

Participation – March 2018



International Women's Day

March 8—International Women's Day

International Women's Day (IWD) was first recognized by the United Nations in 1975. However, IWD was first celebrated in New York in 1909. IWD celebrates the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women around the world and challenges us to continue to work for gender equality in every place on the planet. The United Nations (UN) Sustainability Goals specifically recognize that global sustainable development requires that gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls be at the heart of the 2030 agenda. This year's theme is "Press for Progress" and women are mobilizing worldwide to call attention to wage disparity, calling for equal pay for equal work; to educational disparities, calling for equal educational opportunities throughout the world; to employment and career advancement

discrimination, calling for all to be judged by their hard work and competence, no matter their gender or gender identity; to sexual harassment in the workplace and at home, calling for an end to these abusive practices which are all too often the "norm". After over 100 years of struggle, the time is now to "press for progress". The worldwide "Women's Marches" of January 2017 and 2018 have demonstrated that millions of women around the world are ready to act for change.

Oh, Holy One, as we celebrate the strength, openness and dedication of women around the world, may we each continue to work toward full equality for women. May every woman and girl know their strengths and gifts and be willing to support one another in the struggle for equality. May we honor those women who have gone before us and who continue to inspire us to action. May our own commitment and action inspire and motivate future generations to reach for the stars, to become all that they desire to be and to create a world of peace and justice.



March 21—Week of Solidarity Against Racism and Racial Discrimination

March 21st begins the UN week of solidarity against racism and racial discrimination. This date was chosen to remember the 69-people killed by police on March 21, 1960, at a peaceful demonstration against the apartheid "pass laws" in Sharpeville,

South Africa. In 1966 the United Nations called on the entire international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination. Further, the UN officially recognized that discrimination against many ethnic, indigenous and racial groups exists all over the world, and continues to hinder people from living up to their fullest potential. In 2001, the World Conference against Racism produced the most authoritative and comprehensive program for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance: the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Periodic reviews of global progress towards eliminating all forms of racial discrimination continue as a formal part of the UN evaluation of compliance with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. The emphasis for the day is on inclusion, unity and respect for diversity. The UN is especially concerned about the renewed racial discrimination presently being associated with the ongoing global refugee and immigrant crisis. It is crucial that all nations redouble their efforts to promote inclusion, unity and respect for the dignity of every person.

This week we pray for open hearts as we reach out to build understanding among people. May we all come to know, deep within ourselves, that we are all brothers and sisters to one another. God, bless us with compassion for all, and help us to treasure and celebrate the diversity that enriches our one human family.

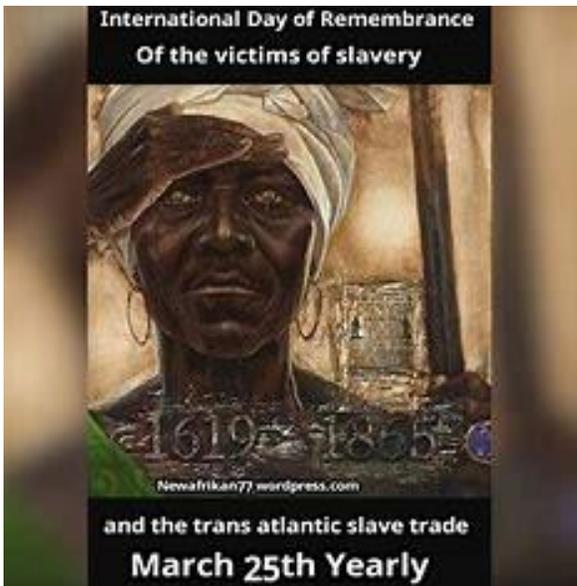


March 22—World Water Day

This Day was established in 1993 by the UN to raise awareness among all people of the need to protect and conserve the precious gift of water. This year's theme is "Nature for Water", and focuses on exploring nature-based solutions to the water challenges we face. Damage to ecosystems affect the quantity and quality of the water available for human use and consumption. The UN Sustainable Development Goal #6 commits the world to ensuring that everyone have access to safe water by 2030. Presently, it is estimated that over 2.1 billion people worldwide do not have this access. This negatively affects health, education and livelihoods. Restoring wetlands, reducing and eventually eliminating pollution, curbing climate change and restoring vegetation and animal life necessary to maintain healthy ecosystems is required if we are to protect and preserve clean, refreshing, health-

sustaining water for ourselves and future generations.

God, we thank you for the gift of water, which sustains life on our planet, refreshes our bodies and spirits, carves our valleys and canyons, flows through our rivers and lakes, waters our fields and serenades us as it trickles over rocks and crashes over waterfalls. Help us to care for water, use her wisely, and protect her from contamination and harm. May we have the courage to make the necessary choices today that will help sustain clean and pure water for ourselves and our planet.



March 25—International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

This UN day of remembrance has been held annually since 2008. Over 17 million Africans were transported to the Americas during 16th to the mid-19th centuries, with many millions more dying in route. This day is a special day for remembering—remembering all those who were sold into slavery; those who died during the treacherous Atlantic crossing; those who lived, sometimes for generations, as slaves; and those who suffer today because of the racism that still exists in many parts of the world as an inheritance of the slave trade. The legacy of slavery continues to have profound social and economic impact. The scars of deeply rooted racial discrimination, chronic poverty, systemic and institutionalized racism continue to affect people of African descent today. This day also reminds us of the capacity of the human being to inflict unimaginable physical, psychological and

spiritual pain on other human beings. Human trafficking today is another form of the slave trade that continues to this very day. This is a day to honor the contributions of those from Africa who have contributed to global cultural advancement and who deserve our appreciation, honor, respect and support in this and future generations.

God, we ask forgiveness for the suffering caused to so many people by the transatlantic slave trade. We also ask for our hearts to be transformed so that discrimination and racism will vanish and we will learn to treat every person with compassion, love, respect and dignity. Give us the courage to raise our voices and to stand up to all forms of racism and oppression. Help us to reach across racial and ethnic barriers to become one family, all sharing the spark of the divine.