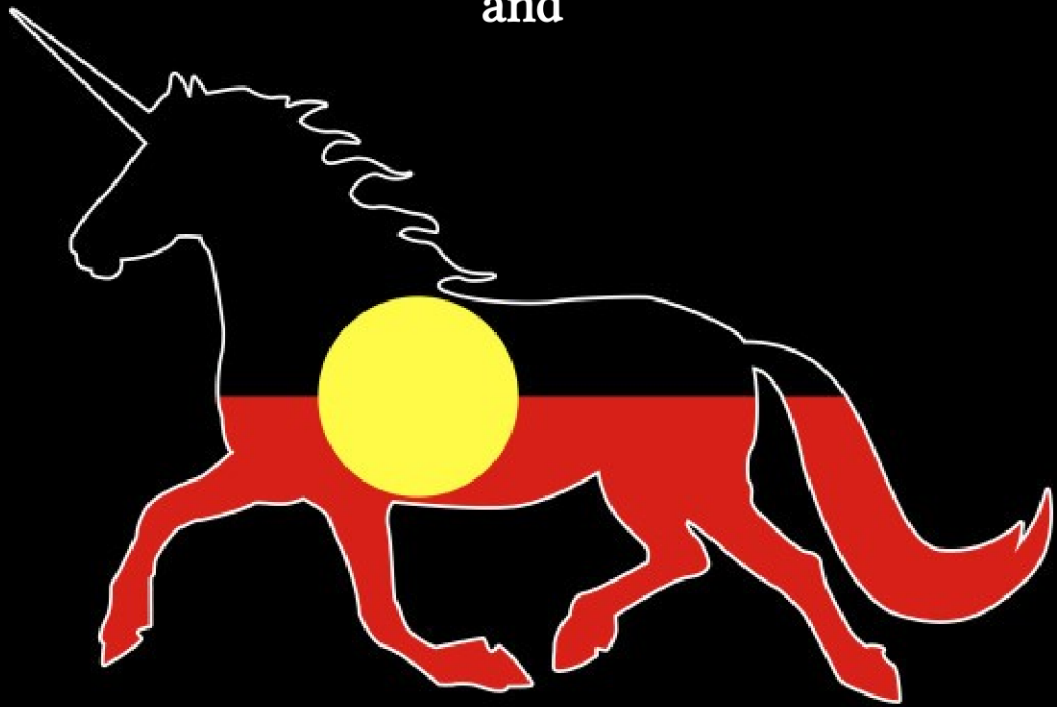


# “Electoralism in the Colonial Occupation”

and



# “Colonial Democracy and First Nations Liberation”

Keiran Stewart-Assheton

First Nations listeners are advised the following program may contain the names and the voices of our mob who have passed on to the dreaming.

## **PART I:**

### **Electoralism in the Colonial Occupation (so-called auSStralia)**

Listen at [www.3cr.org.au/yillamin/episode/yillamin-march-5-2025-elecoralism-colonial-occupation](http://www.3cr.org.au/yillamin/episode/yillamin-march-5-2025-elecoralism-colonial-occupation)

We are going to be talking a bit about the upcoming feral (“federal”) elections here in the colony. I suppose I want to preface what I'm going to say with, it is something that I suppose is not necessarily a mainstream view – the views I'm about to put out there – it's definitely not a view that has been embodied in any sort of large-scale sense. But throughout our analysis it is the ultimate conclusion that we come to. I also want to preface this with saying, with some extent I am breaking the trend here – within even my own family. I'm about to talking about voting, and the issues with voting. But before I do I want to talk a bit about my own family history.

My grandfather, Harold John Stewart, or Jonno Stewart as he was known, was quite a influential figure within our community, up in the Yuin Nation, as well as withinin a lot of neighbouring nations as well. He done a lot of great work throughout his life too to get our land back. There's segments of land right up and down the Yuin Nation that are now back in the hands of the Yuin people as a direct result of my grandfather challenging local councils, and state government, the police and whoever else he needed to, to be able to get some land back into our hands to manage. And he done this not only in his own nation, but he was very much involved in a lot of the land claims, and land grants that happened around 'new south wales' and 'victoria' as well throughout his lifetime. The reason I'm bring him up is something that I was quite proud of for a while, especially when I was younger, was the fact that he was one of the first Aboriginal people to actually vote as well, and be given the right to vote. And you know for him that was a very large point of pride, and a bit of a point of pride for our family as well. But I suppose it gets to a stage where you have to kind of look at repeating the same actions over and over again without getting any different result, and recognise that those actions and that those methods are *failed* methods, and that something else, and something new needs to be tried.

