

Clip: ITV Pridecast w/ Peter Tatchell

Name: ITV Pridecast w/ Peter Tatchell

Peter **00:00:00:13**

I've been involved in over 3000 direct action protests in the last 55 years. I have been arrested 100 times, I've suffered more than 300 violent assaults, and I'm still here, and I intend to carry on for another 25 years. Maybe when I'm 95, I'll consider retiring. But until then there is work to be done.

Liam **00:00:27:12**

Hello and welcome to Pridecast. This is a podcast about all things LGBTQ+ are brought to you by ITV. During the show, we chat about being proud to be LGBT+ today. We speak to people from across the community to find out where they are on their journey and where they're headed. We'll also keep you updated on the latest LGBT+ news, events and the things that matter to you. This is the ITV Pridecast.

Liam **00:00:58:13**

So on this episode, I'm delighted to say that Bella Cockarill is joining me to host the show. Bella, it's lovely to see you. How are you?

Bella **00:01:08:18**

I'm good Liam. How are you?

Liam **00:01:10:01**

Yeah, I'm all right. Thank you and very much looking forward to this episode of the ITV Pridecast and you're one of our colleagues here at ITV. You're also part of the The Pride Network, and you're on the committee and I wondered if you can tell our listeners a little bit about what you do at the company.

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Bella

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So at ITV, my, my job is I'm a Technical Product Manager, so I work in the streaming services side of ITV. And my job in a nutshell, or at least what I tell people and people at ITV may make me disagree, but um, but my job is basically to make things more binge watchable, um, is what I say to people. Um, and that's my that's my day job. And this is a phrase that I've heard before, my "Gay job" is that I'm bisexual as well. So it's that, that that's where I earn my place on the committee.

Liam

00:02:04:10

Nice way of describing it. And before we get on to that, let's chat about your main job for a moment. And you say it involves making TV much more binge watchable. And what does that entail? Because, you know, many of us have been binge watching programmes now for a while, especially over the last two years and during the pandemic, you know, how have you increased that experience for, um, the viewers on ITV?

Bella

00:02:33:15

My job is to come up with ideas on how to get people, um, to like, have the best experience when watching, um, ITV hub. So for example, having like collections of content and having trailers and like that, that kind of stuff.

Liam

00:02:51:00

And you were saying just before that and I loved your description of it, your gay job. Um, you got involved very recently with the Pride Network, didn't you? And, and tell us about what your role is within the committee.

Bella

00:03:04:00

So within the committee, we all take part in, um, different areas that are particular to the strengths that we hold in our day jobs at ITV and I would say, uh, my role within the Pride committee, um, is mainly focused around organising people and things. Most particularly, uh, the events that we hold, um, at, at ITV Pride, I'm involved with in the communication for those.

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Liam

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So we're recording this episode during LGBT+ History Month in February, of course. And I wondered if you could tell us a little bit more about what the month means to you.

Bella

00:03:45:13

LGBT History Month and LGBT history in general, I think is so important because as someone who was born in 1996, growing up, being gay, or being part of the LGBTQ, uh, community to me wasn't, I don't have any internalised homophobia. I never I've never grown up and felt the need to hate myself for the fact, um, that that I am the B in LGBT. But that is something that also you take for granted. I think, um, when you're in the younger generation, especially, in, in this country, and it's only when, um, I think my first real experience of, um, or the first time LGBT history was highlighted to me as, uh, as something so important was when I was in, I was travelling to I was travelling around America a few years ago, and on on this particular day I was flying, um, flying up to San Francisco, which arguably is the most, like the gayest city on Earth, I guess. Um, and that was the same day, um, or that that morning was the same day as the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando. 49 people, um, were shot dead. And it was I mean, mass shootings in America are, you know, it's a it's a problem that happens repeatedly. But this one in particular was obviously, given the fact that it was my first time in San Francisco. Um, and this is, uh, to date, the deadliest, um, incident in sort of violence against LGBT people. The effect of that, um, and being in San Francisco, um, when I got there, when I landed, um, because it happened in the morning, they were every single flag in the city had been replaced with a pride flag. And in the evening, because I wanted to do something just to, you know, you feel this need to just 'do', um, when these things happened, um, there was. On Twitter, apparently there was a small vigil that was a small vigil that was supposed to be being held. And that evening at the Harvey Milk Plaza. And when I got there, there were thousands of people there. Um, and then everyone had candles and were singing and crying and march to

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City Hall and it was lit up with rainbow lights. And and that was probably my first moment where I realized how privileged I am to have not really experienced a great deal of sort of homophobia or internalised homophobia towards myself. Um, and then it's people like Peter Tatchell when, you know, you see, before you were even born. The amount of work that has been done for you as an LGBT individual, it's it's incredible.

Liam

00:06:44:04

Well, I'm glad you mentioned Peter Tatchell there as he's, of course, our guest for the ITV Pridecast. And you make a really important point there actually because what he has done for the LGBTQ+ community in campaigning for rights, you know, it's often left him facing extensive verbal and physical abuse. But in some ways, had he not have done what he has, we might not be living in the same world today. And, you know, he's shown such positive change can come if you are really determined to make it happen, hasn't he?

