

THE POWER OF PROTEST

WITH APRYL
DAY



JUSTICE FOR AUNTY TANYA DAY

HOW WE CAN CHANGE
THE WORLD THROUGH
PROTEST

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

Apryl Day is a proud Yorta Yorta, Wemba Wemba and Barapa Barapa woman. She is a community organiser, campaigner, founder of the Dhadjowa Foundation, co-founder of Pay the Rent and a member of both WAR VIC and Pay the Rent.

She is the daughter of Tanya Day – a proud Yorta Yorta woman who died in custody in 2017.

Apryl and her family successfully led the campaign to end the criminalisation of public drunkenness in Victoria and are at the forefront of the fight for police accountability and justice matters.

Apryl established the **Dhadjowa Foundation** to provide culturally safe and strategic guidance and support to families whose loved ones have died in custody, in hopes to amplify the campaigning of families and end Aboriginal deaths in custody.

 **STOP** 
BLACK DEATHS
IN CUSTODY

As a proud Yorta Yorta, Wemba Wemba and Barapa Barapa woman, Apryl Day has inherited the strength and resilience of her ancestors who have been involved in many protests movements throughout history.

“As Blackfullas, we are all born into a political movement”



Mariah 'Papa' Day

In 1938, Apryl's great great grandmother matriarch 'Papa' Mariah Day travelled by herself, in a horse and cart, to attend the first Day of Mourning. A year later, the Cummeragunja Walk Off happened on Yorta Yorta Country, sparking a powerful protest movement across the nation. Her family still lives on this Country today.



Apryl with the next generation of family activists

For Apryl, protest has been passed down from generation to generation. It has been used as a tool for First Nations people to fight for justice. For years, they have achieved justice and accountability out in the streets. Now, Apryl is using protest to continue that fight and pay respect to her ancestors.

In December 2017, Apryl's mum, Auntie Tanya Day, fell asleep on a train. After a train conductor woke her up and accused her of being "unruly", police arrested her for public drunkenness. Auntie Tanya was detained in a police cell, where she went unmonitored for hours. During that time, she sustained a serious head injury. Unfortunately, Auntie Tanya passed away seventeen days later, three days before Christmas.

Auntie Tanya was a proud Yorta Yorta woman, a community advocate, a much-loved sister, mother, grandmother and a well respected member of the Victorian Aboriginal community.



Apryl and her family made the brave decision to share their mum's story publicly. Surrounded by campaigners and community organisers, they used protest as a key mechanism to raise awareness and achieve tangible change in public drunkenness legislation and ultimately end Aboriginal deaths in custody.

“Once mum's story was out, it was all over the media”

Apryl and her family began by taking every speaking opportunity and media interview. They door knocked with petitions to support legislative reform.

“There is something healing about being able to share your story”



Apryl was at the forefront of this protest movement, setting an example for her daughters and the next generation.

“They watched us do it, now they want to do it themselves for their nan”



With their own intergenerational strength and resilience, it wasn't long before they were leading their own actions. At just 8-years-old, Aunty Tanya's granddaughter, Allira, started **#PinkforTanya** to honour her grandma and raise further awareness.

As part of their strategic campaign, Apryl and her family requested a smoking ceremony, a photo wall, pink ribbons, gum leaves, clapsticks and dirt from Country at the coroners court. This helped to humanise and personalise Aunty Tanya's case and encourage solidarity from others.



In being visible in their sense of belonging and connection to Country, Apryl and her family were instrumental in shifting the way in which the courts work with Aboriginal communities in Victoria.

