A Ghazalled Sentence After "My People…Hold On" by Eddie Kendricks and the Negro Act of 1740

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WHEREIN, a particular people
are allowed to make slaves of people

after the 1739 revolt where people convinced
tools useful in implementing their people's

freedom had been stolen from them pursued
people to a river shallow enough for people

to cross on horseback & some of the people leapt
into the river kicking their legs like people

on the riverbank kicking the legs of the horses
& the people on the horses while some people

managed to briefly evade retrieval
by people who could not see the people

they pursued could not be retrieved,
People,

because your body belongs to you,
& certainly not to the kind of people

who devised laws to make properties
of people after the people

at the river were captured, their heads
put on stakes along the road & people

who briefly eluded pursuit before
being recouped or returned to people

so afraid of working for themselves
they made it illegal for other people

to work for themselves, grow their own food,
congregate & educate their own people,

without say-so of the kind of people who come
after people pursuing freedom for their people

while pursuing freedom for the people
who come after their people.

May 10, 1740

The South Carolina Commons House of Assembly passes the Negro Act, making it illegal for enslaved Africans to move freely, assemble in groups, grow food, earn money, or learn to read and write. These restrictions come in response to the Stono Rebellion, the largest uprising of enslaved people in the colonies to date. It was spearheaded the previous year by a man named Jemmy, who was most likely Kongolese. Jemmy led a band of roughly twenty men southward from the Stono River, killing white people, burning plantations, and recruiting new fighters along the way. Their goal was to reach Spanish Florida, which offered freedom to fugitives, but before they could escape South Carolina, they were defeated by a white militia.