

## River of Knowledge

Picking up her pen, a young woman looked out toward the distant pounding of Iguazu Falls. After a moment she touched her pen to the sheet before her. The words of her journey from a drop of water, to a minute piece of the greater ocean soon flowed across the paper.

“When people express doubt in their ability to change the way their world is governed, I explain to them how a group of jostling figures will crowd towards the edge of an icy blue pinnacle in the Antarctic. After a moment one of the sleek black-backed penguins will plunge over the frozen edge into the polar water. The others wait and watch. Then suddenly dozens of black and white divers from atop the glacier drop into the ocean. Someone must lead, but the rest will soon follow.

“During my early school years one book asked the question ‘What is delicious?’ Only in college did I come to know the significance of its answer: ‘Water is delicious.’ Like the fictional events from that book, it was the development of a reservoir that brought me to understand the true value of water. After the icy shock of discovering that the waterfall I had first adored as a youth was to be drowned beneath the silent waters of a reservoir, I dedicated myself to the volumes of graphs and information, which steadily trickled in. As if I were descending into an ever-quieter ocean, my comprehension of the proposal evolved and deepened into knowledge. The reservoir’s water would not be used by the city, which owned it, but sold to feed the bottles of a water company, the dreams of a developer, and the trucks from the oil and gas industry.

“As I studied an article regarding the primary source of water for the reservoir I suddenly understood what the city’s Water Board had realized before they conceived their plan to construct a reservoir. Unless they laid claim to their aggregate water rights from the Colorado River, they would lose them forever. In fact if the city didn’t use its portion of the river’s water soon, it might run dry before they took their share. The dam I despised was only a drop of rain in a swelling ocean of insatiability.

“Suddenly the river was the tributary that mattered. If one could preserve what little lifeblood still flowed through the concrete channels of the Colorado River, one could achieve more than the prevention of the new dam.

“On the banks of the withered Colorado three thousand dedicated people, each carrying a bottle of water, joined me to return that water to the river from which it had been taken to sell. On the anniversary of when our forefathers stood together to proclaim their conviction in a free nation we stood united to declare our belief in a river free from commercial interests. Water is a God-given right, not the privilege of those who can afford to own and sell it. A river is an artery of the world, and belongs to the people, and wildlife as a whole.

“The nation heard our voices. While the life of the Colorado hung in the balance of our highest courts, people across the world found the courage to demand the preservation of *their* homelands’ waters. As the people began standing up to assert their rights, the claims of private companies began to fall. The Colorado River has been given a second chance at life, but many people are still facing a dam of opposition.

“This past week I stood on the bank of the Iguazu River amid a ribbon of people. We gathered in support of the Argentinean and Brazilian people in their protest against selling the rights to the world’s largest source of fresh water to those who can afford to buy ultimate power.

“Today I know how delicious the water is, which I drink. Due to the knowledge I gained from the Colorado River I know a deeper truth than those found in textbooks, a human truth. One grain of sand might be swept away by a wave, but a beach of sand will outlive even a tsunami if they stick together. Why should they endure such difficulty? For that which is delicious, that which is the lifeblood of all.”

With a slight smile the woman lay down her pen. The strength of the falls thundering in the distance gave voice to the vigor and determination of a people.