

UGANDA NETWORK FOR THE TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NON CONFIRMING PERSONS

REPORT FOR THE;

TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

THEME: MY IDENTITY MY PRIDE

HELD AT;

**MOST AT RISK POPULATIONS (MARPS) NETWORK
OFFICES (MARPS-NETWORK)**

DATE: 22ND: NOVEMBER: 2014

INTRODUCTION

The Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDoR) is a day that is celebrated world wide every 20th of November in remembrance of Transgender persons who have lost their lives in the struggle of fighting for their freedom, fair and equal rights, recognition and acceptance. This day is not only limited to those who have lost their lives but also recognising those who are still in the struggle of fighting for equal and fair rights. Many trans persons have continuously been violated, tortured, evicted and killed because of their gender identities.

In Uganda we have lost several Trans and Gender Non Confirming persons to hate crime, HIV/AIDS, violence attacks and other ailments. However those who are still alive have tirelessly continued to advocate for equal rights and sensitize the general population about gender identity issues.

The TDOR was held on the 22nd November 2014 due to the fact that it was tricky to get participants during a week day, so it was decided by the organising team to be held on a Saturday which would be convenient for most persons to attend. This was not limited to only transgender and gender non confirming persons but to the entire LGB community, sex workers, service providers and other allies.

OVERVIEW

The Uganda Network for Transgender and gender non confirming persons (UNGTNC) is a network that was started by a group of transgender persons with the aim of mainstreaming trans related issues and concerns to create a better platform for Trans and gender non confirming persons to air out their issues freely with people of the same identities and life experiences.

This network is open to both transwomen and Trans men not forgetting the gender non confirming persons in Uganda. It comprises of several member organisations like; COPTec, WOPIN, ATRI, FEMA and still open to other organisations that are willing to work with in regards to improving the Trans gender movement in Uganda.

UNGTNC is looking forward to operate locally, regionally and internationally. It has got several volunteers from different organisations that have helped and will continue helping in the implementing of the activities that are to be carried out by the network. These are committed trans persons who have been in the movement for some good time and they therefore know what can be changed to see that the trans people are being catered for in all aspects of their needs as far as human rights is concerned.

In the respect of honouring our fallen heroes, recognising those still in the fight and appreciating those who have always been on our side to see that the trans and gender non confirming persons are recognised, understood and accepted, the day was blessed as below.

Overview remarks from the coordinator; Apako Williams

“Thank you for respecting this day and taking time to be part of this celebration. I recognise all the organisations present and the gender non confirming persons, these people are never recognised in all communities. But now UNTGNC is proud to recognise you all. Today we are celebrating the lives of those fallen heroes who have lost their lives due to transphobic communities and hate. Many Trans people have been killed, raped, attacked due to the fact that they are trans or gender non confirming.”

Williams further talked about the network, its mission, vision and goals and requested more organisations to be part of it.

SPEECHES;

We had several activities ranging from, speeches, educative talks, VCT services, entertainment, and cutting of the cake.

Guest of honour; Mr Pepe Onziema 'STONE WALL HERO OF THE YEAR'

“Am honoured to be the guest of honour and apologise for being a little bit late. I had a tight schedule. Am also happy for the efforts you have all put in to see that this day happens irrespective of the harsh conditions you work in which are fuelled by homophobia. The gay movement was started by transgender persons, cross dressers and gender non confirming persons. We all go through a lot of challenges but all we need is commitment, integrity and hard work. We have to fight until we achieve our goals as Trans and gender non confirming persons.”

Pepe was also given a shirt that was labelled, “SOME PEOPLE ARE TRANS, GET OVER IT”. He presented another T-shirt with the same labels to the coordinator of the network thanking him for the idea of starting up the network. He further pledged to continue helping the network with, technical, moral and financial support.

Stella Okuni:- Consultant

“Am happy that you persevere with work despite the harsh conditioned community you are working in. I encourage you to keep this unity and endeavour to achieve all your goals. Feel strong because you are citizens of the country. You have a right to participate in everything and a right to get everything that is entitled to the citizens of this country.

