



UUCG 2019 Welcoming Renewal Monthly Observances – March 2019

International Transgender Day of Visibility (TDOV) – March 31

This observance is dedicated to celebrating transgender people and raising awareness of discrimination faced by transgender people worldwide. The holiday was founded by U.S.-based transgender activist Rachel Crandall of Michigan in 2009 as a reaction to the lack of LGBTQ+ holidays celebrating transgender people, citing the frustration that the only well-known transgender-centered holiday was the November 20th Transgender Day of Remembrance which mourned the murders of transgender people but did not acknowledge and celebrate living members of the transgender community.

The first International Transgender Day of Visibility was held March 31, 2009. It has since been spearheaded by the U.S.-based youth advocacy organization Trans Student Educational Resources.

Celebrating Transgender Day of Visibility brings attention to the accomplishments of trans people around the globe. “Being visible for those who can’t be” is the slogan attached to and stemming from TDOV, for it is a movement by visible people to proudly claim their identity, to create awareness among cisgender people that transgender people exist, to celebrate their ability to live with relatively less fear of violence than certain sectors in the trans community, and to bring attention to issues faced by those who bear the brunt of society’s violence and discrimination.

Trans women of color are the most targeted sector of the transgender community. Since the 1980s, the murder of trans women of color has increased from 2 to over 150 in 2017. Of course, these are only the murders that are reported by the media and that are attributed to hate crimes. These statistics are mostly from Europe, America and South America, with no statistics from Africa. The number of deaths of black trans women is thus much higher than these statistics indicate.

In Africa, where homosexuality is under the spotlight, most hate crimes against and murders of transgender people are attributed to the victims being gay. The fact that “transgender” is a Western word and there is no equivalent for it in any African language also skews the awareness of discrimination specifically aimed at transgender people.

The number of visible transgender people in Africa is therefore much less than in other parts of the world, meaning that trans people in Africa mostly only have Western examples of visible trans people to look up to.

On this day, transgender individuals around the world are encouraged to share their stories on social media to raise awareness of transgender issues and to increase visibility. Thanks to social media, everyone can participate in discussions and spread information about the trans community, contributing to transgender visibility around the world.