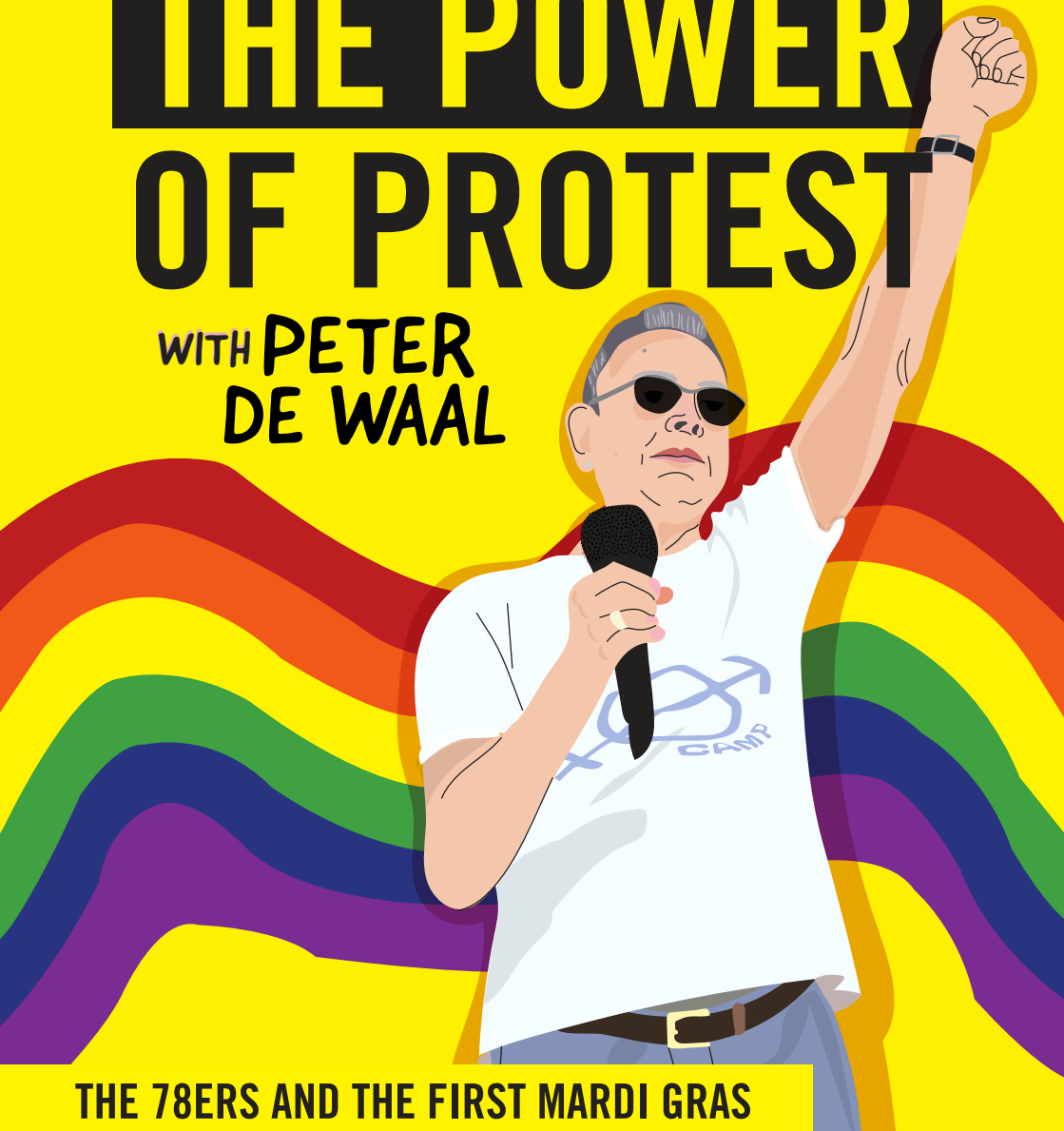


# THE POWER OF PROTEST

WITH **PETER  
DE WAAL**



**THE 78ERS AND THE FIRST MARDI GRAS**

**HOW WE CAN CHANGE  
THE WORLD THROUGH  
PROTEST**

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



**DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS**

Peter de Waal AM and Peter "Bon" Bonsall-Boone met and fell in love in 1966.

As a gay couple at the time, they faced a lot of discrimination and danger being out in public.



