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Trans Visibility Day

Invisibilities, Visibilities, and Liberation

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This article, originally published on 31 March the Transgender Day of Visibility, outlines the challenges still faced by trans men, trans women and non binary people. On this day and every day we must see everyone first and foremost as human beings.

For quite a period now International Trans Visibility Day has felt, for the trans community at large, increasingly hollow. First conceived by Michigan transgender activist Rachel Crandall in 2009, at that time it aimed to counterbalance the mourning of Transgender Day of Remembrance by celebrating the lives and accomplishments of trans people. It was also a response to the sidelining of transgender people in the broader LGBT community. Subsequently, Joe Biden gave the stamp of US government approval to it, the culmination of making liberal trans rights a centerpiece of his presidential election campaign. (Although he has done little to nothing for trans Americans subsequently, having put them in the crosshairs of GOP reactionary opportunists.)

The situation in 2022 is substantively different to what it was in 2009. Trans liberation (and the securing of access to vital healthcare, legal recognition and community protection from transphobic violence) has stalled throughout most of the world not because trans people are relegated to the extreme margins, but because we have become a fetishistic object for cis fears about societal collapse. The British media now engages politicians to speculate about trans women's genitalia with the likes of Wes Streeting former Head of Education at Stonewall and current Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care proudly proclaiming that women cannot have a penis. (This foreshadows what trans people can expect even were a Labour government in the offing.)

The Gender Critical movement in the UK, borrowing transphobic ideas from currents of radical feminism as well as conservative Catholic reactionaries, coalesced around Theresa May's planned reform to the Gender Recognition Act to grant improved access to Gender Recognition Certificates, humanizing and demedicalising the process. (Although likely retaining significant and brutal checks, and completely excluding nonbinary people.) These minor changes with no consequences for cis people, were cynically conflated with long existing rights enshrined in the Equality Act that protects trans people from discrimination and gives them access to gender specific spaces congruent with their gender identities.

This has given rise to a phoney debate about single-sex spaces, amounting to a fascist wedge against the oppressed, bolstered by false claims to represent cis women's and LGB anxieties with no evidentiary polling basis. Politicians and journalists now glibly speculate about trans women's genitals and misrepresent language intended to include trans men as a concession to trans women's "delusions"—or, in the pretentious language of noted transphobic academic Kathleen Stock, "immersive fictions". In this context the relative invisibility of trans men is deeply interwoven in the weaponised hyper-visibility of trans women and transfeminine people.

Meanwhile, transphobic hate crimes have quadrupled during a pandemic that already renders queer people especially vulnerable, often bereft of vital familial support needed to traverse this social catastrophe. Denied services, publicly attacked and maligned, discriminated against in work, all LGBTQIA+ people near disaster as the cost-of-living crisis again impacts us doubly: first, as generally more financially precarious, and second, as scapegoats for inevitable mass discontent.

The kind of visibility trans people have received, then, is harmful. But a deeper invisibility, the one to which Crandall was responding, remains in place. Our humanity remains tragically invisible. We are the subject of a debate, material for clickbait throughout the press from the BBC and Guardian to the Times and Telegraph. Every major party (the [Labour](#) Party, the [Conservative](#) Party, the [Green](#) Party, the [Liberal Democrats](#), the [Scottish Nationalist](#) Party) has

been embroiled in transphobia, with the Tories easily being worst and the SNP performing better, but nobody coming out well. In all of this, our lives and struggles and complexities are rendered null.

Before Streeting sat opposite arch-reactionary and transphobe Julia Hartley-Brewer to deny trans humanity, he congratulated a conservative MP for coming out as trans and discussing gender dysphoria. The disconnect here is exemplary. Real human beings are not seen at all in this culture war, we are mill for the grist. The selfsame person can express compassion for us one moment, and contribute to our demonization an entire fifteen minutes later! The cognitive dissonance sees that 'trans issues' are separated from real trans people, as interlocuters on all sides (but rarely trans people themselves) are given immense platforms to discuss us as an abstracted problem.

Instead of visibility, trans people want support. The living solidarity needed to secure healthcare and to be allowed about society without constant harassment or worse. We need a Trans Day of Action. Not merely our own, because we cannot win this fight alone. Trans people routinely donate to one another's Go Fund Me pages to raise enough to seek private treatment for dysphoria; we regularly create online spaces, on an internet utterly hostile to us, to nurture our shared trans consciousness and allow one another to flourish; we often attend protest after protest to demand liberation from the systems of domination that renders our existences living hell.

We need cis people to commit to taking some of this burden in the coming years. We need more unions to care enough to show up to our protests (during a recent trans pride, many unions opted to attend another generalised left protest that had no demands, no unified message and no reason to exist whatsoever). We need the prejudice of transphobia to be addressed in all liberatory organisations and called out in workplaces, education, political parties and everywhere else.

After these conditions are met, we will be enabled to be visible in all of our diverse humanity, not only as trans men, trans women, and nonbinary people, but as human beings. But until the particularities of our social condition are thereby addressed, our general place in a universal humanity, and therefore humanity as such, is impossible. This diminishes not only us, but everyone. It also creates an example of reactionary triumph that inevitably jeopardizes the wider unity of the exploited and the oppressed, and therefore the entire socialist project.

Solidarity is a means and an end for socialism, every part of our humanity that comes under sustained assault draws in ever more of our humanity to resist, and to transform defensive struggles into a fight for our full emancipation in the abolition of the social forces of class society that deny us freedom. In this struggle, to give ground at all, to fail to defend the smallest group, is to encourage inhumanity to its final victory, what Marx insightfully called the common ruin of the contending classes. Solidarity is the only alternative.

Source: [Anti*Capitalist Resistance](#).

PS:

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