And in fact, to quote Professor Gary Foley, I'm paraphrasing here – was something to effect of: the generation before him had tried what they had tried, but they were only so successful, and for the most part they had actually failed to achieve anything of great effect in terms of liberation for our people. So it was up to his generation to try something new, to try and break the mold, to try different tactics and do their own different analysis. Likewise he goes on in the quote to talk about how his generation also to some extent very much failed in this as well, and the tactics and campaigns and methods they employed were proven to be ineffective, so it was up for the next generation to go and make their own analysis and their own tactics and their own way forward to try and bring about some change for our people.

Now building on that, some people might be aware of the 'sunk cost fallacy,' where people will put money or put resources into something, it won't come to fruition but they don't

want to admit that they wasted all this time and energy and resources and whatever else – so they put more in and they put more in and they put more in, in the hope that they'll put so much in that it will actually make a difference, and things will actually change. Quite often though this is a lost venture. If you've got a crappy old car for example, that's got a hundred and one things wrong it with – youknow the car might only be worth a thousand dollars – you're not going to put five hundred dollars into fixing it, then another five hundred, and then another five hundred – and so on and so forwards – with new problems constantly cropping up. You'll eventually get to a point where it's like, all right I've invested more than the car is worth into fixing the car, and it's still not working. I've gotta accept defeat, get rid of the car and get something else.

Back to voting. I very much see voting as something that quite fits into this, and the tendency for First Nations people to cling to this right of voting, and this right to being able to participate in a democratic system. I think it's one of those sunk cost fallacies. We look at what happens every time someone gets in, whether it's [the] Labor [Party]<sup>1</sup> or Liberal [Party]<sup>2</sup>, whoever it is – things don't change.

If anything, things often get *worse* each election.

So it's something to really consider, and I suppose reconcile with.

In particular though, I want to talk about how electoral participation actually *upholds* colonisation here, in this colony. Participating in colonial elections does ultimately legitimise and uphold the very system of occupation and settler control regardless of who the candidates are. **Even your so-called 'progressive' candidates operate within and reinforce the colonial framework itself** – making the whole idea of the 'progressive candidate' in a settler colonial state an oxymoron at the end of the day! The system itself is very much designed to maintain colonial rule, and no amount of reform, and no amount of electoral participation will fundamentally alter that reality. This is a fact. *True progress lies in dismantling colonial structures, not reinforcing them through participation.*

Now, expanding on this, the very foundation of so-called 'australia' itself is built on the theft of land, it's built on genocide, and it's built on the ongoing subjugation of First Nations peoples. The electoral system within this colonial entity exists to serve and maintain the occupation, not to dismantle it. By participating in colonial elections – whether as voters, candidates, or campaigners – one is engaging with and legitimising an imposed system that fundamentally *does not belong here*. I can't stress enough that your western democracy is *our* occupation. Democracy has no right or jurisdiction to be operating here. And democracy itself is a very failed venture. Democracy – it's a scam at the end of the day, even if we exclude all the stuff about capitalism and the candidates being representatives of the capitalist class, democracy, at its very core foundations, is a scam. It is a way for people to subvert the laws and change laws to suit themselves. What sort of people actually think that is a good process? That, youknow, you can come in, and these laws that exist to protect the environment and protect this minority and protect this or that or whatever – we can just decide to get rid of these things, and change the laws for our own wants and desires! That's what democracy is, youknow it's a scam, it's not a proper legal system. Especially in comparison to First Nations governance structures, and the way that we didn't have democracy here – where, youknow, laws are ever-changing. We had our laws, that were based on the land, and that was set in stone, no one was above those laws. And that's what democracy is about. Democracy is about creating a route by which people can subvert and

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1 So-called "center-left" federal party in 'australia.'

