

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

February 21, 1967

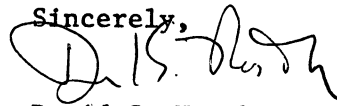
Dear Dr. Garcia:

I thought you might be interested in having a copy of the following items:

1. Statement by Alberto Piñon, President, CSO, before the President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty.
2. Press Release on Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker Educational Program for Arizona. Most of the workers involved in this program are Mexican Americans.
3. Memorandum on the Effect of the President's Proposed Social Security and Welfare Amendments on the Mexican American Community prepared by Mrs. Schwartz of our staff.

As other material which we believe would be of interest to you becomes available, we will pass it on. In the meantime, if there is any particular information you might like to have, please feel free to call on us for it.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

David S. North

Dr. Hector P. Garcia
1315 Bright Avenue
Corpus Christi, Texas 78405

Enclosures



Community Service Organization

FROM THE OFFICE

CALIFORNIA CHAPTERS

BAKERSFIELD
BRAWLEY
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OAKLAND
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REDWOOD CITY
RICHGROVE
SAN FRANCISCO
SAN JOSE
SANTA MARIA
SELMA
STOCKTON
VISALIA
WEST LOS ANGELES

Testimony of
ALBERT PINÓN
National President

COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATION
Los Angeles, California

before

THE PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON RURAL POVERTY

Washington, D. C.

February 17, 1967

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission.

My name is Alberto Piñón. I reside at 3642 Vista Del Valle, San José, California.

Presently I am employed as Area Director for Manpower Opportunities Project under a grant made by the U.S. Department of Labor, OMPER. Manpower Opportunities Project was funded because of the low number of participants from the Spanish-speaking community of California in training programs -- MDTA and others. MOP was created to bridge the gap -- not only in training programs but also to promote a better working relationship with all agencies.

I am also the president of Community Service Organization -- CSO -- and with your kind permission I would like to briefly tell you about it. CSO was organized in the City of Los Angeles in 1947 by a small group of individuals who saw the need for a community mutual aid organization. This movement then spread throughout the State and now 27 counties in California have a CSO chapter.

In 1953, CSO was incorporated under the laws of the State of California and its influence has since spread into Arizona and Colorado. CSO is neither a political movement nor a welfare agency. It is a self-help, mutual assistance organization with its strength in its membership, and as long as there is a need of one human for another CSO will endure.

CSO is a civic action group. Its goal is the socio-economic improvement of the community with particular attention to the needs of the Mexican Americans. From its inception the membership of CSO has come from the low-income families in the community. It was so structured in order to permit broad community participation. Its constitution

and by-laws contain no reference to ethnic background or antecedents. Today, however, the membership of CSO is predominately Mexican-American with a sprinkling of Negroes, and some Anglos. The reason for the predominance of Mexican Americans is quite obvious -- the need is very great among the six million Spanish-surname people of the United States and especially those in the five Southwestern States.

CSO has been commended by the California State legislature through resolutions several times. CSO has been commended by the Bishops Committee, by the American Friends Service Committee, by labor organizations and by prominent national and local leaders for its good works.

This Commission, I have been told, wants to hear from persons who know about or may feel that they have not had an adequate opportunity in life. For the most part, you can put the entire Spanish-surname population in this category.

How is it possible that one -- such as myself -- could have adequate opportunities in life? How could it be when I was told from the day I was born to the day I entered school and beyond, that somehow I was different from the rest of my peers? That I was different because my name was Piñón instead of Rodgers; that I spoke a language foreign to the one universally spoken; and in addition that my skin is a few shades darker -- that I was to believe that I am something less than the Anglo.

How can I say that I have had an adequate opportunity in life when I can remember so vividly a teacher saying to me, "No, I would not think about college; you have a very good aptitude for mechanical work; I would suggest that you take a shop course."

And, when I expressed the dream of perhaps one day becoming a great attorney, I was shot down with, "No, I don't think you'll make it as a lawyer, you probably won't be accepted."

There are many other Mexican Americans who have experienced this type of counselling. The big question in my mind today is: How many Al Piñóns or José Rodríguez or Antonio Hernández have we lost this way?

Another question in my mind is: If other Mexican Americans had not experienced the same treatment I did, would we not perhaps today have 100 Professor George Sánchezes, or 1,000 Dr. Julián Samoras? Who can say what the cost has been -- not only to the Mexican American community, the Spanish-surname communities, but to this, our country?

Now let me talk about the conditions that exist in my State -- the great State of California; the richest State in the Union.

For many years, the great Central Valley of California has been the richest farm area in the world. Three counties in the Central Valley have led the nation in dollar value of agricultural production for the past ten years. The farms are large. Some farms are as large as feudal baronies. For example, on the Western perimeter of the Valley the Southern Pacific Railroad owns 120,000 acres, and another company, Anderson-Clayton, owns a 52,000 acre ranch.