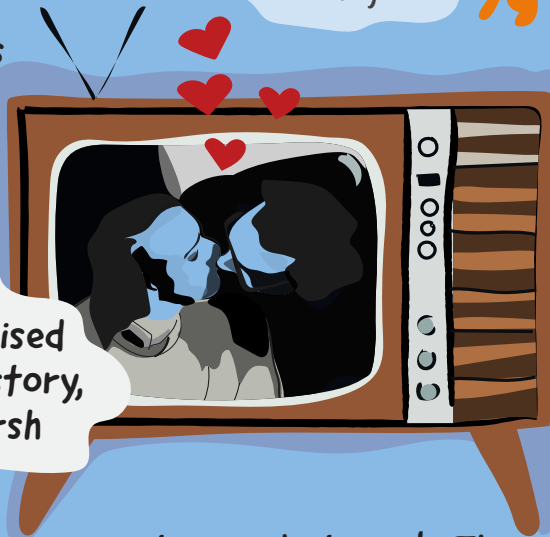
Peter and Bon, 1966

Despite how tough it was, they realised they could only change the way things were if they stood up and called for change.

“There was no template for being an activist. We had to create our own, we learnt on the job”

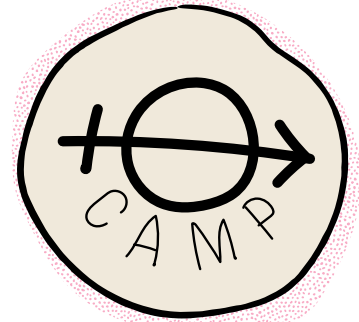
Peter and Bon went on to be life-long activists for rainbow rights, paving the way for their community.

In 1972, they shared the first national televised gay kiss in Australian history, however they faced harsh backlash.



Bon lost his job and Peter was ostracised at work. There was a lot of work yet to be done, however the media attention they received on the back of the program also helped the rainbow community find each other.

Peter and Bon are foundation members of the Campaign Against Moral Persecution (CAMP) – Australia's first national rainbow rights movement.



They launched the Phone-A-Friend counselling service in response to receiving many phone calls from the rainbow community in need of support and a friendly ear.



CAMP would host parties and events to bring people together and foster a sense of belonging, community and safety.

“For many, attending one of these events was the first time in their life that they met another gay or lesbian person. It may have well been the start of their pride journey!”

There was a growing sense of community, however it was still hidden and not completely visible in the public.

In response to a call from the USA to mobilise solidarity and visibility for rainbow rights around the world, Peter, Bon and a group of people from the community, now known as the 78ers, began to organise.



On the evening of June 24, 1978, the rainbow community took to the streets, with people dancing, singing and marching down Oxford Street.

The group began to grow as they yelled "out of the bars, into the streets!". With a truck and two speakers as their only float, they marched in solidarity for their fight against oppression and discrimination.

**Spirits were high.**

Despite the festive atmosphere and a permit to 'assemble and march', the police took actions to restrict their freedoms and shut down the night. After confiscating the truck, the group moved towards Kings Cross, chanting in defiance.

The police began to get violent, pushing, shoving, kicking and dragging people for no reason.

“They were thugs, not police. Unspeakable things happened”



Despite much fear and disempowerment, the group found strength and power in linking arms and chanting "stop police attacks on gays, women and blacks".

That night, 53 people were arrested on the back of their peaceful resistance.

For Peter, Bon and many other 78ers, there is a lot of emotional pain that still exists from that night. At the same time, that night was a catalyst for a larger Pride movement that persists today.



The protest movement that began in 1978 was so important for building a sense of belonging and increasing the visibility of the rainbow community. Protests help build solidarity and allyship for the movement – combining the pride of individuals to make collective change for the community.

“ To have allies for a movement is just amazing ”

For Peter and many people in the rainbow community, protest was an empowering instrument that contributed to a sense of unity, purpose and liberation. Today, we see Mardi Gras as a rite of passage for the community to take back the streets!

For Peter and Bon, their lifelong journey of activism saw them championing for the Marriage Equality Bill that finally passed on 9 December 2017. Sadly, Bon passed away seven months before, while they were waiting for permission to get married.



Today, Peter continues to share his and Bon's story and document history as it continues to change for the rainbow community. As a 78er, he asks the next generation of activists to use the momentum of protests today to keep creating change. He urges them to remember that amidst the glitter & glam of today's Mardi Gras, this protest movement was born from brave activists fighting to reclaim the streets. He hopes they will continue to celebrate and enjoy the rights that the rainbow community has today and in doing so, use the people-power of this growing protest movement to continue calling for change for all!

**From all of us at Amnesty, thank you so much for taking the time to read this story.**

## **Protest is an invaluable way to speak truth to power and create change.**

Throughout history, protests have been the driving force behind some of the most powerful social movements, exposing injustice and abuse, demanding accountability and inspiring people that progress toward a better future is possible. However, around the world the right to protest is under attack as those with power intensify their efforts to suppress protest and silence critical voices.

**That's why we need to #ProtectTheProtest.**

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## **ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**

Like you, we believe everyone has equal rights to justice, freedom and equality. When these rights are violated, it's up to all of us to take a stand and act in solidarity, as allies. We are a movement made up of people who feel just like you do. Defending human rights is what brings us together, from all walks of life and from all over the world. Working together with you, we can challenge injustice by raising our voices for a better world, where human rights are enjoyed by all.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge that this land was and always will be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land.

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