2 Far-right, conservative federal party in 'australia.'

rise above laws, and make laws non-applicable to them. That is essentially its crux at the end of the day.

But to go back to what we're talking about though, about legitimising these imposed systems that fundamentally don't belong here, and how electoralism upholds colonisation. First and foremost, **engaging in elections legitimises the colonial state**. Engaging in elections gives credibility to idea that the 'australian' state has a rightful claim to govern this land – which it does not. It sends a message that the settler system can be fixed, or reformed, from within, rather than abolished and replaced with Indigenous governance structures.

Another main point is that **it distracts us from real decolonisation**. So, youknow, elections absorb a lot of time and energy and resources. All that time, energy, and resources could otherwise be directed toward doing First Nations self-determination, towards stuff like land reclamation, towards decolonial structures that exist outside of the colonial framework. *The illusion of change through electoral politics is what keeps people trapped in a cycle hoping for better settlers, rather than working towards actual Indigenous liberation.*

Another way that [electoralism] upholds colonisation is that ultimately all candidates must serve the colonial system. *It doesn't matter how 'progressive' a candidate claims to be, they must operate within the legal, political, and economic systems of the 'australian' state.* These systems – as we've discussed – were designed to maintain settler dominance and private property rights over our stolen land! Even if a politician were to personally support decolonisation, their *role* actually requires them to uphold the colonial laws, and the colonial borders and the colonial governance structures.

Another way in which electoral participation upholds colonisation is that **voting does not shift power**. *Real power is not held in parliament, it is held in the hands of those who control the land, the resources, and the means of production.* No election will return the land to First Nations control, or dismantle the settler claims to sovereignty over our lands. Colonial power must be confronted and dismantled, instead of being validated through participation.

And finally, the settler masses will always vote for their interests. This is something we know to be true. So even if some settlers support decolonisation in theory, we know that the majority will vote to maintain their privileges, their property, and their access to stolen wealth. The electoral system is structured to serve these interests – not the serve the interests of Indigenous liberation. So youknow hoping for some mass electoral shift towards supporting decolonisation is an absolutely dead end strategy.

What we should be doing, instead of engaging with colonial elections – **energy should be directed towards building Indigenous governance structures, towards reclaiming land, towards practicing self-determination, towards organising resistance against this colonial authority**. *Decolonisation is not about electing a better settler government, it's about dismantling the settler government entirely.* In fact, it's not just about decolonisation, it's liberation in general. Liberation in general, whether it's for Indigenous people, whether it's for a settler working class, it's not about youknow electing the better colonial-capitalist government, it's always been about *dismantling* that capitalist-colonial government and replacing it with something new entirely.

Quite often one the arguments I hear against these things I'm talking about here, is this whole argument about 'pragmatism.' And people like to argue that you must be 'pragmatic,' and you have to do stuff like 'voting Labor to stop the Liberals!' And to those people I would say this: *this so-called pragmatism is ultimately a trap*. Pragmatism only serves to maintain the colonial system indefinitely. It relies on fearmongering and historical amnesia, ignoring the reality that both major parties serve the exact same colonial-capitalist interests.

Something that comes up a lot in these sort of discussions is a phenomenon known as the ‘ratchet effect,’ which explains how settler politics moves more and more to the right each election. So the ratchet effect – for those who aren’t familiar with it – ultimately describes how politics under capitalism and under colonialism moves even further to the right, even when so-called progressive parties are elected. Now the way in which this happens is – to give you a bit of an example: the Liberals will push extreme reactionary policies. Some examples of these might be harsh anti-protest laws, further police militarisation, more land theft for global imperialism, et cetera, et cetera. And then, when Labor comes in, instead of reversing these policies, they *normalise* these policies, while introducing slightly softer or ‘progressive’ rhetoric to try and passify any resistance against these policies. Then, when the Liberals return, they push stuff even further to the right again, building what Labor left in place. This cycle repeats over and over and over in every election, and each time it ratchets closer and closer to extreme right wing sentiments, and pro-colonial, white supremacist sentiments. And it makes oppression even stronger, exploitation even stronger, and resistance even harder.

