



Tear Down the Wall

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I live in the Sonoran Desert on Tohono O'odham land in what is now called Tucson, Arizona. It is such a unique ecosystem, so stirring and beautiful, mystical and magnificent. It is protected by state, federal, and international laws. It is the only place you will find the Saguaro Cactus, and it is a felony in the state of Arizona to destroy one. Endangered jaguars and ocelots roam the mountains, and birders come from around the world as this area is [one of the most diverse in the world](#) for bird species.

The Tohono O'odham Nation is sovereign land recognized by both the United States and Mexico, and though [there is no O'odham word for "wall,"](#) 62 miles of the US-Mexico border runs through their sovereign land. However, the irreplaceable beauty, the critical ecosystem, the sacred ancestral lands, the state and federal and international laws, have been destroyed, desecrated, broken, and gone largely unnoticed.

When the border wall was proposed, [Native people, conservation groups, and activists sounded alarms.](#) As construction began, those same groups tried to educate and organize direct actions to slow it down. But the construction has gone on and devastated this area – by executive order – disregarding conservation lands and the sovereign land rights of indigenous people. Now that the election has taken place and a new administration has pledged to halt border wall construction, opportunists are [continuing to blow up mountains to receive a paycheck](#) for as long as they can.

We are in a world that contains so much devastation. Even if some circumstances begin to improve, the devastation is there to be dealt with. Psalm 126, for me, contains some wisdom for continuing on in a time of devastation:

Restore our fortunes, O God,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.
May those who sow in tears

reap with shouts of joy.
Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.
- Psalm 126:4-6 (NRSV)

The watercourses of the Negeb are a system of seasonal streams that usually appear as dry beds in the arid southern land. However, winter rains can make them fill suddenly and completely, bringing green growing life to a parched desert landscape. This psalm is a cry for immediate and supernatural intervention. A people, returning to devastation after living in exile, longed for everything to be strong and new, as the watercourses strengthen and restore the crops.

It is a prayer for immediate and supernatural intervention, but there is a shift then to the final petition: "May those who sow in tears, reap with shouts of joy." People, weeping for the tremendous struggles and suffering of people, for their children and for their own pain, pick up their tools, and – with wet cheeks – they throw their tools into the ground and plant seeds. The only intervention being asked for in this prayer is one of blessing, that the harvest would simply come, that the seeds would sprout and become food and grain so that they can return "carrying their harvest sheaves."

No matter the circumstances, the promise is that we have each other. We cannot bring back species once they are extinct, but we can plant. [Quitobaquito Springs](#) may have been depleted beyond restoration, but we can tell the story of the women who tried to save it, and clean and protect what remains. We can tear down walls that have no place in this world and shout with joy one day.

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