Bella

00:07:20:07

Yeah, it's it's the whole power of the people thing, right? Nothing is set and everything is the possibility for change is always there. It's just how hard you have to push and how you should push. Um, I think Peter has done a brilliant job of showing the world.

Liam

00:07:38:16

Absolutely. Well, Bella, thank you so much for joining me on the Pridecast. And here's the latest episode with Peter Tatchell.

Liam

00:07:53:12

Peter Tatchell thank you very much for joining us on the ITV Pridecast. I must say, it feels like a real honor, actually. And, um, I wanted to start off by saying happy birthday to you. I know it was your birthday recently.

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Peter

00:08:06:14

It was my 70th birthday on the 25th of January, a birthday that I share with Robbie Burns and quite a few other luminaries. Um, it's hard to believe I'm 70. I really feel just about 40. I'm still very fit. I still work 14 or 16 hours a day on my human rights work. I love it and I intend to go on for another 25 years. Health willing.

Liam

00:08:32:14

I was gonna say, Peter, you seem to have the stamina of someone that's half your age. And it's extraordinary, really, that you're still committed to all those causes that you've worked on for so many years. And we're recording this during LGBT+ History Month. And, you know, you've helped shape a lot of that history. And I wondered if you could tell us what the month means to you.

Peter

00:08:58:16

We need to understand how we got where we are today, what happened in the past, who was involved, what were the struggles? Because without that knowledge, we can't understand our place. Moreover, if we look back at the past and understand our successes, it can also help us continue the struggle and when further successes in the future. So for me, LGBT+ History Month is very much a celebration of the people, organisations, events and struggles that have brought us the rights and freedoms we enjoy today and we owe a great debt for many, many people. Long before I started who helped pave the way for our communities.

Liam

00:09:52:04

Yeah, absolutely. And I wondered if we could, you know, look into your own history a little bit, actually. Um, and, um, you know, take us back to, to Melbourne in the, uh, in the 1950s, 1960s and tell us a bit about life for you then. Um, because from what I can gather, you know, you it wasn't always the easiest upbringing that you had.

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Peter

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I was born into a pretty traditional working class family, um, in the industrial suburbs of West Melbourne. And my father was a lathe operator in an engineering factory. He worked night shifts, so I hardly ever saw him when I was young. Um, my mother for a while worked in a bank, but, um, as soon as she got married, she was sacked because in those days, banks did not allow married women to work. Unbelievable sexism. Um, my parents also very, very devoutly religious. They were evangelical, Pentecostals. Um, for them, homosexuality was a terrible mortal sin on a par with, well, almost on a par with murder and rape. So I had a pretty harsh, suffocating upbringing. Um, my parents were very poor, even by working class standards, because my mother suffered from life threatening asthma. Indeed, she nearly died eight times during my childhood. Um, so a lot of our limited family income went on medical bills, prescriptions, hospital and so on. Um, so I went with that a lot as a kid. You know, I didn't have much in the way of birthday or Christmas presents. And plus, because my mother was ill so often, I, from the age of eight was, you know, bringing up my younger brother and two sisters and not all the time, but when my mother was bedridden or in hospital, you know, I did the cooking, the cleaning, um, all the mother type tasks. So I've actually sort of feel I've been through a, a parenting phase myself, you know, I've done I've done parenting, um, and my younger brother and two sisters, they say, you know, that I was a wonderful surrogate parent. So that's very nice to know.

Liam

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Yeah, indeed. And even with the, you know, difficult upbringing that you had, you seem to have a real clear notion of what injustice is, didn't you?

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Peter

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Well, the light switch moment for my human rights activism was in 1963, when I was 11 years old, I heard about the bombing of a black church in Birmingham, Alabama, where four young girls about my own age were murdered by white racists. I was only 11 years old. I wasn't political, but instinctively I saw that this was so, so wrong. And that inspired my interest in and support for the black civil rights movement led by Doctor Martin Luther King, and I could particularly relate to him, given my devout Christian upbringing, because he was a Baptist pastor. Um, but I didn't actually do anything until several years later. In 1967, a man was due to be hanged in the state of Victoria, Australia, for allegedly shooting at a prison warden during a jail escape. I was only 15, but I read an autopsy report in the newspapers about the warders body examination, including the trajectory of the bullet through his body, and I worked out that from where the alleged killer was standing and from where the prison warden was standing when he was allegedly shot, the bullet would have had to almost do a U-turn in mid-air. So, right or wrong, I believe there was a reasonable doubt about this man's guilt. So I joined the campaigns to stop his execution. We failed. We failed. We failed big time. He was hanged anyway by a right-wing law and order government. But that provoked my lifetime skepticism of authority. It made me think if the police, the government, the judges are prepared to hang a man where there is at least some evidence that he may not have fired that fatal shot, what other things are they doing in our name? So it alerted me to the dispossession of the indigenous Black Australians. It alerted me to Australia's role in the Vietnam War, where we had troops fighting alongside the Americans. And I got involved in both those campaigns.

