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Fighting the Tragedy of the Commons (Poem)

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FIGHTING THE TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONS

Poetry by Olivia Romo

El grito de la Frontera rides in with 1,000 men on horseback,
burning barns, cutting fences, ripping up railroad ties
to protect half a million acres.
To protect the livelihoods of those who depended on the commons.

Cuando vino el alambre, vino el hambre

El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora de Dolores
Las Vegas Land Grant

La vega—
Wetland jewels fed by the Río Gallinas.
Springs, streams, and pastures that were reserved for the common good,
not for the interests of politicians and big cattle operators to establish land holdings.
7,200 acres of fraudulently sold homesteads that were originally owned by Spanish
land grant heirs.

That bare, wide-open, wild virginity of the West,
refuses to be wed—
She can never really be yours!
Even the wealthiest tried!
They proposed to her with the Santa Fe Ring.
But lumber, gold, and cattle were never sufficient dowry—

Pobre cautiva.

El canto de la frontera gurgles beneath the water meter placed at the headwaters of
the Río Gallinas.
The sins of our political leaders are buried in the silt rising above Storrie Lake.

The Adjudication process has dried up 6,000 acres of irrigable land from Las Vegas
farmers. The Pueblo Water Rights Doctrine granted priority to the city that
intercepted the water from the acequias for over 50 years.
It is legal for the government to nickel-and-dime us for every drop!
Every quarter of an acre adds up.

In an exchange for a priority date of 1835, the City has offered to pay \$1.7 million
dollars to the farmers to justify their backhanded deal.

¿Dónde está la Mano Negra?

Las lágrimas de la frontera are shed by an 84-year-old man, whose water rights were being challenged by the State of New Mexico and the US Fish and Wildlife. The loving hand of his wife embroidered his blue-collar shirt, "I am proud to be a farmer."

With a firm voice, he said:

"If the very government who took our land, now takes our water rights, they will finally kill our cultural heritage! They will dry up the Gallinas River, impact the economy, and our ability to make a living. Ruin the opportunity for next generation farmers. Take away our ability to produce fiber and foods that feed the rich and the poor!"

You see, my people are not willing to negotiate, not willing to give up anything!
So where are the Gorras Blancas?
I pray for a resurrection of the movimiento.
The resurrection of Juan Jose Herrera,
Reies Lopez Tijerina.
The resistance against commercial and industrial control of New Mexico, our
homeland.
We are one with water and place.
We rise up with lightning, rain, y con los caballeros de justicia.

El agua es una frontera—
Todos pelean por ella.
Muchos han muerto cruzandola—
Ellos la robaron—
Y al final se seca.

La sequía—
is probably a curse for those who want to take ownership of mother earth.
The bones of our ancestors, buried beneath the city, are finally taking the water
back.
Quenching their thirst, at last!