Another one of the silly arguments I quite often hear against the points I’m making today is stuff like ‘Dutton<sup>3</sup> is the worst person ever, we just got to make sure Dutton doesn’t get in, we’ve just got to make sure we keep Dutton out until the next election’ and rah-rah-rah... But this argument is scare tactic that settlers use to keep people locked into this electoralism that upholds this colony. People act as if Peter Dutton is some unprecedented threat. As if people like Howard, and Abbott, and Morrison<sup>4</sup>, and every other Liberal leader before him wasn’t also some form of reactionary monster! We look at Howard for example, and we look at the policies that Howard oversaw, we look at the massive intervention into Indigenous communities<sup>5</sup>, the draconian anti-refugee policies, all the other groundwork that he laid for modern day police state powers, the attacks on labour rights, on unions, on housing, on social welfare, youknow the list goes on and on and on... Howard was a reactionary right wing white supremacist monster. And so was Abbott and Morrison – they did the same thing, they doubled down on Howard’s policies, they criminalised resistance, and they entrenched even more exploitation of land and of labour. And the next Liberal leader after Dutton will be no different, because their job is ultimately to serve the interest of capital and colonial control. *Voting Labor out of fear of Dutton is only a short term defensive move that actually does nothing to dismantle the conditions that allow people like Dutton to rise in the first place. If anything, it actually reinforces those conditions by keeping people passive and dependent on settler institutions for their protection.*

Another argument I often hear is Labor being the lesser of two evils. At the end of the day – ignoring the fact that the lesser of two evils is *still evil* – Labor is not actually much more of a ‘lesser of the two evils.’ You know what Labor is? Labor is a more *effective* evil. A lot of people might not see it this way, but it is the truth of the matter.

Labor isn’t a lesser evil. Labor is a more effective evil.

Labor isn’t an opposition party. It is a stabilising force for colonial rule.

You look at Labor and you look at the way they co-opt and pacify resistance by offering superficial reforms while keeping the settler colonial system intact.

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3 Peter Dutton, conservative federal Liberal Party leader and opposition during the 2025 elections.

4 Conservative federal Liberal Party leaders and Prime Ministers: John Howard (1996-2007), Tony Abbott (2013-2015) and Scott Morrison (2018-2022).

5 ie the Northern Territory intervention.

A really great example of this is all of these Medicare reforms that [Anthony] Albanese<sup>6</sup> is promising if he is re-elected again – but then you actually go look at the legislation, you actually go look at the bills and what's actually being proposed here, and it's not any sweeping reforms to Medicare<sup>7</sup> that are actually gonna benefit lots of people. I've seen a lot of news articles trying to frame these Medicare reforms as youknow 'free healthcare for all,' but you look at what's on offer, and it's actually a couple of extra dollars per patient for doctors who *already* bulk bill<sup>8</sup>. It's not incentives to move doctors away from private billing into bulk billing. It's just those who are already bulk billing will get a couple more dollars per client to continue to bulk bill. But, here's the kicker right, in order for the doctors to be able to claim these incentives, every single doctor in the practice has to bulk-bill exclusively. If you've got one private doctor in there, all those other bulk-billing doctors at the same practice don't get this extra incentive. And for that private billing doctor to move over to a bulk-billing system, they would have to give up a 30% pay cut. Now don't get me wrong, I think they totally *should* – doctors get paid more than enough here in this colony. But let's be realistic, who's going to give up a 30% pay cut just for no reason? No one. Maybe you'll get a few conscientious doctors here and there who are willing to give up a 30% pay cut, nearly one third of their pay, but for the most part most doctors aren't gonna do that. And youknow, what's gonna actually change for access to doctors for the general working class pleb? Nothing! It's going to be the exact same scenario, although they've framed it very much as 'free healthcare for all!' But this is just an example of how they co-opt and pacify resistance by offering these superficial reforms while actually keeping the settler colonial system very much intact as it is.

Another thing that Labor does is they expand the police and military just as much as the Liberals. The only difference is they do it with a 'progressive' branding when they do. They betray Indigenous people all the time. They do this – they do this in so many ways! Whether it be endorsing mining projects on our sacred lands, whether it be enforcing the genocidal child removal policies that have been enacted here for a 150-odd years now, whether it's doing stuff like pushing a failed voice referendum while knowing it's a dead end then using that as an excuse to pull themselves out of any sort of treaty negotiation.