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Peter

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It wasn't until I was 17 that I realised I was gay. And that was largely because, um, I'd had to leave school at 16. My parents couldn't afford to keep me on. They needed my income to help support the family's finances. So I had a great dream and passion to do art and design, but they couldn't afford to send me to art college or university. So I did the next best thing, and that was to go and work for the art, design and display department of one of Melbourne's biggest department stores. And that's where I met for the first time, other gay people about my own age. Initially, I thought I was straight, you know, I'd had sort of crazy girlfriends at school. Um, you know, I didn't think I was gay, but over time, you know, as I got to know them, I sort of relaxed and opened up, first of all, disabused me of the idea that gay people were evil and, you know, you know, which is the traditional Christian biblical interpretation. But secondly, also, I just found them. They were nice people intelligent, smart, handsome, friendly, supportive. Um, and one of my co-workers, after a few months invited me home for dinner, one of the gay co-workers and I sort of conjectured that it was probably a date, and I'd probably end up in bed if I went home with him. So I was not gay. So I said, no, no, no. Um, he was persistent. He used to ask every evening at going home time. He'd say, want to come home for dinner tonight? Uh, a sort of a joke, really, because he said he accepted that I didn't want to, and but he made it as a joke. Eventually. Um, one day, I believe I said yes. You should have seen the look on his face. We had the most romantic meal in his tiny bedsit, um, right on the beach overlooking Port Phillip Bay. Um, with dolphins, you know, jumping out of the water. You couldn't have imagined a more romantic dinner.

Liam

00:17:12:01

Wow.

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Peter

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And then after dinner, he said, let's let's go to bed. And I thought, well. Try it. See what it's like, you know? Um, and that's what I did. And I can remember lying back on the bed after we'd had sex and thinking to myself, wow, if this is what being gay is, then I am definitely gay. Um, I didn't have a moment's guilt, despite my incredibly strict religious upbringing. I just thought to myself, look, we're not harming each other. Um. We're friends. It was with consent. It gave me not only sexual pleasure, but emotional pleasure. Um, so what can be wrong with it in the end? Um. Couple months later, we moved. I moved in with him. And, um, although we're no longer together, we are still lifelong best friends.

Liam

00:18:07:14

Oh, wow. That's so lovely. And it. I suppose it kind of came round full circle, didn't it? Really?

Bella

00:18:12:18

Well, I think it's. I think it's interesting what you're saying, Peter, about, um, you know, because you would have seen, given your life that maybe that light bulb moment of, um, knowing that you were gay would be the start of your, um, sort of your activities. But it sounds like it was a lot earlier, you know, you were saying 11 and 15 years old. So do you reckon your life probably wouldn't have been that different if you were straight?

Peter

00:18:37:01

Probably, yeah. Because I'd already been involved in human rights activism before I realised I was gay. Um, and as I said, you know, much of the inspiration was from the black civil rights movement. It sort of became the template for my ideals, values and methods. Um, when I realised I was gay at the age of 17, um, and first began to come out, um, there were no LGBT+ organisations in Melbourne, not even any switchboards or counselling services, let alone any campaign groups. There was absolutely nothing and homosexuality was still totally illegal. You could be imprisoned for several years and in some cases even

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forced to undergo compulsory psychiatric treatment. Uh, that's how bad it was. Um, I, you know, decided to try and do something. Um, but then, you know, I didn't know, you know, I knew a few gay people through my partner and, uh, the networks we socialised in. Um, but everybody I went to and asked, you know, let's set up a campaign group. Um, they all sort of, you know, shook their heads in disbelief and horror. They said, what do you know? You're 17. You'll get us all arrested. Go away. Um, and my resolve was, you know, accelerated in late 1969 when I read in the local newspaper about a gay rights or gay liberation march in New York. It was just very simple. I think it said something like thousands or hundreds of homosexuals marched through New York last night to demand civil rights. But I thought when I heard that, wow, I want to be part of that. Now, I didn't have any knowledge of any LGBTQ+ movements that had existed in the past, of which there weren't many, certainly not in Australia. Um, there had been, you know, early homosexual rights movements in England in the late 19th century and, uh, in Germany, uh, in the early 20th century, but nothing at all in Australia. So I reasoned, as a 17 year old, um, looking at the black civil rights movement, if black people are an oppressed minority deserving equal rights, and they are, then the same applies to LGBTQ+ people. We are an oppressed minority and we deserve equal rights. And then I looked at the history of the black civil rights movement and calculated that in Western countries like Australia, Britain and the United States, it would probably take about 50 years to win legal equality. Now, that was a guess. That was speculation, but by coincidence, it's turned out almost right. So, um, I'm not normally a great, uh, seer of the future, but in this case, I almost got it right.

Liam

00:21:56:08

I mean, it's astonishing how precise you were, really. And and interestingly, of course, this year marks 50 years since the first London Pride march took place, which, of course, you were instrumental in helping to organise, weren't you?

