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Community Resistance and Educating in an Authoritarian Climate

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Poetry

Invisible Exploitation

Von Torres
Clovis Community College

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Inspired by Tiana Clark's "After the Plain Day Becomes Magnificent to Her"

Someone I know is about to become a professor. It's June 2016 in Clovis, California. It's sunny. It's Wednesday. It's the last week of school. The day goes by just like any other: Preparing for a new school year while the hope of summer break comes in full sight. Outside, I take a phone call in the shade of Central Valley heat. A job is offered to me. A job? The one I was hoping for with all my capitalistic dreams. The one my Mom prayed for with all her Catholicism and Santo Niño rosaries.

Someone I know is working at a community college. It's November 2019 in Fresno, California. It's overcast. It's Friday. It's the tenth week of the semester. The morning goes by just like any other: Parking your car in the lot closest to your 8am classroom. Seeing your student offload from a public transit shuttle that was the small win of a fight to get a bus to your campus.

Someone I know is lying on the carpeted floor and staring at the ceiling. It's November 2020 in Clovis, California. It's cold. It's a Thursday. It's the sixteenth week of the semester. The afternoon goes by just like any other: Zooming a class, checking your e-mail, and acting busy to stay alive. I take one moment to lay down. I stare at the ceiling. Thoughts I haven't thought since the eighth grade make their way through my library of emotions. You self-talk yourself from checking out that book.

Someone I know is reading about rest as resistance. It's March 2023 in Barcelona, Spain. It's laundry day. It's a Monday. It's the first week of actually vacationing on sabbatical. The night goes by just like any other: washing your clothes and hanging them to dry, reading a book because there is time to do so. I shatter my cup of success with the intellectual hammer of this

book. Bit-by-bit, I unlock the toolbox toward my liberation. Word-by-word, I see the flowers of invisible exploitation blooming open to me.

Someone I don't know is making a decision "out of an abundance of community concern." It's nighttime. It's November 2023 in Fresno, California. It's a school board meeting day. It's a Wednesday with All Saint's Day. The evening goes by just like any other: silent behind the scenes political machinations grind to de-center Ethnic Studies and muffle voices of the marginalized and oppressed. On this Day of the Dead, our ancestors and communities are blindsided by quiet oppressions and decisions outside of public view. The decision tries to scorch a reputation. Embers of resistance encircle pain with a radical community love that grows.

Someone I know is attending a meeting. It's sunny. It's February 2025 in Fresno, California. It's the last day of the month. The meeting goes by just like any other: fake unity, fake compacts, a downness with the brownness while whiteness lurks above us. They bring us to these rooms to deliciously feast our voices, our pain, our time. I know this isn't the space for me, yet here I am, resembling representation. Through hope, some meetings exploit more than others.