



Faith: Faith Bandler, gentle activist

Marilyn Lake

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Faith Bandler is one of Australia's best-loved and most widely respected citizens.

This is the story of Faith's extraordinary life, her journey from a childhood nurtured in a South Sea Islander community in northern New South Wales to national recognition as one of Australia's leading human rights activists.

Drawing on Faith's own vivid recollections, as well as extensive research in the archives, Marilyn Lake tells a lively story which captures the warmth of the woman - her sharp intelligence, her generosity, her calm, her stamina, her eloquence and her ability to have 'a bloody good time'. It brings alive the experience of the 1930s Depression, life in cosmopolitan Kings Cross in the 1940s and the intensity of political commitment in the 1960s and 1970s.

As a leader of campaigns for Aboriginal rights and against racial discrimination, Faith Bandler emerged as an unlikely but compelling public figure - a politically effective woman in a public culture dominated by men, a politician outside Parliament and a Black leader in a nation dedicated for most of her life to the ideal of White Australia. The success of the 1967 referendum on Aboriginal citizenship was a tribute to her leadership and influence - to this day, of more than 40 attempts to change the Constitution by referendum, only eight have succeeded.

Eloquent and elegant, Faith Bandler became that rare phenomenon in Australia: a charismatic public person. Her exemplary courage in fighting for an end to racism and her capacity for moral leadership have never been more relevant.

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