They betray First Nations people. All. Of. The. Time.

And, as I was mentioning before, with the ratchet effect, they very much normalise Liberal [right-wing] policies anyway, so when the right-wing inevitably does return they have an even stronger foundation to escalate further and push stuff even further right.

Where do we go from here? We have to look at breaking this cycle and in order to do that it actually requires **rejecting electoralism**. Real change will never come from electing a so-called 'lesser evil' to manage the colony. It will only come from building independent First Nations power from reclaiming land and organising direct resistance. Settler governments – it doesn't matter which party is in charge – will always work to prevent that. Settler governments will always, always strive to undermine resistance, to undermine liberation, and especially to undermine the resistance and liberation of the First Nations people they are occupying. This is a given. We know this. The idea that we have to be pragmatic by voting Labor – it's not real pragmatism at the end of the day. It's surrender.

6 Leader of the ruling federal Labor party in the leadup to the 2025 election, and current sitting Prime Minister (2022-ongoing).

7 Medicare is the very weakened 'australian' public health provision/insurance scheme.

8 Bulk-billing is the system in which **some** doctors can use Medicare to offer patients fully-subsidised healthcare at no cost to the patient. Doctors are more frequently abandoning bulk-billing either because the government subsidy does not provide enough income to run the practice, or in order to turn more of a profit through private practice.



That's what it is. It is not pragmatism. It is surrendering.

True pragmatism would be recognising that neither party will ever deliver liberation and that our energy must be directed towards dismantling their rule, instead of legitimising it.

Something I want people to sit with and really think about.

And something else that I want to just quickly add on, just to give some perspective and some examples here. I would hope that anybody who is listening at the moment, or that regularly listens to the show, would be someone who is very much a firm supporter of Palestine and is against 'israel.' I would hope as well that quite a lot of the listeners would recognise that 'israel' is not progressive in anyway, and that actually calling 'israel' progressive is an oxymoron. This includes the so-called 'left wing' and 'progressive' politicians in 'israel' who very much still want 'israel' to exist, who very much still want to usurp Palestinian land and resources, and commit genocide on Palestinians, and oppress them and exploit them, ethnically cleanse them and whatever else. I expect that at least a majority of my listeners might understand this very simple basic concept. And then I would ask why would you think that that is any different in 'australia'? What is the difference between a 'progressive israeli' politician and a 'progressive australian' politician? There isn't. There's not much difference, if at all. There's no real differences here to be noticed. Likewise we need to acknowledge that and accept that and reconcile that within ourselves.

To all the conscientious listeners and supporters out there. Look at what we have done down here in Naarm and across this continent for the last year and a half in support of Palestine. And beyond that as well before the last year and a half, in support of places like West Papua and other illegal occupations and genocidal campaigns that are happening across the globe. Look at the BDS movement, Boycott, Divestment, Sanction movement. These are movements that – don't get me wrong – a lot of them like the BDS stuff for example might have some very valid criticisms around its impact and effectiveness and whatever else. But at the end of the day it is still something that is actively working to challenge these colonial systems and these genocidal systems and impact them however they can. I would like to see the same sort of energy and support into boycotting, divesting and sanctioning this here genocidal colonial government and the way that they continue to illegally occupy our lands. Everyone is happy to no longer buy 'israeli' products, but why are we still buying products made by foreign corporations in so-called 'australia' made with the stolen resources from my people, made on land that has been dispossessed from us, that we have been displaced from? Where is the boycotting and the divesting and the sanctioning of so-called 'australia' by the conscientious supporters and those who have good morals and philosophies and ethics in this settler colony? Building on that: where is the opposition to the electoral system? To the governance structure here that is operating illegally? That is stealing our resources, that is stealing our kids, that is mass incarcerating us at the world's highest rate, that subjects us to mental health conditions that sees us having the worlds highest suicide rates, and physical health conditions that see us having stuff like leprosy and tuberculosis that is pretty much eradicated from the world now? On top of all the other stuff that we suffer at two to ten times the rate as mainstream 'australia.' Where's the boycotting, divesting, and sanctioning of the colonial occupation here? It's just something for listeners to really think about and contemplate. And think about the way in which you show up to support First Nations resistance here on *this* colony and disrupt and impact the illegal colonial settlement here.

