

LATIN AMERICAN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY, INC.

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July 14, 1970

Dr. Hector P. Garcia
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Corpus Christi, Texas

Dear Sir:

May I first introduce myself as Jose Ortega, recently appointed Executive Director of L.A.R.A.D.A., the Latin American Research and Development Agency. We are a funded agency set up specifically to help the Chicano regardless of age or whatever the problem. I would like to relate an experience to you in the hopes that some positive action may be taken by you in order to rectify a bad situation here in Colorado Springs.

The Pikes Peak Community Action Program (CAP) is serving many families, the majority of them being Chicano. In the program itself, out of about eighty-nine paid staff, less than ten are Chicano; and the governing board is mainly comprised of Negroes and Anglo's. I saw a great need for the necessity of having a strong person on that board to actively represent the Chicano, even though this person was going to receive more than their fair share of criticism. I asked to be placed on this board and was notified that the only representative they were accepting had to come from the G.I. Forum.

Now, I am going to be perfectly honest with you. I had observed the workings of the Forum in Pueblo and was not at all impressed with what they were doing in relation to what they could be doing, given being a national organization and in many areas, being the only agency representative of the Chicano people.

On observing the Forum in Colorado Springs, I had to come up with the very same conclusions and at one of the Forum meetings I was very critical but honest about my assessment as to what was being accomplished by this chapter. As happens when you attempt to be honestly frank with people, I did not endear myself to several members of the chapter who have long memories, if nothing else. I might add that these opinions are not solely mine but are shared by far too many people in this community.

I must say something on behalf of the President of the Forum who could have done something with this chapter had the members allowed him to do so. He is very active in the community, works many of his off-duty hours promoting the cause of the Chicano and is not afraid to speak up in this Anglo-dominated society when he sees a Chicano being shit on.

Since he has been chosen President, the active membership has increased (not too long ago the national office was ready to take the charter away because eight active members couldn't be found in a city comprised of 16,000 chicanos), and new people were becoming interested because a leader had finally emerged from our conservative people. There was hope that, at last the Forum could become the meaningful organization I am sure you expect it to be on a national level.

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It was at this time that the President approached me to be their representative on the C.A.P. board which meant that I paid my dues and went right to work on the board, much to the dislike of the Negroes, who have had their way far too long and also to the Executive Director who was being swayed by these same people. I was at last in a position where I could fight effectively for La Raza.

Mr. Art Tafoya, past president of the Forum, was being pushed out of the program after almost five years of riding on the gravy train and was offered a part-time position as a token, which he refused. The job opening was then announced and opened to the public and interviews were done with me sitting on the personnel committee (the only Chicano). The deadline had been set for applications and none were to be accepted after that date, so it came as a surprise when on the final day of interviewing, Mr. Tafoya's application was submitted by the director of C.A.P. Mr. Tafoya was further embarrassed by being asked to appear before the interviewing committee. We, as a committee, had to refuse this application because it had come in after the deadline; and if we were to function as an effective group, we had to abide by the policies and procedures which are set up by the C.A.P. board.

Mr. Tafoya felt that I had dealt too personally with him, not realizing that it was the C.A.P. director who was using him, and contacted six of his blind followers to put together a special meeting of the Forum in order to question my selection to the C.A.P. board.

What happened at that meeting is a very sad commentary on exactly what has kept the Chicano from making any kind of meaningful advances himself.

My Chicanismo was questioned because one member stated that he saw me dating anglo women only.

I received criticism for using a part-time secretary who is an Anglo. She, in reality, is doing us a favor by working with the organization. She has a masters degree in special education and because of her interest in the Chicano movement and the people, has chosen to work for our organization.

The president received criticism for having chosen me to represent the Forum although it was his understanding that he had the prerogative as president to select someone of his own choosing to committee's and boards.

The final ignomy was having to go in front of the members of the Forum in order for them to come to a decision as to whether or not I was worthy of being a member. I am a veteran and I am a Chicano and to have to undergo that kind of treatment by a Kangaroo court comprised of bigoted, closed-minded individuals is a disgrace to the good name of the Nation Forum and to any good Chicano.

These questionable gentlemen were not even man enough to have an open vote on the question but had to resort to a secret ballot so that no one would know their perfidy. The vote was seven to four to have a secret ballot, so I need not tell you what the decision was as to my membership.

Dr. Hector P. Garcia

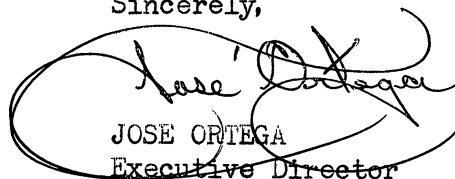
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I am calling for a complete investigation of this Colorado Springs chapter in order to determine whether a small group of men can use the charter of the National G.I. Forum to further their own personal gains or to carry out their own personal vendettas. If an investigation cannot be done, we, and there are many of us, are interested in the possibilities of forming our own chapter of the Forum so would need the necessary information as to what steps would be needed to be taken to become a member of your national organization.

We would appreciate whatever response you can give us in the very near future as we feel that you should be as disturbed by what is going on here as we are.

Sincerely,



JOSE ORTEGA
Executive Director

JO:dg

cc: Mr. Zeke Duran: National Executive
Secretary Treasurer G.I. Forum
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