

## A Conspiracy of Flowers

You did not have to send the flowers, Oscar.  
You have given us so much time, after all—  
enough to assure me of your love:

twenty-six years on that day the artwork  
was hung from a gallery's walls;  
thirty-five by now, and counting still.

You did not have to send me flowers, Oscar.  
I am sure it isn't easy to find them there,  
where they keep you locked away, though  
perhaps not quite so difficult for one  
who truly understands the flowers  
when they speak to us.

Che once spoke of love,  
in words that have echoed ever since  
in so many hearts.

Your “great feelings” echo too,  
through these portraits:

of Mita at her sewing machine,  
of Filiberto, Safiyah, Frida, Julia,  
of Che himself joined by another  
(although nameless) “gringo's nemesis”;  
of corn vendors in their market square,  
of a deer drinking from its river,  
of a bowl filled with mangoes, or . . .  
. . . a vase with flowers.

You did not have to send the flowers, Oscar. I  
would still have known how much you love me:  
enough to dedicate a lifetime  
to our great conspiracy of flowers.

And so I offer you these lines;  
my small effort  
to reciprocate your love.

Someday, I predict, a new law will transform  
“colonialist conspiracy” into a crime  
punishable, henceforth, by thirty-five  
years in prison. And all who  
are thus sentenced will be compelled  
to appeal to you, or to me (or perhaps  
to our children), for clemency.

Allow me to express the hope that we  
will treat them with compassion

when the time arrives,  
for such compassion best demonstrates  
all the truths we hold self-evident  
in our vast conspiracy of flowers.

Long live the conspiracy of flowers,  
our wonderful conspiracy: of artists,  
of poets, of musicians,  
of sisters and mothers and daughters,  
of sons and brothers, of fathers,  
of lovers and comrades who have fallen  
and those who march on, even  
those yet-to-be-born because  
soon, perhaps only a day or three  
after you and I have joined the ancestors,  
they will be the ones who discover  
new ways to celebrate,

aware: that all the prison walls  
in all the world are not enough  
to hold back our glorious conspiracy.

You did not have to send the flowers, Oscar.  
There was no need to send me flowers.

Steve Bloom  
June 2016



**Oscar Lopez Rivera**  
“Still Life: Flowers” (pastel on paper)

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