass you, insult you, or treat you unfairly for any of these reasons.

The Ontario *Human Rights Code* (the “Code”) protects you from racial harassment or discrimination. Your rights are protected where you work, live, or get a service. These services include places such as apartments, restaurants, hotels, hospitals and schools. The *Code* also protects you from discrimination when you sign a contract or join a union, trade or vocational association.

WHEN IS IT HARASSMENT?

Racial harassment can happen when someone:

- makes racial slurs or jokes
- ridicules or insults you because of your racial identity
- puts up cartoons or pictures that degrade persons of a particular racial group
- calls you names because of your race, colour, citizenship, place of origin, ancestry, ethnic background or creed

These kinds of behaviour are wrong even when they are not directed towards you, because they hurt people and make them feel uncomfortable. They can make living and working together very difficult.

Racial harassment can have a bad effect on, or “poison”, the places where you live, work or receive services. Even if the harassment is not directed at you, it can still poison the environment for you and others.

How do you know if the environment is poisoned? One way is to look at the effect of negative comments or actions. For instance, if certain racial slurs or actions make you or others feel uncomfortable in the workplace or fearful of returning to work, this could indicate that the work environment is poisoned.

WHAT CAN I DO?

If you feel you have been harassed, you could try to tell that person to stop.

The person who is harassing you could be:

- your employer or co-worker
- a janitor, building manager or building owner
- your teacher
- a person living in your building

If it happens at work, you can speak to the person’s boss or tell your union representative. If it happens in your building, you can notify your landlord.

IS IT MY RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE IT STOP?

Although you can try to make the harassment stop, it is not your responsibility alone. You might feel that saying or doing something might put you, your job, or your housing at risk. If this is the case, go to someone else in authority.

In Ontario, employers, contractors, professional associations, unions, and people who provide rental housing accommodation and other services, have the responsibility to make sure that racial harassment does not occur on their property, in their workplace, or in their facilities.

RACIAL HARASSMENT CAN LEAD TO VIOLENCE

Silence or doing nothing will not typically make racial harassment go away and sometimes such behaviour can lead to violence. If you feel uncomfortable or threatened, speak to a person in authority about it (a supervisor, the owner of the store, etc.). You can contact the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario to file an application. Where harassing behaviour makes you feel like you’re in danger or leads to violence, you should call the police.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Ontario Human Rights Commission's *Policy and Guidelines on Racism and Racial Discrimination* and other publications are available at www.ohrc.on.ca.

To file an application please contact the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario at:
Toll Free: 1-866-598-0322
TTY Toll Free: 1-866-607-1240
Website: www.hrto.ca

To discuss your rights or if you need legal help please contact the Human Rights Legal Support Centre at:
Toll Free: 1-866-625-5179
TTY Toll Free: 1-866-612-8627
Website: www.hrlsc.on.ca

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YOUR RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES