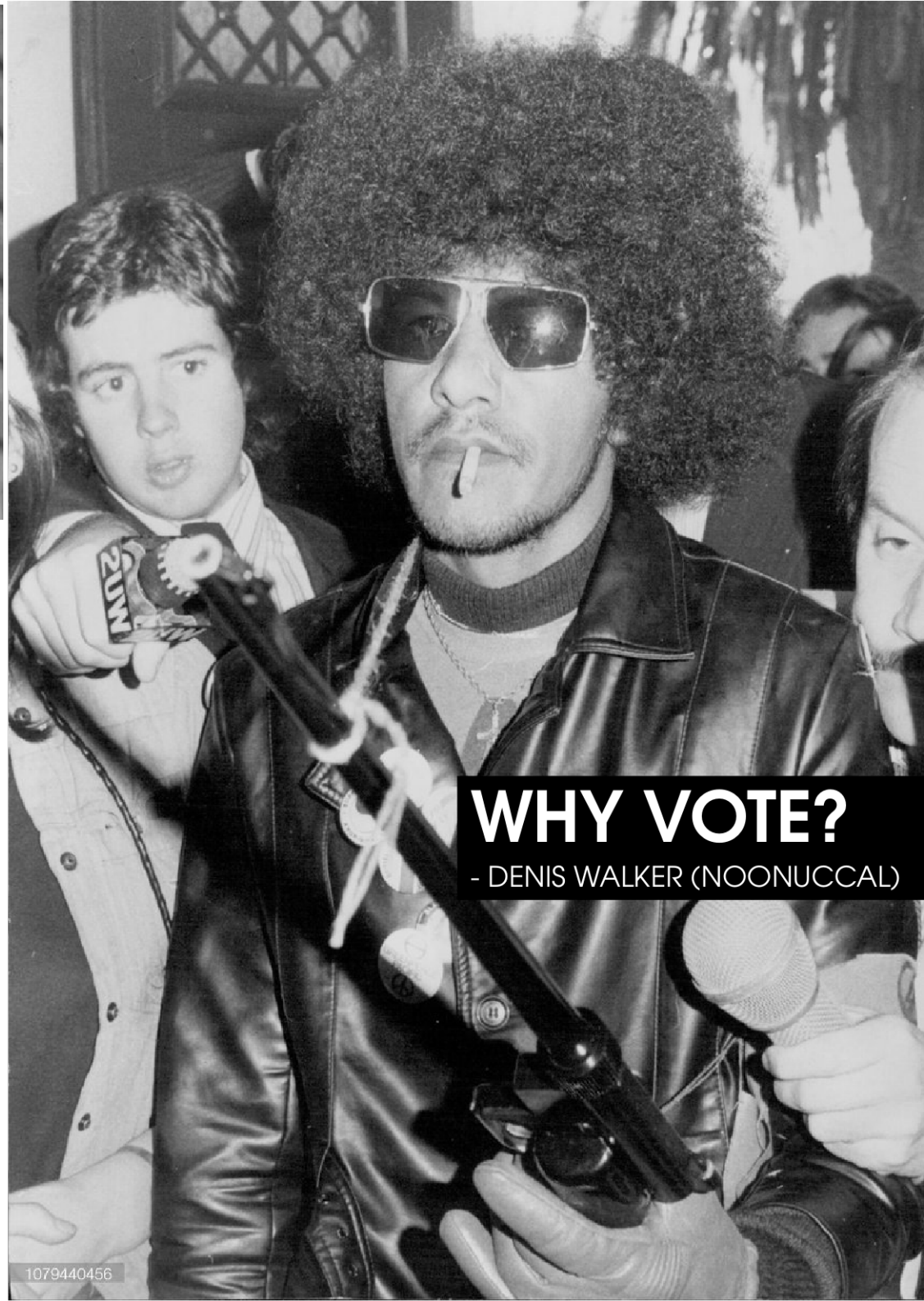


Denis Walker was a Noonuccal man, founder and Minister of Defence of the Australian Black Panther Party with Sam Watson (Birri Gubba and Mundaljali) in 1971. He also founded the Brisbane Tent Embassy in 1969. He was the son of poet and activist Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker).

Walker found himself part of the 'Brisbane Three' accused with Lionel Fogarty (Yoogum and Kudjela) of conspiracy to kidnap the president of the UQ Student Union, politically motivated charges by 'Queensland' Premier Jon Bjelke-Peterson's Special Branch police. After a public campaign they were eventually acquitted.

In January 1972, after Walker and other Aboriginal men got into a scuffle with police – throwing stones and even kicking one pig as he lay on the ground! – he ends up being charged with possession of a concealable firearm. He arrived at the coloniser's court with an (unloaded) gun in hand, telling the media "if you haven't got a gun, you've got nothing. We're not going to get what we want by standing here and talking".

While defending a sacred tree on Bundjalung country in 1994 a pig assaulted him, in defence he fought back and stole the officer's gun from his holster, firing a round into the air. In court he argued that the colony has no jurisdiction over Noonuccal people, and besides, from personal experience he knew what that cop would have been capable of with a gun. The judge cited his own ruling in the Mabo case to reject Walker's assertion of sovereignty!



WHY VOTE?

- DENIS WALKER (NOONUCCAL)

Why is it important that black people should vote? Or rather, why are many black spokesmen becoming increasingly active in this sphere?

It is because, to date, many black spokesmen and women have been trying to convince white people in positions of power that the problems within the black communities are atrocious. However, because the only people in positions of real power throughout Australia are white and because the black community is not organised to exert any power, powerful whites refuse to confront these problems. But black spokesmen and women are now beginning to realise that they have failed to convince the powerful whites that something must be done NOW! Some of these black people, in getting close to powerful whites, have been bought off and silenced by going through bureaucratic red tape and achieve nothing.

Many of them are now saying we must unite and use the ballot box as a weapon to force the powerful whites, to do something about our plight.

I believe that encouraging black people to vote is to ask them to accept this particular system which has done nothing but heap atrocity upon atrocity on the black people: if we concede that we can and will play the game the way powerful whites wish us to play, then they can say that the black community is participating nicely in their wonderful, democratic, freedom-loving, non-racist Australian society – which would be a damned lie!

I believe it would be a grave mistake for black people to allow themselves to be sucked into a power play on the basis of money power, which this system is. Rather, we should participate in a system of people power. Before we black people can choose, we must first examine the political and economic structures which exist in this country and in all countries in the world today. Who has the present political power, how was it set up, how does it operate, and for whose benefit? When the various parliaments were first set up in the Australian States, the only ones who could vote were adult white males who, in many cases, had also to be landowners. Of course, the black people did not “own or occupy” any land. As a result, being black, like being female, in this present day society leaves you open to some of the most oppressive and inhuman legislation and attitudes in the world.

One thing that was obvious when the States set up the Federal Government was the absence of any participation whatsoever of the majority of people.

Then, in whose interests was all this set up? White male adult landowners.

This system has not changed very much since then. It still serves a very privileged class. The difference is that it is far more subtle yet just as oppressive. The people have no real control. The main aim of the political set up, then, was to preserve law and order while allowing the “white, adult, male landowner” to “civilise” our country with a bible and a gun. I ask you, “Has it really changed that much?”

We have a number of political parties. These political parties have their figures heads. The ones most blacks know are [Billy] McMahon, [Gough] Whitlam, Calwell, [John]

Bjelke-Petersen, and [Neville] Bonner. In the forthcoming elections we have the choice between McMahon and Whitlam. In the last State election in Queensland, we had a choice between Bjelke-Petersen and Houston. It was really only a matter of choosing between a wolf or a fox. Calwell is an embarrassment because he is far too blatant in his racism. Bonner is on a fine line. The Liberal Party is at present deciding whether Bonner is stupid enough to stay or whether he is too much of an embarrassment because he loves his master even more than the master does himself.

The politicians do not even know what is going on in the community. Their only concern for the rest of society is to keep them as ignorant as possible so that they can be controlled. People can be controlled far more easily if they are fighting, competing, effectively divided against themselves, and always on the move to earn enough to survive.

Politicians deceive by telling your children lies in the education system, e.g., “Australia was discovered by Captain Cook and therefore the blacks don’t own this land.” They are also thieves (armed robbery of the blacks’ land) and they are also murderers (infant mortality rate of black children and Vietnam).

Now why should our politicians be lying, thieving, and murdering puppets? Surely the people who elect them do not do so for that reason? Of course not. What, then, gets into our politicians to make them to that? The big fat businessman!

The mass media, i.e., television, newspapers, radio, etc., are all controlled by big fat businessmen. You know the advertisements? That’s right, who pays for the ads? The big fat businessman. Where does all the money come from for investments, etc., in this country? The big fat businessman. What would that big fat businessman do to a politician if he gave land rights to the black people and so cut down on his profits from mining, cattle, etc.? Why, he’d smash the politician’s image with his mass media, that’s what he would do. And what if the Minister for Education told the truth about the education system: that, in fact, it was there to teach the kids racism and male chauvinism and that blacks do not really have any right to land? Why that big fat businessman would smash the Education Minister with his mass media. The big fat businessman needs the education system to churn out a certain number of skilled people, a certain number of academics, a certain number of semi-skilled people and a whole lot of labourers to make more money for him. And, if they start working together to get some for themselves, then that’s bad for him.

So blacks can really get power and control through the ballot box? Not when the big fat businessman can get it more easily through money!

Vote with your feet in the streets and give peace and power to the people.

[*Identity Magazine*, November 1972]