## PART II: Colonial Democracy and First Nations Liberation

Listen at [www.3cr.org.au/yillamin/episode/yillamin-april-30-2025-colonial-democracy-and-first-nations-liberation](http://www.3cr.org.au/yillamin/episode/yillamin-april-30-2025-colonial-democracy-and-first-nations-liberation)

Today, this is the last episode we have before the upcoming feral ('federal') elections this weekend, so we're going to be touching a bit more today on electoralism here on this colony, and all of the problems and issues that come with democracy and with this whole electoral system here. If you're a regular listener, you may have heard the episode back on March 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> where I went into some detail about dispelling this whole notion of voting for the lesser evil, you know something that we often hear here in this colony is that we have to vote to keep 'xyz' out, we gotta vote to keep Dutton out, we've gotta vote to keep the LNP<sup>9</sup> out we've gotta vote for the lesser evil, so I actually went into a fair bit of detail about this whole phenomenon, where we actually analyse it a bit and when you actually do analyse it and you actually do delve into it and you do look into it properly, what you find is that you don't actually vote for the lesser evil. There is no such thing here in this colony. It's a farce. It's a lie that we tell ourselves to feel a bit better about what we're doing, but at the end of the day what we're really doing when we indulge this ratchet system, this whole ratchet effect within the system I should say, although it is a very ratchet system as well. What we do when we indulge this ratchet effect within the system is empowering a more effective evil. And that is the way that we have to reconcile with it. That is what we have to understand. That's the way we have to view it. There is no such thing as voting for the lesser evil in a colonial occupation. What you are doing is voting in a more effective evil. An evil that can operate in a covert way instead of an overt way. That's what it is at the end of the day.

I want to try and debunk some of the notions that exist around electoralism as well as try and get rid of some of this propaganda and persuasion that exist, that tries to encourage and persuade people to participate in these systems.

First off, **settler elections are not a forum for First Nations liberation.** Goes without saying but of course settler democracy was not built for us, it was built against us, to entrench occupation, to entrench resource theft and the erasure of our laws and our governance systems. Participation does not transform it, it merely legitimises it. For mob, voting in settler elections is actually a bit of a loyalty test. It's not a tool for liberation, it is designed to measure how well colonised we have become, how well we have been absorbed into their systems. It is also worth noting that we only acquired the right to vote in this colony once we had been genocided down to a tiny percentage of the overall population of the continent, essentially making our vote null and void through sheer irrelevancy anyway. Even today, we remain about 1% of the overall voting population. *And*, although it's not actually relevant to the upcoming federal election, but First Nations inmates are actually restricted from voting in state elections in nearly every single state and territory of this colony. If they are serving sentences longer than x amount of months or years<sup>10</sup>. Now, when you factor in our massive amount of incarceration rates – the world's highest rates – it really demonstrates just how much mob are actually cut out of democratic processes here in this colony.

Now building on that is the next point I want to talk about, which is: **representation within a coloniser's system is a trap.** Some listeners may be familiar with the term "not all skin-folk

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9 Liberal National Party.

10 Prisoners in 'australia' cannot vote in federal, senate and state elections if they are serving a sentence of three or more years in length.



are kin-folk.” For mob, we know especially that saying to be true when it comes to a lot of the elected parliamentarians that might be First Nations. We know that **representation without power is just decoration**. Having more black faces in settler parliaments has never actually protected country. Has never reduced our incarceration rates and has never slowed the theft of our resources. In fact, some of the worst accelerations of our issues have come about under First Nations direction, such as when Linda Burney held the ‘new south wales’ state portfolio for family and community services in the twenty-teens, only to oversee skyrocketing rates of First Nations child removal across ‘new south wales.’ Or maybe listeners should go and look at Aboriginal statistics for ‘new south wales’ mob during 2000-2003 when Burney was the deputy director general of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, and look at the damage that was done there. Personally, I will be very glad to see the back of Burney when she resigns after this election. But it’s not just Burney, it is all of these black faces that go and become poster-children for colonial parties. The only legitimate First Nations politicians are those who stand in their sovereignty, and actually challenge the colonial order and the ALP<sup>11</sup>/LNP regime. Politicians like senator Lydia Thorpe or candidates running as independents or as a part of First Nations parties and coalitions such as Uncle Coco aka Wayne Wharton who is running in ‘queensland’ as a candidate for the Indigenous Aboriginal Party of ‘australia.’

