Transgender Day of Visibility Arrives Amid Legal Attacks—and a Big Win

Allies and advocates unveil gender-neutral passports, launch new campaigns and show other support for transgender people. [VIDEO]

March 31, 2022 By Trent Straube

Thursday, March 31, marks International Transgender Day of Visibility 2022. It's a time to celebrate the transgender community, including youth and children, and raise awareness of the challenges they face.

This year, the day arrives amid both good and bad headlines. First the good news: Beginning April 11, transgender people will be able to mark a gender-neutral X on their U.S. passports, the State Department anounced Wednesday, according to NBCnews.com.

U.S. citizens will be able to check the gender neutral "X" on their passport books starting April 11.

The State Dept announced the milestone on the eve of #TransDayOfVisibility.

For @NBCOUT @NBCNews: https://t.co/ZivKBqsHFF

— Jo Yurcaba (@JoYurcaba) March 31, 2022

"The addition of a third gender marker propels the U.S. forward toward ensuring that our administrative systems account for the diversity of gender identity, gender expression and sex

characteristics among U.S. citizens," Jessica Stern the U.S. special diplomatic envoy for LGBTQ rights, said at a news conference Wednesday.

NBC reports that Stern added: "The issuance of X gender markers on U.S. passports does not create new definitions nor rights. This policy change recognizes the true identity of the passport holder."

Elsewhere this week in the United States, as if to underscore the need for visibility and support, the governors of Arizona and Oklahoma signed bills discriminating against transgender youth. As CNN reports, the Arizona laws—yes, there are more than one—ban gender-affirming medical care for trans youth younger than 18 and prohibit transgender athletes from competing on women's and girl's teams in certain schools. The Oklahoma law also limits transgender student athletes from playing sports consistent with their gender identity. Similar laws were passed in Florida and South Dakota to name recent states to do so; countless other bills have been introduced across the nation, including bills to define LGBTQ information as obscene.

> On this #TransDayOfVisibility, our hearts are heavy knowing more than 200 bills have been introduced across the country attacking trans youth. Please check out @Trans_Week to find out how to take action against these hateful bills. Defend trans youth! pic.twitter.com/08ns13wCbK
>
> — Jack & Yaya (@JackandYayaFilm) March 31, 2022

"It's only March, and 2022 is on track to be the worst year on record for introduction and enactment of anti-transgender legislation," said Cathryn Oakley, a state legislative director and senior counsel at Human Rights Campaign (HRC), an LGBTQ advocacy group, in a statement on the Oklahoma law.

HRC points out that anti-transgender laws are counter to mainstream opinions:

> The latest data from [Public Religion Research Institute, PRRI] show that support for LGBTQ+ rights is on the rise in Arizona and nationwide: 77% of Arizonans support nondiscrimination

> protections, and 67% of Arizonans oppose refusal of service on religious grounds. Approximately 8 in 10 Americans (79%) favor laws that would protect LGBTQ+ people against discrimination in jobs, public accommodations and housing. This reflects an 11% increase in the proportion of Americans who support nondiscrimination protections since 2015 (71%).

Indeed, a quick search on social media for the hashtags #TransDayofVisibility and #TDOV2022 shows support across the globe—including from President Joe Biden. A White House proclamation on Transgender Day of Awareness states, in part:

> To everyone celebrating Transgender Day of Visibility, I want you to know that your president sees you. The first lady, the vice president, the second gentleman, and my entire administration see you for who you are—made in the image of God and deserving of dignity, respect and support. On this day and every day, we recognize the resilience, strength, and joy of transgender, nonbinary and gender-nonconforming people. We celebrate the activism and determination that have fueled the fight for transgender equality. We acknowledge the adversity and discrimination that the transgender community continues to face across our nation and around the world.…
>
> Despite this progress, transgender Americans continue to face discrimination, harassment, and barriers to opportunity. Transgender women and girls—especially transgender women and girls of color—continue to face epidemic levels of violence, and 2021 marked the deadliest year on record for transgender Americans.…
>
> In the past year, hundreds of anti-transgender bills in states were proposed across America, most of them targeting transgender kids. The onslaught has continued this year. These bills are wrong.… My entire administration is committed to ensuring that transgender people enjoy the freedom and equality that are promised to everyone in America.

Welfare rights = trans rights

Trans folks are unemployed at 4x the average. They’re bullied & deadnamed by job agencies & charities. The choice is to tolerate it or starve. On poverty payments you can’t afford vital healthcare.

Solidarity today & every day #TransDayOfVisibility pic.twitter.com/S6uWKAhUaq

— Antipoverty Centre (@antipovertycent) March 30, 2022

HIV is another issue that affects the transgender community, especially transgender women, who in 2017 tested HIV positive at three times the national average. To raise awareness for this issue, National Transgender HIV Testing Day (#TransHIV) is marked each April 18.

This year, to coincide with International Transgender Day of Visibility, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) created an awareness campaign called “Unbox Me” aimed at parents, teachers and the wider population.

“The ’Unbox Me’ campaign advocates for the rights of transgender children,” UNAIDS explains about the India-based campaign, which you can watch above. “Most children love to have boxes or hidden places in which they can hide precious trinkets or prized possessions safely and securely. The hidden objects can reveal a lot about the child—who he or she is, what he or she likes and what his or her dreams are. For some transgender children, this act of hiding treasures in a box becomes a way of hiding their identity from disapproving eyes. ’Unbox Me’ is about giving transgender children visibility. It is a call for inclusion and acceptance.”

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