

August 7, 1978

Congressman Abraham Kazen
Congress of the United States
2411 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Sir:

I am writing you about a matter that I think definitely needs some serious heedful attention and probable action. This is a matter of exploitation that has gone untouched or undetected long enough. I am referring to the Mexican Americans and the bias exposure they are faced with in today's television and motion picture medias. I am looking for a means to help eradicate past gross injustices that have been perpetrated against the Chicano communities. Is there any way possible to attain positive image recognition for this ethnic race?

In reference to today's televising and theater viewing it is evident that minorities from all ranks of society are focused and expanded upon with the exception of the Mexican American or the Mexican in general. This is a very lucid point as actors are constantly representing, or punctuating in various ways, their ethnical backgrounds. This fact of representation is normally conveyed to the public via pedigree related pictures in the background of the screening plays, names inferring their own descent, or simply making reference to their native land. For distinctive examples of this practice Puerto Ricans constantly use the word Puerto Rico in phrases of their speech, Italians almost always use Italian resonant names plus highly demonstrating their cultural foods, and Blacks immoderately verbalize Black oriented jokes. This in the eyes of many is the way the mass and television media purport these individuals. Consequently the idea of these stars glorifying their own heritage of vernacular instills in the minds of a myriad number of gullible citizens that they are immanently visualized as ultra superior beings. I think it is very infarious to deprive the stars of Mexican descent this option. Mexican Americans are not only stymied from exhibiting this fact but many times Mexican Americans are even scenaried to give credit to other individuals of different lineage. Thus Mexican Americans are ultimately assigned to stigmatizing roles rendering labels of miscasts.

Is there anyone we can submit to or is there any action we can take in reference to the above to try to get more of an equalized system of stars for our telecasting and motion picture production. My plea is one of mere equal representation for all. I personally think it is very unfair and unjust for the Mexican American population not to have a credible respectable star they can truly call and look upon as their own.

Letter of Inquiry
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Attached is a conspectus researched by me along with other reliable sources, which I would like to propound for any possible relief or rectifying action.

Thank you in advance for any assistance regarding this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Hilario M. Garcia
Hilario M. Garcia
204 S. Tyler
Beeville, Texas 78102

HMG: dg

1 Incl

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Subject: Letter of Inquiry

Dear Mr. Congressman:

My name is Hilario Martinez Garcia. I am married and presently enrolled in a junior college in my community pursuing Business Administration as my major and Sociology as my minor. I have just completed 78 semester hours at Bee County College in Beeville, Texas. I served in the United States Army from May 1971 to May 1974. During my three year tenure in the Army I served in many capacities such as Personnel Specialist, Legal Clerk, Officer Efficiency Reports Clerk, Personnel Actions Clerk and Battalion Commander's Personal Clerk. I served abroad in the republics of Korea and Germany and achieved two Army Commendation Medals, one with first oak leaf cluster. I was awarded these two medals for my meritorious service while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States.

In view of today's modern world of events, and in regards to my being a citizen of the United States of America it is with great due respect and sincerity that I am hereby imploring for your assistance. I would like to inquire about matters concerning my ethnic minority group, the Mexican American society. I would simply like to know what can be done or who I may consult so that I might be able to obtain a definite status reading as to why very few Mexican Americans are given opportunities to appear on television or motion pictures.

In recent years and times I've noticed an acute increase of minorities appearing on television. Supposedly, this is all being done by demand request. The only thing is, all but the Mexican Americans are being given equal opportunities for telecasting. I truthfully do not see the rationale behind this fabrication unless it's totally a sheer case of discrimination against a minority group that is so immense in size, and indeed one that plays a major role in the further development of this country. As you well know, the Mexican American race constitutes the second largest minority group in the entire U.S. For a minority group as substantial in magnitude as ours, I absolutely supplicate to you that our representation on television to the national public is in essence far from equal.

I have been keeping up in the world of television and have observed that the Puerto Rican race has been represented in astronomical numbers or should I say at least far more than the Mexican Americans. I would approximate that on an even basis they hold a two to one margin over the Mexican American people, even though Puerto Ricans only comprise the third largest minority group in the U.S. This, in context, is the crux of my inquiry. I do not think the Puerto Ricans should be that greatly publicized over the Mexican Americans as my people do dwell in this country in greater quantities.

I can see the definite logic and rationale in allowing Blacks to assume paramount star roles, as they are America's largest minority group, but Puerto Ricans technically do not warrant such massive advertisement.