By contrast -- in this very same Central Valley region of California -- tens of thousands of farm workers live in stark poverty. This fertile valley is pock-marked with isolated slums, without water, without streets, with virtually no public facilities, and virtually no public service -- except an occasional whisk-through by an unfriendly Deputy Sheriff.

As we see it in this rich valley, most of the Federal assistance goes to the rich at the expense of the poor.

Permit me to cite one specific example, a rural slum called THREE ROCKS, located on the West side of the Valley. It was established in 1956 of condemned shacks moved off of nearby ranches. As THREE ROCKS grew, the outside world came to gawk -- stories and pictures from dusty, desolate, waterless THREE ROCKS appeared in publications all over, as far away as Moscow.

In 1962, the American Friends Service Committee became concerned. A member of the Friends Committee began to help the people organize and prod various public and private agencies consciences. Indifference was the main fruit of this effort.

In 1964, a full time worker of the Friends Committee was assigned to help the people of THREE ROCKS get decent housing. The worker and the people were organized and applied for projects under the various titles of the Economic Opportunity Act -- commonly called the "War on Poverty."

For nearly four years now, the Friends Committee worker and these people of poverty have lived with the hope of moving into homes. This hope seemed so near when a large land owner -- a farmer who owns 100,000 acres -- offered to grant 20 acres of land for the purpose of building homes for farm workers. But, when the community worker mentioned that he believed farm workers should be covered by a minimum wage law, the offer was withdrawn.

Despite the great disappointment, the organized community purchased a tract of land and, now, the THREE ROCKS housing project is

on the verge of final approval by Farmers Home Administration, Department of Agriculture -- a real hope. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that after almost four years of organizing, petitioning, applying for grants, and all the other necessary work involved in laying out what could be considered a new township, NOT ONE SHOVEL OF DIRT HAS BEEN TURNED.

In sharp contrast, let us take a look at a development 15 or 20 miles down the road. Here we see bulldozers working and dirt flying. Beautiful rolling green slopes with man-made lakes and trucked in palm trees replacing the rolling sage. A new country club has appeared -- thanks to a recreation subsidy from the Farmers Home Administration. How long did it take? Well, early in 1965, some 250 charter members of the Whitebridge Country Club raised \$200 a piece to establish it. The Farmers Home Administration almost immediately authorized a \$245,000 construction loan which would pay for an 18-hole golf course, a swimming pool, and club house. The golf course is scheduled to be completed early this summer. And, to the best of my knowledge, not one of the 250 charter members comes from the THREE ROCKS shanty town.

Members of the Commission, if you lived in a shack in THREE ROCKS and had to haul your water four miles, how would you feel about a government whose policies makes it easy for rich farmers to build a country club, but next to impossible for you and your neighbors to build a decent home for your family?

The problems of rural poverty cannot be understood and dealt with unless this double standard that exists and the programs resulting therefrom are clearly analyzed. In order to put this into perspective

for such an analysis, let us consider the various farm and rural programs as a giant welfare system. With this point of view in mind, there are two rural welfare programs -- both with Federal financing: one for the rich, and one for the poor.

The welfare programs for the rich comprise price supports, soil conservation, irrigation subsidies, etc., etc., and are administered by the rich themselves through various local farmers' committees and/or public service agencies. They control, for example, irrigation districts.

On the other hand, the welfare programs for the poor are run by unfriendly bureaucrats answerable only to the rich. It must also be considered that under the rich folks' welfare program, the biggest welfare payments go to those with the most money or the largest land owners.

Permit me to briefly review an example of this rich welfare system -- speaking of it from my California experience. Water for irrigation purposes is the life blood of California's rich agriculture. Without its expensive canals, pumps, dams, etc., not much more than hay would be grown in the Golden State. The Federal government provides various irrigation subsidies in many parts of California. Federal water supply to the East Side of the Central Valley is subsidized at \$577 per acre -- which means if you own 10 acres, your subsidy is \$5,770; on 100 acres it is \$57,700; and for 1,000 acres it equals \$577,000. The Federal government is constructing an irrigation project on the West Side of the Valley in which the subsidy will be over \$1,000 an acre.

There is in existence a Federal regulation which is supposed to limit the subsidy on irrigation projects and provide the machinery whereby the poor can obtain a share in these subsidies and an opportunity

to own land. Land ownership, as you all know, is one of the great desires of people. We know that many of them, especially the thousands of skilled farm workers, have the ability and the motivation to conduct agricultural operations, if given a chance.

But, alas, our people will never realize this goal under the current administration of Federal irrigation projects in California because the subsidy limit regulation has been interpreted into meaningless words by bureaucrats pressured into submission by large land owners.

I respectfully urge this Commission to make a detailed examination of all Federal programs directed to rural areas. All of these programs have a direct effect on rural poverty.