Peter

00:22:11:23

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Well, I was one of about 30 or 40 people, so I cannot claim the credit for it. But, um, it arose because the prevailing view at the time was that we should be ashamed to be LGBT. So our counter to that was Gay Pride. Um, we also adopted the slogan "Gay is good." Again, partly inspired by the American black freedom struggle with their slogan "Black is Beautiful." So we had a three word slogan Gay is good. And that those three words were sort of revolutionary in their time. They turned on its head the prevailing consensus that being gay was bad, mad, sad and shameful. So Gay Pride and Gay is Good. That was they were the two concepts that really kickstarted the modern LGBTQ+ community and movement as we know it today. And we had no idea when we planned that first march on the 1st of July, 1972, in London. Whether it would work, you know, because back then the vast majority of LGBT+ people were closeted. You know, they were not out and open. They would not dare show their faces in public. Moreover, many of them had internalised the shame that society heaped upon us. So it was a big gamble. I can remember about two weeks before that march, a group of us from the Gay Liberation Front went to the then gay ghetto in Earl's Court to leaflet at the pubs and bars there, and we did get some support, but also a lot of hostility from the gay men there. A lot of them said, you know, "You're you're extremists, you're drawing attention to us, you're going to create trouble, you're going to provoke a backlash." Um, and in the case of the Colherne pub, when we went there to leaflet, we were actually physically ejected by the managers and staff along with some of the gay customers. And as we left, um, bottles and coins were thrown at us. You know, they told us to f off. And, you know, you never come back. You know, it was it was quite shocking, the level of internalised homophobia back then. So on the day we were lucky to have about 700 to 1000 people on the march, um, you know, we were greatly relieved. You know, we'd been worrying days beforehand that we'd, like, have 100 or 200 people. Um, so it was it was a it was a decent, respectable turnout. Um, it was very heavily policed, way more police than was necessary for an entirely peaceful march. Um, you know, some of the officers openly abused us with insults and slurs. There was nothing you

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could do in those days. You know, there was no police complaints procedure. The police were a law unto themselves. They could do whatever they want to do and get away with it. Um, members of the public that was very interesting. About a third were overtly hostile, shouting abuse and in some cases throwing, um, bottles and coins. Um, you know, like like it happened outside the Colherne. Um, about another third of the public were- oh, they were just gawping in disbelief that gay people would dare show their faces. Um, and another third, and this is the big surprise for us. Another third were supportive. Um, you know, about a third of the public clapped. Cheered. Um, gave us shouts of encouragement and support. That was really, really surprising. Um, given the homophobic atmosphere of that era. But it gave us the confidence to do it again the next year and the year after and ever since. So from those humble beginnings, um, gay pride has grown.

Bella

00:26:36:15

What was the atmosphere of the very first one like? Was it more like a protest atmosphere, or was it still joyful in any sense?

Peter

00:26:44:15

Yeah well, the Liberation Front always had the idea that protests should be joyful, that it should be fun to be part of, as well as having a serious message. So the that first pride parade had a sort of carnival atmosphere. Indeed, it was billed as a carnival parade. Um, so it combined the fun, the joy with the protest. And sadly, LGBT+ Pride in London and many other cities has lost that. It's just become a party. It's lost the protest dimension. And that's one of the reasons why we need to reclaim Pride, uh, to reclaim it for and by the community and as both a celebration and a protest.

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Bella

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I was just thinking, it's very interesting to look at Pride in different countries, especially to see which stage each one has got to because it's growing up in this country. Um, at my age now, um, Pride was normal. It's become normalized. So, um, even in I didn't grow up in a particularly large place, but we still had a small pride that a few thousand people would come to. It's the same point as the importance of LGBT History Month, knowing the work that has been done before you were even born, to allow you to have this privilege. And then you look at other countries and even kissing someone is illegal. And it's just interesting to see. Um, I think Pride parades are a good, um, sort of pH scale of how well countries are doing.

Peter

00:28:27:16

The Pride movement is one of the most universal and successful in the world today. You know, there are Pride parades and events in almost every country on Earth. Some, of course, in secret behind closed doors, but they happen anyway. And that is a phenomenal achievement. Uh, we've gone from no visibility to massive public visibility right across the globe. Now, I can't think of any other comparable movement that has had such a reach into so many countries across this planet. And it's the same with the rainbow flag. You know, the rainbow flag is probably the most ubiquitous flag in the world today. You'll find it in every country, sometimes hidden away secretly. But it's there. And you can go to many, many countries and you can see rainbow flags flying, um, more so in many cases than their own national flags. So again, you know, this is a testament to the incredible success of our movement, the way we have forged history making, society changing, um, reforms and movements and events.

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Liam

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And Peter, you know, through a lot of the things you've done yourself. You know, you've often said this is a global struggle and, you know, you've been at the forefront of protesting for LGBT+ rights. And, you know, you've put yourself in harm's way from both physical and verbal abuse. But by putting yourself on the line, you know, we probably wouldn't be where we are today. Had you have not done so, would we?