Be patient and sensitive to people because it is a gradual change and you have to change with them. Take this initiative seriously and let it be beneficial to everyone. Let us together take and support this coalition.”

Mildred; Fit clique Africa

It is a pleasure to be part of this occasion and am so grateful to meet with all of you. A few days back i meet with Pepe and we talked about how we can engage my work with this community. He further introduced me to Williams who also endeavoured to see that i meet with several people and i managed to meet with a group of four Trans guys and one gender non confirming person who told me how my services would be beneficial to the group of people they are working with. Fit clique Africa offers fitness services, security tips, martial arts, aerobics, yoga lessons and we are also planning to include counselling sessions in regards to body acceptance since most trans persons are not in love with their bodies. Am looking forward to working with you.

Bad black; secretary come out positive test club (coptec)

Am honoured to be part of this occasion, am a Trans woman and work with COPTEC as the secretary. The reason why we started COPTEC was to help positive Trans women, sex workers, and gender non confirming persons come out and accept them selves, encourage them to test and be a ware of their HIV status, start antiretroviral therapy and live a productive positive life. This organisation is welcome to all other trans gender persons since we all need to be healthy for better productivity.

Emalia Atwine; Executive director, Action for transgender rights initiative (ATRI)

Today is our day, as trans genders in Uganda life is too hard but am grateful to see all of you here for honouring the lives of trans people we have lost in the fight for our freedom. I am a trans woman and am proud of whom I am. I also recognise all the Trans people who have taken the initiative of fighting for equal and free human rights in this transphobic country. The reason we started ATRI was to help those Trans persons living with HIV get access to ART, counselling, find ways of economically empowering them and help them become productive irrespective of being positive.

SENSTIZING SESSION

This was conducted by Mugisha Shawn. Shawn is a Trans man and a trans activist working with Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF)

He further explained what UNTGNC was, why the network was formed and briefly explained the different stereotypes of transgender. The network was formed to bring Transgender and Gender non Confirming Persons together in the same principle and goals of unity, equality and wellbeing

Challenges faced by TGNC persons

- Constant bullying in schools
- Rejection from families, friends and in societies they live
- Violence attacks, rape, corrective rape, hate crimes
- Poor/lack of proper medical interventions
- Hash legislations
- Unemployment

After this session, statements were read, poems were presented from international activists and partners. A GNC person who could not make it for the occasion sent a poem which William read to the congregation. A message from one of the founder members of the LGBTI movement, Kasha was also read.

The day was also blessed with a lot of entertainment from different groups of entertainers from the trans community. They showed their talents through singing, dancing and fashion show casing. This was conducted after every speech and presentation.

VIGIL SESSION

Candles were lit in respect of the fallen heroes; a flip chart was presented for people to write messages in recognition of their heroes in the LGBTI/SEX WORK movement, freedom fighters and friendly service providers. To differentiate between the fallen and still alive comrades, a blue was opted for those who were still alive and a red marker for the ones who have lost their lives to violence, HIV/AIDS, suicide and drugs in the struggle of fighting for their rights. This was accompanied with hymns, different messages and words of condolences from the participants. In this session a statement of courage was said by the stone wall hero of the year 2014, everyone was encouraged to recite it till the whole group could say it together and loud. The statement says;

‘‘IT’S OUR DUTY TO FIGHT FOR OUR FREEDOM.

IT’S OUR DUTY TO WIN

WE MUST LOVE AND PROTECT EACHOTHER

WE HAVE NOTHING TO LOOSE BUT OUR CHAINS’’

Closing remark (Kim Mukasa)

A word of appreciation goes to sexual minorities Uganda for the financial and technical support they provided making this day happen. The event would not have been possible without SMUG. MARPS network for providing us with the venue which was also secured for protecting participants, all the LGBT and Sex Worker's organisations that showed a lot of love and support for TGNC persons and the organising team of trans gender persons who worked tirelessly from the initial stages of organising this day to the final day.

TOGETHER WE ALL CAN.

" MY IDENTITY MY PRIDE"

Report captured by **Arthur Mubiru**

PHOTOS FOR THE TDOR 2014

By Ilakut Mac