Now unfortunately even then **our mob can often be in helpless and powerless situations within these systems**. I’m 100% sure for example that people like senator Thorpe would implement stuff like the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody<sup>12</sup>, and the recommendations from the *Bringing Them Home* report<sup>13</sup> if it was in her power to do so. Unfortunately though, the way Parliament is organised, and the way it is dominated by anti-Indigenous settlers who are happy to watch our mob continue to be over-incarcerated and murdered in custody and to see our children snatched up at unprecedented rates, these settler politicians would, and have in the past, aligned with each other to downvote any concessions that our people try to table. Even when they are just basic recommendations from these settlers’ very own courts and institutions mind you, recommendations that just say basic stuff like ‘remove hanging points from cells so that people, black and white, can’t hang themselves in gaol.’ Basic recommendations.

On top of this we also have to contend with cooption versus sovereignty, and the ways that settler states often reward those individuals that do collaborate with the system and punish those who resist. Now we need only to look at people like the LNP’s tool Jacinta Price, or Burney like I was just mentioning, or even the so-called progressives in the Greens and the way they silence and undermine their own black caucuses, whenever said caucus disagrees, but are happy to platform and promote individuals like the ex-copper Dorinda Cox<sup>14</sup> who toes the Green settler political lines. **We must not confuse visibility with power**, which is a trap that quite a lot of people actually do fall into.

Another thing I wanted to quickly touch on is this whole illusion of colonial choice and how that illusion is very much manufactured. Voting actually offers no real choices. **Labor, Liberal, Greens, they are just different branding for the same operating system**, which is the maintenance of our colonial occupation. All three parties push the same imperialist

11 ‘australian’ Labor Party.

12 A commission that took place over 1987-1991 and produced 339 recommendations.

13 Also known as *The Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families* (1997).

14 Yamatji and Noongar woman and senator for ‘western australia,’ she has been a member for both Labor and the Greens.

sentiments. It wasn't too long ago that I remember [Adam] Bandt<sup>15</sup> standing up in parliament, echoing calls for the 'united states' to initiate bombing runs over Libya and North Africa. It was only the other day as well that the Greens announced their own policy to create tanks and missiles in 'australia' and for 'australia.' They made this policy knowing full well that 'australia' is a core Western imperialist power that actively follows other imperialist powers like the 'united states' into imperialist conflicts. They made this policy knowing full well that said tanks and missiles would inevitably be used to slaughter black and brown people across the Global South so that the West can maintain its global hegemony and domination and so that those in the West can continue to plunder the resources of the Global South for capitalist profit. When we see through the contradictions and illusions of so-called choice, we see that elections are merely theatre to mask dictatorship of colonial capital. Our lands remain stolen, our people will remain criminalised, regardless of who 'wins.'

Another point is how **true power does not come from the ballot, it comes from the land. Land is the basis of all power.** In fact, to quote the legendary Malcolm X: "Land is the basis of freedom, justice and equality." Without land, we have no real autonomy. We have no economic base, no means of survival independent of colonial structures, decolonisation or any means of progress for that matter. It means severing dependency on colonial democracy, not seeking favour within it. **The ballot box cannot give back what the gun and the lie stole.**

Another thing is how **sabotage and disruption are legitimate forms of political education**, because it highlights the illegitimacy of this system. Whether it's disrupting ballots, whether it's boycotts, whether it's protest actions, these acts all force a conversation about the occupation itself. It reminds the settlers that their system is not uncontested, and their rule is not inevitable, we are still here, we are occupied, and we want liberation.