Peter

00:30:26:13

Well, of course, it's never been me alone. I've been part of a bigger, broader, wider movement, and it's our collective effort that has won these changes. You know, it's together that we are stronger and together we make the change. But of course, I have played my bit. That's true. Um, and you know, when I look back at, let's say, to 1999, um, even as late as 1999, Britain had by volume the largest number of anti-LGBTQ laws of any country in the world. Some of them dating back centuries, like the law that sent Oscar Wilde to prison in 1895. Those laws were only fully repealed in 2003, in England and Wales, in 2009, in Northern Ireland, and in 2013 in Scotland. And it's because we campaigned in protest that those laws were repealed. If we'd sat back and just said, oh, progress will come. It might have come, but probably not until much, much later. The other thing about 1999 is we did have the largest number of anti-LGBT+ laws then. But just 14 years later, with the advent of same sex marriage in 2013, we had some of the best laws. So that's got to be the fastest, most successful law reform campaign in British history. And again, it's a huge tribute to the tens of thousands, mostly unsung and unknown LGBT+ people who made that possible. And of course, our straight friends and allies. We together fundamentally changed Britain.

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Liam

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When we look back to some of the descriptions that were given to you back in the 80s and 90s, it's, you know, really quite alarming. I mean, "Queer Terrorist" was thrown around to describe you. You were seen as one of the most hated men in Britain, especially during the Bermondsey by-election. I mean, you know, looking back on that, you've often had to be the outsider. And I wondered, you know, how that was for you. What was that like?

Peter

00:32:52:20

Well, you know, I was inspired by the black civil rights movement in America. They took risks. They suffered violence, but they won in the end. They pushed the envelope. You know, there were others inside Congress who are more cautious and, um, more, more reformist. But the black civil rights movement said, "No, we must end segregation full stop, no compromise. We must ensure black voting rights, no compromise." And I just felt that the same applied to the LGBT+ struggle. There were people who did things quietly and softly, but frankly, for the most part back then, they weren't having any success at all. And, um, in my experience in the Gay Liberation Front, from 1971 to 74, it was very clear that we had to get more uppity. We had to, you know, not be Mr. Nice Gay, but, you know, be challenging, be provocative non-violently without abuse or threats, but be strong. You had to stand tall and get up off our knees, stand tall and proud. And that's what I and a few others sought to do. You know, we did take on the establishment at a time when very few people did, and that made us enemies within the LGBT+ community as well. They said, you know, you know, "Don't rock the boat." You know, "You'll, you'll bring a ton of bricks down upon us." But we just said, well, look at every successful social movement in history, from the Chartists to the Suffragettes to the black civil rights movement in America. Every single one of them had to be sometimes provocative, confrontational and challenging. They did it peacefully, but they made their point. Um, and so we had to do the same. We had to ensure that our issues. Got onto the public agenda. And the way to do that was through protest. You

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know, we we understood that the protest was not an end in itself. It was a means to an end through direct action, protests, non-violent. We aimed to get media coverage because the media is the main means of social communication in our society. You know, without media coverage, the public don't know about the issues and the causes. So we had to get media coverage in order to raise public awareness about homophobic, biphobic and transphobic discrimination. Um, and also to put the authorities under pressure. You know, if journalists are going to the prime minister or to the Archbishop of Canterbury, um, demanding answers to the protest that we have organised, they're going to be much more likely to respond than if we write them a private letter or just sit outside their front door. So very early on, we we realised and understood that taking risks was part of the process. And it's true. You know, I've been involved in over 3000 direct action protests in the last 55 years of my campaigning. I have been arrested 100 times. I've suffered more than 300 violent assaults, including 50 attacks upon my flat. Um, I've had thousands and thousands of death threats and hate letters. And I'm still here. I'm still here, and I intend to carry on for another 25 years. You know, maybe when I'm 95, I'll consider retiring. But until then, there is work to be done.

Bella

00:36:50:16

How has your motivation been affected throughout the years? Because I would assume that at this point, because the amount of change that you've been able to affect motivation would be infinite, just because of the work that you've done so far, that there is no end to this, right?

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Peter

00:37:08:13

I guess the successes that I've helped bring about have been a continuing motivation to do more. People have often said to me, wow, you did that campaign really well. Can you try this campaign? And so I'd just go from one campaign to the next. There's always been a strategy and a plan, but you know, success is a great motivator. Plus, of course, as a counter to all the hate mail and death threats and violent attacks, I have had a marvelous network of supportive friends who've encouraged me and backed me up when I've been in a corner. So that's enabled me to carry on. But, you know, at times it has been tough. You know, mentally and emotionally, I've really struggled at times, um, you know, to deal with, you know, over 300 assaults, you know, nearly all the teeth in my mouth are chipped and cracked from being bashed by homophobes or neo-Nazis in Moscow or President Mugabe's bodyguards in Brussels. Um, I've had to have my teeth reconstructed by dental surgeons, but, you know, I've still got my teeth. I can still eat. You know, unlike other activists in other countries, like David Kato, who was murdered in Uganda, or the heroic activist in Russia who've been arrested, fined and and often beaten up as well. You know, I've got off lightly and that sort of that kind of perverse thinking sustains me. It keeps me going. I think, you know, um, you know, I'm not dead. I haven't been imprisoned, I haven't been tortured, and I'm certainly not dead. So carry on. Carry on the fight.

