

sOIL MATris{x} (track 01) LUPANG RAMOS
[English translation]

Miriam Villanueva, KASAMA-LR
on BUNGKALAN /// COLLECTIVE LAND OCCUPATION/ASSERTION/CULTIVATION
and FOOD SECURITY

>>> The bullet can be evaded, but the starving stomach can kill, even leaving
your eyes open. <<<

. . .

The first land occupation that took place in the 90s was a campaign of the
farmers, from the slanted areas up to the flatlands, to oust contractors of
sugarcane, reclaim the plains, and bring back the planting of rice, corn, and
vegetables.

Before [Ferdinand] Marcos' Presidential Decree (P.D. 27), the crops being
planted in this 372-hectare piece of land were rice and corn.

Marcos' P.D. 27 was his land reform program that was only concentrated on
fields of rice and corn.

1965 was when this land was titled by the family of Emerito Ramos. So that
this land won't be included in P.D. 27, they converted the crops into
sugarcane. That was also the time of strength and struggle in Negros because
most of the crops planted there were sugarcane.

If any of you know the song "Katawa'y Payat..." ("Body is Thin...")? It says,
chicken and rice were what people ate at first, until there was nothing to
eat, there was no salt even, that's why the eyes are bulging, the stomach is
swelling. . .

That song. . . The people here were about to suffer that very fate, but then,
at that time, even when they weren't aware of the struggle yet, they asked
the caretaker of the land if they could plant vegetables on the slanted
areas.

The Ramoses only arrived here in 1965. Our parents first lived here even
before that, on this 372-hectare land. The story of how this land was titled
started in the time of Diosdado Macapagal. 1965. Where was Emerito Ramos
then? He was working in the Malacañang Palace as one of the secretaries. That
was the magic behind it.

. . .

I gained the awareness that I needed to know the story of why the land was
not ours, even if we were the first to live here before the landlord who took
it.

220 hectares were reclaimed by our parents in the first land occupation, out
of 372.

"Abolish haciendas in the Philippines! Organize bungkalan!" —
We responded to the campaign of KMP (Peasant Movement of the Philippines) to
abolish haciendas (large plantations owned by the landlord class) and reclaim
idle lands. We, as the 3rd generation, now asserted to till the remaining
land on the entryway. We stood our ground.

We filed a petition at the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) regarding this

372-hectare. We have a certification from DAR that our case is pending. This land is still vacant, so we have a right to handle this. We are only reclaiming what is ours, which they did not give.

When the police arrived, we (women) were there since we were in charge of negotiation. Suddenly, my child grabbed me, and said, "Mother! You have to bring me with you!"

"Why?" I asked. My child said, "So they will be ashamed to arrest you because you have your child with you."

While the petition was ongoing, the bungkalan and collective action continued, as well as the picketing at DAR. A lesson – while writing papers and submitting them to the government, you have to accompany that with action, follow-ups, and rallies while continuing to till and improve the land.

On legal matters, we only sit and go through it because we have to. But the true fight lies within in our collective struggle. Whatever the decision of the high courts, if we do not act and only follow them, if we do not enact our struggle, then let us not continue to live. As early as now, let us self-demolish if we will not fight.

It is legitimate, right, and just that we reclaim the land at the entryway because it's not being put to use. Now we benefit from it. If we did not organize bungkalan in 2017, and in 2020 the lockdown started, then we would have been hungry. We did not go hungry during the pandemic. We enjoy a life almost similar to that of middle-class farmers because of our collective work and action.

Here, any seed will grow. We are inspired by the bungkalan being launched in the city centers, because Dasmariñas is also a city. And we are at the door of national democracy's victory.

>>> There is no victory without sacrifice. <<<

. . .

The bullet can be evaded, hunger in the stomach will fade. And if we will not fight for this land, the feet of our children will scatter. We will die as squatters, and our children will live as squatters.

Never mind if we bequeath our children with struggle, than if we bequeath them with hopelessness. So. . . Struggle. . .