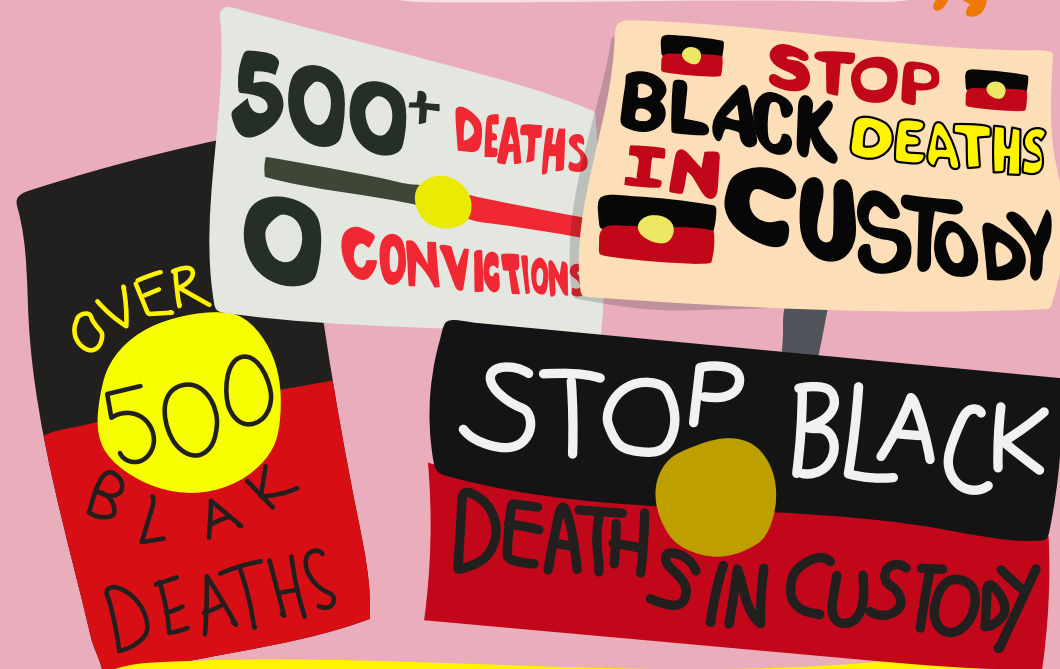
“We can't do this alone!”



This sense of community carried throughout the protests. For Apryl, relationship building is vital in protest movements. The collective power of their campaign, filled with family, friends and allies, allowed them to achieve the change they were fighting for.

Through their multi-generational and strategic approach to their campaign, Apryl and her family were able to influence legislative reform for public drunkenness, in line with the recommendations made in the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody over 30 years ago.

“Grassroots movements are so important”



Victoria has committed to abolishing the criminal and legal response to public drunkenness, and instead shifting towards a public-health response. This will mean that people who are identified as drunk in public will be supported to go to a safe place, rather than locked up in a police cell.

This long overdue reform was the result of Apryl and her family's campaign putting pressure on the authorities. Their protest movement was strategic, resilient and consistent so it couldn't be ignored!



In 2021, Apryl founded the Dhadjowa Foundation, in consultation with families who had lost loved ones in police custody. The Dhadjowa Foundation provides strategic guidance and support to families to empower them to successfully navigate the challenging procedural, media and campaigning realities they are faced with. This support enables family-led, culturally appropriate, strategically coordinated campaigns that are grounded in self-determination – inspired by Auntie Tanya's campaign.

For Apryl and her family, they were seeking justice and accountability for Auntie Tanya. In doing so, they amplified the ongoing fight to end Aboriginal Deaths in Custody – a protest movement that Auntie Tanya was heavily involved in herself throughout her lifetime.

ALWAYS WAS
ALWAYS WILL BE
ABORIGINAL LAND

Going forward, Apryl reminds the next generation of activists to hold space for protest, but also hold space for joy. The journey of creating change is long and requires us all to prioritise self care to ensure longevity. Together we can translate our collective power into collective care so that we can continue to use protest as a tool to achieve change for generations to come!



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.**

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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Amnesty International Australia — defending human rights

ABN 64 002 806 233 | Locked Bag 23, Eora Nation, Broadway NSW 2007

supporter@amnesty.org.au | 1300 300 920 | amnesty.org.au

