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June 2, 1970

Mr. Pete Tijerina, Executive Director
Mexican-American Legal Defense & Educational Fund
International Building
San Antonio, Texas 78205

Dear Mr. Tijerina:

On May 21, 1970 I wrote Mr. Mario G. Obledo, your general counsel, concerning an incident of ethnic conflict in Snyder, Texas, involving young Mexican-Americans. The incident was brought to my attention as Executive Director of the Citywide Committee for Human Rights, Inc. of Austin. I asked that Mr. Obledo send an investigator to Snyder.

To this date I have received neither acknowledgment or other reply from Mr. Obledo. I might mention that the Lieutenant Governor of this State, to whom I also reported the incident, has already replied to my letter and is concerned about what happened in Snyder. It seems to me--wholly apart from the fact that Mr. Obledo asked me to recommend him to you before his initial employment which I was delighted to do--that professional courtesy and the previously professed desire by you and others to develop a relationship between the University of Texas Law School and MALD required Mr. Obledo to respond to my letter or at least to acknowledge it.

With this letter I call to your attention another incident involving young Mexican-Americans--another police shooting incident in which two youths were shot down as they were fleeing a place they were believed to be attempting to burglarize. This incident was reported to me last week by Mr. George Parnham, Esq., a lawyer in Grand Prairie. If you are not already familiar with the incident, Mr. Parnham will provide you with the details. His address is 326 Midway National Bank Building, Grand Prairie, Texas 75050. He is a former law student of mine, an excellent lawyer, and he is trying to do something to change the Dallas police procedures in the use of deadly force.

As Mr. Obledo well knows, I prepared a brief in a similar shooting incident here in Austin and am vitally interested in seeing a case brought to the highest courts testing the validity of these police procedures in the use of deadly force. Mr. Obledo and I, indeed, worked together on the case in Austin.

I wish to take this opportunity to state that I think it is most regrettable that MALD has not developed a working relationship with the faculty at the University of Texas School of Law. We are constantly called upon to assist others in the field of civil rights and do so with considerable success.

Even if MALD does not call upon the faculty and resources of the School of Law to any greater extent than it has, our School has a great interest in the work of MALD and would like to be informed from time to time about the nature of the cases being handled and the disposition of them. To this date I have received not one communication of this sort since the luncheon at the Villa Capri with you before the employment of Mr. Obledo.

I will be sending you shortly a copy of the annual report for 1970 of the Citywide Committee for Human Rights, Inc. of Austin. Although it is a different kind of organization from MALD, it is serving many Mexican-Americans and Negroes, as well as Anglos, in an extensive Educational Program, Job Counseling and Placement Program, and Family Aid Program. We are not funded, as you are, by a large foundation grant nor by the government, nor by the United Fund but simply by concerned and interested citizens. Yet we serve nearly 500 persons per month and often in legal matters through the use of volunteer lawyers. Our cases are not as dramatic as the ones you handle but the problems they involve hurt the people suffering them as much as the problems do that you handle. I think you and your organization might well consider the significance of our work and the possible resource our organization represents as the idea becomes more widespread in Texas and elsewhere.

I am sending a copy of this letter to certain members of your Board of Directors, to Mr. Parnham, and to Mr. Obledo.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Joseph P. Witherspoon
Dr. Joseph P. Witherspoon
Professor of Law

copies to:

- (1) Hon. Carlos C. Cadena
- (2) Hon. Joe J. Bernal
- (3) Rev. Henry J. Casso
- (4) Dr. Hector P. Garcia, M.D.
- (5) Mr. George Parnham
- (6) Mr. Mario G. Obledo