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Liam

00:38:56:10

Peter, there's so much of a personal sacrifice there. And, you know, you touched on it before about going to the heart of the establishment. And I wanted to hear more about when you challenge the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey, during his Easter Sunday sermon in 1998. And of course, this is shown in the Netflix documentary *Hating*, which I recommend anyone who hasn't watched it to go and do so. And, you know, in that we see that, you know, Dr. Carey was clearly very upset after your fellow outrage protesters and yourself confronted him at the pulpit over the churches, you know, legal discrimination of LGBT+ people. But, you know, what I was really struck by was at the end of the documentary, the the same Dr George Carey had done, you know, a complete 180 on his view on you and was drawing parallels between you and Jesus Christ. And, you know, I mean, if that's not the biggest change of opinion, then, you know, I don't know what is really. But but what it really does show is that for someone who was viewed as, you know, the pariah for so many years is now being regarded with with such esteem. And I mean, you know, how do you react to that?

Clip: ITV Pridecast w/ Peter Tatchell

Peter

00:40:37:08

Over time, many of my critics have come to the view that, you know, I have stood up for what I believed in. I've followed my conscience. I've done what I believe to be right. Of course, I might be wrong, but I have done what I believe to be right. And that, I think, has some kudos and currency, um, even for critics. I've also always made a point of being polite and courteous. Of course, I did challenge the Archbishop in his pulpit over his support for homophobic discrimination in law. That is true. But I didn't insult him. Or the Christian religion. Um, I just spoke firmly, clearly and and calmly. So, you know, if you stick to the principle of non-violence, even when great violence is done against you, um, people do eventually get some kind of grudging respect. And, you know, when people hear the stories about me suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder for many years, having night terrors because of the violent attacks upon me and still carrying on and not giving up, you know. The respect. Perhaps even grudging. But the respect does come eventually.

Liam

00:41:55:21

Another very well-publicized protest that you've done is, of course, um, when you try to perform a citizen's arrest on, um, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and, you know, of course, you tried to do that twice. You know, in the moment just before you're attempting to do this, you know, what's going through your mind. Is it all adrenaline or is there a mixture of fear as well? You know, are you on the verge of turning back?

Clip: ITV Pridecast w/ Peter Tatchell

Peter

00:42:29:12

As you know, I ambushed him once with my outraged colleagues in London. We ran in front of his speeding limousine and forced it to halt. We actually had him under arrest, but when we summoned the police, we were arrested. Even though we had the legal papers to show it authorized the torture of two black journalists. Even then, we were arrested and he was given a police escort to go Christmas shopping at Harrods the second time. Well, no one else was available to accompany me. So I went to Brussels and ambushed President Mugabe in the lobby of the Hilton Hotel. Um, um, I ended up being pretty badly battered around the head by his bodyguards and eventually knocked unconscious. But boy, the TV footage of that assault was PR gold dust for me and the Zimbabwe Human Rights Campaign, and a PR disaster for President Mugabe. People concluded if President Mugabe is prepared to have his bodyguards beat up a peaceful protester in the heart of a European capital city in broad daylight in front of the world's media, just imagine what he's doing to his own people when no one is watching. Whenever I do high profile protest, like confronting Mike Tyson, Robert Mugabe, Tony Blair and so on, um, I am always a bundle of nerves. I'm literally shaking with fear and nervous energy. Um, my body temperature plummets. I've got goosebumps. Um, I've got a splitting headache from the nervous tension my stomach is churning over. I feel the urge to urinate and defecate and have to hold it in. Um. That's how just nerve wracking the experience is. And it's partly because of the fear of failure that I'll get caught out and the protest won't happen and won't be successful, but also partly because of the fear of arrest, possible beating by the police, or being attacked by bystanders. And that has happened on quite a number of occasions. But somehow my love of the, you know, the cause of justice, the my support for the people whose rights I'm standing in solidarity with, somehow that overrides my fear. It's a struggle, but I overcome the fear by thinking of the importance of shining a spotlight on an injustice or a human rights abuse. And that's what gets me through it.

Clip: ITV Pridecast w/ Peter Tatchell

Liam

00:45:15:13

When you perform the citizen's arrest on Robert Mugabe, do you think that was when the the turning point was for public opinion towards you?

Peter

00:45:23:16

I'd of course, always been championing all kinds of human rights causes, not just LGBT+ rights, but I was seen by my critics as just an LGBT+ campaigner when they saw me taking on President Mugabe and broadening the concerns to human rights abuses that were happening in Zimbabwe at the time. It did radically change people's attitude towards me. Uh, that wasn't part of my game plan, but I was very pleasantly surprised. I can remember a friend of mine, the former editor of cosmopolitan, Marcelle Daji Smith, phoned me up, um, after I'd attempted to arrest Mugabe in Brussels. She said, have you seen the Daily Mail? They're describing you as a national hero. Uh, I stumbled and gulped and gargled in my mouth with disbelief. Um, and she said, go out and get a copy of the Daily Mail. So I did, and I went to the local newsagents or W.H. Smith. The Elephant and Castle opened up the Daily Mail, and surely there was a double page spread. I was just I was gobsmacked. But then I thought to myself, hang on, this is probably some kind of trick. So I lifted up the pile of Daily Mail and took one about 10th in the pile and pulled it out. And sure enough, you know the article was there. But at that moment I was thinking, this is probably a Jeremy Beadle sort of, um, Candid Camera trick.

