Sixteenth-century reducción towns in the Andes, complete with cabildos and cofradías are usually understood to be top-down, state imposed places of resettlement. But the majority of rural towns in the colonial Audiencia of Charcas were founded in succeeding generations by indigenous Andeans themselves as they turned the tables on forced resettlement by making the towns their own, and the center of their social, political, and religious lives. Andeans made a coherent life for themselves in a complex process of ethnogenesis that blended preconquest ways of life (the ayllu) with the imposed institutions of town life and Christian religious practices. Producing a new kind of civil society, they demanded the right to elect their own leaders. Calling themselves members of the común or comuneros, indigenous Andeans asserted a radical political philosophy of community-based sovereignty that led to the revolutionary moment of 1780-82. Re-examining the era of the Great Rebellion, while eschewing a focus on well-known leaders such as Tupac Amaru, this paper demonstrates through commoner rebels’ holographic letters that it was common indigenous people across the Andes who made the late eighteenth-century a revolutionary moment by asserting their rights to town-based self-government.