Now one of the final things I want to talk about in regards to electoralism is how settler guilt is weaponised to coerce participation. We hear this whole notion of, "if you don't vote, you're helping the bad side win, blah, blah, blah. We have to vote to keep out Dutton. Vote to keep out this person or that person." But this is all manipulative rhetoric, and it's built on settler guilt projection, at the end of the day.

**Our refusal to vote is not a passive refusal.**

**It is an active rejection of colonial authority.**

**Boycotting is not apathy, it's allegiance to our ancestors.**

**They did not die fighting to elect some better colonial manager.**

Further to this, as a Black man who has actually lived through homelessness and dire poverty, who has had family actually impacted by the colony, even murdered by this colony, who has seen family torn apart by child removal systems, do you know how much it absolutely disgusts me when I see privileged people talking about voting on behalf of the vulnerable, speak over the same vulnerable they claim to be supporting? I dealt with so much of this tone deaf nonsense during the Voice to Parliament referendum, listening to all these privileged settlers, who aren't now and have never been at risk of starving, turning around and telling actual starving First Nations people that we should be grateful, and take the poison scraps we are offered, and how they will be voting to make sure we get those poison scraps, and how it was apparently out of our own best interest – but that rhetoric is based purely in ego and guilt, and is condescending, patronising and covertly racist.

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15 Leader of the 'asutralian' Greens from 2020-2025.

The final thing I'll say on this is **no settler party will ever deliver us justice**. This is because settler parties are structurally incapable of delivering land back, of reparations, and of acknowledging and upholding our sovereignty. Their role is to manage the colony, not dismantle it.

Further to that if anyone actually thinks that some settler has entered electoral politics to dismantle this colony from within, please make sure you contact me after the show about a unicorn I have for sale, seeing as you want to be so naive and arrogant and full of yourself.

We know that justice will never be legislated into existence by colonial parliament. It will be *forced* by the struggle of the colonised. What we need is to be building our own systems beyond these settler states. Withdrawal from settler politics must be coupled with building alternative structures. Stuff like community-run governance, food sovereignty projects, independent media like the mob presenters here on the deadly 3CR, or the education and media being put out by groups and orgs like the BPU<sup>16</sup>, or the Global Decolonial Institute, or like Radio Rata or many of the other sovereign, staunch First Nations media outlets. And we need cultural reclamation. And a lot of people aren't gonna like this but we need self defence initiatives.

Every effort that we pour into their elections is energy being stolen from building our own liberation. This colony needs us to believe in their democracy, more than we need their democracy to survive. Every ballot cast into their box is another thread tied around our necks. It's time we stopped weaving our own nooses.

### **Suggested further reading:**

"Disrupting the Election": <https://www.zinesquatteshoppe.noblogs.org/disrupting-the-election>

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<sup>16</sup> Black People's Union.

*“Real power is not held in parliament, it is held in the hands of those who control the land, the resources, and the means of production. Real change will never come from electing a so-called ‘lesser evil’ to manage the colony. It will only come from building independent First Nations power from reclaiming land and organising direct resistance.”*

*Yillamin* host Keiran Stewart-Assheton provides analysis on the notions and phenomenons that exist around electoralism, and the propaganda that exists to encourage people to participate in the settler democracy of so-called ‘australia.’

## Part I

Why electoral politics only serves to reinforce the status quo of occupation;  
How we are driven further and further towards the far right with each election;  
How Labor isn’t the “lesser evil” that it is portrayed as, but instead the “more effective evil”;  
Some of the fearmongering tactics employed by normalisers;  
What you should be doing instead of picking your oppressor.

## Part II

Why settler elections are not a forum for First Nations liberation;  
How representation within a coloniser’s system is a trap;  
The manufactured illusion of choice in colonial democracy;  
Why true power and First Nations autonomy dos not come from the ballot, but from the land;  
How settler guilt is weaponised to coerce participation in colonial democracy;  
Why settler political parties will never deliver First Nations justice;  
Why First Nations governmental structures should be built and implemented as an alternative to colonial democracy.

Keiran Stewart-Assheton is the founder of the Black People’s Union and a Traditional Owner of Wani-Wandian country in the Yuin Nation.

Made into a zine on unceded Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung country, in solidarity with the struggle for First Nations liberation and the return of land for all Aboriginal nations across this continent.