Clip: ITV Pridecast w/ Peter Tatchell

Peter

00:47:03:19

My ambush of boxer Mike Tyson in 2002 was pretty memorable. Um, I confronted him outside his gym just a few days before his world title fight against British boxer Lennox Lewis, to call out Tyson over his sexism and homophobia. I can remember as he got out of his black SUV, um, I walked over to him and challenged him, um, demanding he apologize for his homophobic epithets against Lennox Lewis. Um, Tyson's first reaction was anger, and he raised his fist. And for a moment I thought I was going to get floored by this mighty huge, meaty fist. Um, but then he saw the TV cameras and journalists and then, um, put his fist away and began arguing with me. He protested very violently that he wasn't homophobic, but I then challenged him. If you're not homophobic, prove it. And so Mike Tyson, to his great credit, made a statement saying he condemn discrimination against LGBT+ people. I think he was probably the first or one of the first big male macho sports stars to ever come out for LGBT+ rights. So that was a fantastic turnaround.

Bella

00:48:36:07

It's easy to say that you definitely know how to protest, and the right way to get the media's attention and the world's attention for the causes that you're campaigning for. That knowledge of how to protest and how to get things done. Are you, um, what are you doing to actively or pass that knowledge on to the younger generation?

Clip: ITV Pridecast w/ Peter Tatchell

Peter

00:48:58:03

Well I've been doing that all my life. I remember back in the days of the Gay Liberation Front and then in the 1980s, um, from 1990 onwards, with outrage. Um, I have worked with probably hundreds of other mostly young people. Um, and through working with me, they have learnt the skills of how to do campaigning, and many of them are gone on to do great work with other campaigns like in Extinction Rebellion, Black Lives Matter, me to some of the people that I worked with and trained up in the past have been leading lights in those recent movements, so it's great to know that, um, what we did together has been used by these people, um, to further other social justice, human rights and environmental causes.

Liam

00:49:50:10

With with that Peter has the has the nature of protesting changed for you at all? Because, you know, of course, I'm thinking back to the days of outrage, which, you know, come up for a lot of controversy due to the way bishops were being outed. And I you know, I wondered, has there been a change in how you, you know, look at direct action?

Clip: ITV Pridecast w/ Peter Tatchell

Peter

00:50:12:11

Well since you've raised the issue of outing, let me just explain to listeners that we never outed anyone because they were gay and in the closet. The outing campaigns in the 1990s by outrage were targeted at homophobes and hypocrites. We were targeting public figures, not private citizens, public figures who were abusing their power and influence to harm other LGBT+ people. So, for example, MPs who were voting against gay equality, bishops who were denouncing gay people from the pulpit, you know, we were doing queer self-defence. We were defending our community against those causing us harm and damage. So it was very, very effective and I wish I had started it much sooner, because the upshot of naming those bishops, for example, was that none of them, as far as I recall, ever again, said anything homophobic or continued to collude in any way with the church. Um, some later became allies of our community. Um, on top of that, naming the bishops did create a sort of mini crisis in the church, um, which led to the Archbishop of Canterbury beginning the first ever dialogue with the LGBT+ community. This is in 1994. We're talking about, um, for the first time, um, a senior bishop was appointed as liaison, Nigel McCulloch, the then bishop of Manchester, and he began a dialogue with the lesbian and gay Christian movement that had never happened before. Also, some other bishops spoke out in support of LGBT+ rights. So those were three wins from naming the bishops. I don't have any regrets at all. I just wish I'd done it earlier and sooner and thereby helped, perhaps, you know, produce quicker and faster change.

Clip: ITV Pridecast w/ Peter Tatchell

Liam

00:52:26:11

I wanted to just I'm going back to Bella's point a bit earlier on, actually, in terms of, you know, you were saying, um, you know, that of course, people different countries are at different scales and different levels of, um, how tolerant they are towards LGBTQ+ people. Um, you know, we're hearing reports that from Iran, from human rights groups in Iran, that two men who were arrested six years ago for homosexual acts have been have been executed. That if it is true, of course, just highlights the point that this is an issue and a struggle that is still ongoing and it still needs people like you and and so many others to campaign for the rights of people across the globe.

Peter

00:53:11:23

Absolutely. We still have 69 countries where homosexuality is illegal and 12 of those countries, 12 Muslim majority countries, have the death penalty for same sex relations. 43 countries. Criminalize trans people. This is unconscionable in the 21st century. Of those 69 countries. More than half are members of the Commonwealth. 35 of the 53 Commonwealth member states have a total prohibition on same sex relations. Eight have life imprisonment in certain parts of two Commonwealth countries, Nigeria and Pakistan. Gay people can be put to death under Sharia law. This is incomplete violation of the Commonwealth principles enshrined in its charter, which declare and insist upon equality and non-discrimination for all Commonwealth citizens. So the question is why are these countries still allowed to be members of the Commonwealth when they violate its human rights values? And it's not just on LGBT+ rights. Many of these Commonwealth countries also restrict the right to process, protest, um, uh, inhibit press freedom. Um, diminish the rights of women and ethnic minorities. Across the board, most Commonwealth countries are violating human rights, including the rights of LGBT+ people. That has got to change. We can't allow countries to belong to the Commonwealth if they violate its ideals and principles.