I pledge, for the record, my full cooperation and the assistance of my associates in making this study. Such a detailed examination will, I am sure, indicate that many rural programs need drastic revision if the government is to make a realistic effort in alleviating rural poverty. Why can we not build healthy rural environments which in turn would stop the depressive flight to the cities and arrest the further enrichment and entrenchment of a monolithic rural feudalistic society?

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before this Commission. I hope that these deliberations will lead not only to more effective Federal programs in alleviating rural poverty but also to a more effective use of existing programs. I thank you.

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

Telephone: 296-2980

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1967

MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARM WORKER EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR ARIZONA

The Arizona Council of Churches in Phoenix, Arizona, will continue the Migrant Opportunity Program for farm workers in ten communities in the State.

A \$1,297,962 Office of Economic Opportunity grant was announced today. The grant will provide a three-part program requested and designed by the migrant workers themselves, and consisting of child development centers for infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers, full and part-time adult educational services and technical assistance for self-help housing groups. The three-part program will be held in the communities of Allenville, Cashion, El Mirage, Eloy, Marana-Rillito, Stanfield, Randolph, Peoria, Willcox, Winslow and vicinities, located in the counties of Maricopa, Pinal, Pima, Cochise and Navajo.

The child development centers will have long day care services in each community while the workers are in the fields. The children will receive nutritious meals and basic medical services. One-hundred-twenty day care aides will receive in-service training in child development.

Approximately 100 workers who are heads of households and who are currently being forced out of jobs will receive educational stipends of \$35 to \$45 per week for 20 weeks while they are attending school full time. Nine-hundred workers will receive no stipends, but will attend classes at night and on weekends when they are not working. Classes include basic literacy and elementary education, preparation for General Educational Development examinations and prevocational training. Facilities where the workers can learn to perform minor repairs on their own cars will also be provided. The educational services will be integrated with programs conducted by other agencies in the areas of manpower, counseling and community organization.

Self-help housing technical assistance will enable 60 families to form self-help building groups to build their own homes. Nine professionals will assist community residents in processing applications for loans under the Farmers Home Administration lending program, as well as to oversee construction and help utilize self-help building techniques.

A total of 57 professionals and 145 non-professional aides will be employed in the program.

(MORE)

All grants for migrant and seasonal farm worker programs are made by OEO to the grantee for administration of the program under authority of Title III-B of the Economic Opportunity Act, as amended. Grants are processed through the Migrant Division of the Office of Special Field Programs/CAP, Washington, D.C.

The Arizona Council of Churches is a non-profit, private organization which has been engaged in serving migrant and seasonal farm workers throughout the state for more than fifteen years.

Joseph A. Baird, B.A., M.B.A. has been selected by the Council as Staff Director.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : David S. North

DATE: February 21, 1967

FROM : Terry Schwartz

SUBJECT: Effect of the President's Proposed Social Security and Welfare Amendments on the Mexican American Community

Although the Social Security Administration does not keep records by ethnic groups, one assumes that the economically disadvantaged Mexican Americans are often on the losing end when it comes to social security benefits. Either they are not covered by social security or they are eligible for very low payments. The proposed amendments are aimed at alleviating this situation.

For example, the greatest increase in payments will be 59% for those 2.5 million people who receive the minimum benefits (\$44). While it is not possible to measure the exact effect of this increase on Mexican Americans, it is possible to see the overall effect on the five Southwestern States. In New Mexico and Texas, the change will be especially significant because in the former state 24.1% of the recipients of social security receive \$44 or less while in Texas it is 24.9%. In Colorado, the figure is 17.4%, in Arizona 15.3%, and in California 14.1%. Nationwide, 16.5% of the social security recipients receive \$44 or less.

Another proposed change will assist some 1,100,000 persons 72 or older who have made little or no contribution to social security. While there is undoubtedly a high percentage of Mexican Americans 72 and above which has not contributed to social security, there is also a low percentage of Mexican Americans at this age level. In 1960 there were 83,371 persons of Spanish surname 70 or above (that is 2.4% of the Spanish-speaking population as compared with 6%, 70 or above, in the total population).

The president also proposed that State welfare agencies be required to raise their cash payments to welfare recipients to the level the states themselves set as a minimum for subsistence. This will affect all the five Southwestern states, because in all of them the highest monthly benefit payable is less than the amount determined necessary for basic needs. In Arizona the highest payment is 57.8% of the state's minimum for subsistence, in Texas it is 63.7%, in Colorado 81.9%, California 93.7% and New Mexico 95%. In New York, on the other hand, it is 100%.

The President also proposed to extend the social security law to cover the earnings of farm workers who earn \$50 from and work 10 days for a single employer. This is a marked change from the present requirement that a person earn \$150 and work 20 days before the earnings are covered. This change will not only increase the number of migrants covered by social security but also the amount of wages that are covered. Because of the high percentage of migrant workers who are Mexican American, this change in the law will have much significance for this group.



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