Clip: ITV Pridecast w/ Peter Tatchell

Liam

00:55:14:10

In terms of us looking at history, it often, of course, helps us shape the future. And what do you hope for the future and what do you envisage for the future of LGBT+ rights for the future?

Clip: ITV Pridecast w/ Peter Tatchell

Peter

00:55:26:11

Well, of course, here in Britain and other Western countries we have made huge advances in the last two decades. But the picture is very different in other parts of the world and we must never forget that. But in Western countries we can glimpse the future. The future is going to be the breakdown of barriers and divisions between LGBT and straight cisgender people. We're seeing already emerging a blurring of those boundaries. I mean, it's fantastic to know that research shows that in Britain, among young people aged 16 to 24, nearly a quarter have had a same sex experience, nearly a quarter, um, in the same age group, 49% say they would not describe themselves as 100% straight, 49%, almost half. It is showing that we are going through a gender and sexuality revolution where breaking down those old divisions, those old polarities between us and them. And I think that's great. And I think it's going to develop. It's going to expand. I think gender fluidity and nonconformity is on the rise. And that's great because people should be able to be who they truly are and not have to conform to traditional ideas of masculinity and femininity, male and female. And on top of that, also, of course, we are seeing more and more people experiencing both same sex and opposite sex. Um, attraction. To have just a single attraction to a person of the opposite sex or the same sex. That's perfectly valid. But increasingly, I think people are exploring sexuality and being open to the possibility, at least, of being attracted to and engaging in relations with both men and women and indeed non-binary people and trans people. So this is a very exciting moment in the evolution of humanity. And I am so lucky and so privileged to be part of it, to witness it, to see my friends experience it, and to know that in the process of this change, we're going to make life better for a lot of people on this planet. They won't be forced into those suffocating boxes that society has put us in, that people will be free to explore for who they are to express their true inner self. I'll finish with my motto, which is very simple. Don't accept the world as it is. Dream of what the world could be and then help make it happen. Thank you so much.

Clip: ITV Pridecast w/ Peter Tatchell

Liam

00:58:44:13

Bella. That was amazing what Peter had to say. I mean, I really think he is someone that has left such a legacy and continues to do so, of course. And it's so incredible to think someone has gone to the lengths that he has to make such a difference to this community.

Bella

00:59:04:02

He's insanely inspiring and inspiring, to the point where it makes you feel like you're not. You're not doing enough. If one man has managed to change the the, the course of history for the better of so many, not not just LGBT people, but so many different groups of people then. And that is one person, albeit with help. It makes you. It makes you look at your life and think, what could I be doing? And, um, yeah, that's that's the mark of a truly inspiring person.

Liam

00:59:34:20

One I was really struck by was when he was talking about his first relationship, the guy he was working with in Melbourne and, and, you know, they'd had a really romantic evening and how he felt wonderful afterwards and there was no sense of guilt or internalised homophobia. And I think, you know, that's real testament to his character, isn't it? Really. You know, maybe that is, you know, what's helped drive, drive him forward to think that this is completely normal and therefore, you know, why should I be denied having this wonderful experience? And to me, it really set the tone of his determination and self-belief really.

Liam

01:00:14:01

Clip: ITV Pridecast w/ Peter Tatchell

Bella

01:00:14:04

It's part of being, you realise, it's just part of being a human and therefore it is a human right to love essentially, you know, like it's it's no different to you finding out your star sign or your blood type. It's not, it's, it's it's irrefutable. So if you can't um, and then I of course understand the because it's a similar thing for me. I don't know about you, Liam as well. Like that was why I never had any internalised homophobia, because it just felt so irrefutable that this is such a statement and the fact that there's no getting around it and therefore it's not changeable, and therefore it's something that has to be defended as much as you would defend your right to be, um, you know, your to have your name to be the gender that you are and you know, your race, everything. It's just it's just part of you. You know, I.

Liam

01:01:06:13

Really felt we were listening to history before us. And I must admit, I feel like I've learnt some life lessons from what Peter has said as well. And, you know, he has had such an impact on so many people's lives. And I think there's going to be many people that don't realise actually the impact he has had on their lives.

Bella

01:01:26:16

It is. It's such a privilege to be oblivious. It's such a privilege to be ignorant to the, um, not that anyone should be, but to be ignorant to the work that has been been done for you as an individual, to be able to say, you know, I've got a girlfriend or I've got a boyfriend, and for people to not throw stones at your head, you know, um, and yeah, it's amazing.

Liam

01:01:53:09

Well, thank you so much to Bella for joining me to host this episode of the ITV Pridecast with Peter Tatchell. It was a real joy to have you both on. And just before we go, a reminder that if you were by TV and you're a member of the LGBTQ+ community, want to join the ITV Pride network if you haven't done so already. Thanks very much for listening to this episode of the Pridecast. We hope you can tune in for the next one.

Clip: ITV Pridecast w/ Peter Tatchell