To name a few, and to further substantiate my plea, I shall now cite several

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Puerto Ricans now appearing, or who have starred on national television series:

1. Tony Orlando (Singer) of Tony Orlando and Dawn
2. Gregory Serria (Chano) of Barney Miller, (Julio) of Sanford & Son
3. Robert Hedges (Juan Ebstein) of Welcome Back Kotter
4. Geraldo Rivera (Reporter) of Good Morning America
5. Jose Feliciano (Singer)
6. Liz Torrez (Actress)
7. Roberto Clemente (Former Baseball Player)
8. Jorge Valezquez (Jockey)
9. Rita Moreno (Actress)
10. Roberto Escalera (Boxer)
11. Convict of On the Rocks (Lead Actor)
12. David Yanez (Manuel) of Fish

David Yanez is one of the latest addition to the Puerto Rican build up as current as April 13, 1977. However, the latest addition to the Puerto Rican build up is as current as late 1977 when the media introduced an alleged "Latin" who plays the star role in the program called "CHIPS", California Highway Patrol. This is a series of a super Latin Motorcycle Policeman (Eric Estrada) that just recently was dubbed Sex Symbol by Photoplay Magazine. I have not been able to determine a definite ethnical background which this person belongs to but already I discovered on one particular series that upon saving the life of an infant he offered to take her to Puerto Rico along with making reference to two other countries. Here again it is very ironic that this individual identify more with Puerto Rico rather than with Mexico which is only moments away from California. Due to this phrase in speech by this actor I gather this person is also of Puerto Rican origin. If this is the case Estrada is just one more episode of disgrace to the Mexican American society as it is conducive to the notion that the Mexican American society is so illiterate and illegitimate that the Patrol force had to elicit a Puerto Rican from either an island or New York and bring him to California to exercise law throughout the state even though that state today is almost over 3/4 Mexican American. This enacts a palpable conviction to practically all viewers that amidst all of California's best Mexican American citizens, none are qualified sufficiently to serve as their own law and order officials. In addition to the above list, the next two individuals of which I am about to explicate, have really,

in my eyes and in the eyes of millions more of Mexican Americans, insinuated, demoralized, and utterly shattered the true image of the Mexican American of today's society. Freddy Prinze and Henry Darrow, who played Manuelito of "High Chaparral", have overtly debauched my race time and time again. Freddy Prinze, a Puerto Rican, before committing suicide, technically portrayed the part of a Mexican American even though in each play he only gave recognition to his own Puerto Rican identity. It is really ironic how a tentative Mexican American identifies only with the Puerto Rican descent. It is really despicable for a supposedly alleged Chicano speaking Puerto Rican spanish, as their dialects and enunciations are well unlike our own. To the bonafide Mexican American, this is one of the greatest insults life can pose, especially in Burbank, California where the movie "Chico and the Man" was filmed and where virtually all the conglomeration of people there are predominantly Mexican American. Most Mexican Americans perceive this as a degradation and an insult to their integrity as myriads of Chicano intellects and erudites reside in the immediate milieu. I envisaged Prinze as licidly casting innuendoes at my own race and heritage, as in my eyes, only a Mexican American can duly portray a Mexican American role. Henry Darrow, who played "Manuelito" of "High Chaparral", was another individual who represented an ill image of the Mexican American as he portrayed the Hispanic cowboy. As evident by history, the first authentic cowboys to permeate and roam the land of America happened to be Mexicans and not Puerto Ricans, as lead to be believed by the television media. I construed the introduction of this particular star as Puerto Ricans being the first cowboys on these soils which is definitely incorrect, for it was the Mexican who manufactured the first hats and saddles. The Chicano presence which antedated the Mayflower also left its mark in mining, irrigation, the cowboy tradition, missions, home styles, and place names. They contributed greatly to the building of the South West.

Even when it comes to one time actor or actress appearances, Puerto Ricans still manage to hold the helms as indicated by the preceding list of names.

1. Barretta (drug addict)
2. MASH (wounded soldier)
3. Barney Miller (lady cop)
4. Chico and the Man (lady relative)
5. Toma (male gangsters)

Here again Mr. Congressman, the portrayal of these few characters is very relevant of the preponderance and hegemony the Puerto Rican race holds as opposed to that held by the Mexican American. The wounded soldier portion conveys the message that Puerto Ricans were the sole minorities, next to Blacks, that ever served in the Armed Forces of the United States, which also is in error. As a matter of fact, in the United States Army today Chicano soldiers serve in greater numbers than Puerto Ricans. Also 20% of the GI's on the front lines in Viet Nam

were Chicanos. Mexican Americans hold the highest fatality rate during the Viet Nam War.

In relation to the continuous promulgation of new stars, Puerto Ricans again still hold the edge as only their race is ever consistently being focused on such as baseball players, boxers and jockeys to mention but a few of their exorbitant line of infamous star players. Television is trying to meet their minority quota by instilling only Puerto Rican characters in roles such as baseball and boxing and this to me is but a mere facet of the aggregate human spectrum.

In April 1977 I researched the welfare of Mexican Americans. I shall now relay some significant findings I managed to procure from this investigation so as to further shed more light on this case of inquiry. After an extensive amount of research on the welfare of the Mexican Americans it was asserted that this particular group of minorities has been divested of virtually all benefits entitled them. It was also noted from this report that these people are society's stepchildren as they have been suppressed and forgotten on the other side of the railroad tracks due to their prolonged period of isolation, and their scanty financial support in regard to furthering their education. The report also included information stating that the virtuous Mexican American stars on Broadway today cannot impart their actual identity which is in absolute converse when inferring to minorities of other walks of life. This supposedly is being executed in view of past encounterances with the Mexican people which dates as far back as the Alamo days. Supposedly the caste system which is in effect today, does not want to recognize the Mexican Americans as potent and effective individuals who can produce simply because of his past retaliatory history of events. Thus because of past history, the rest of the subsisting Mexican Americans are to be stereotyped, castigated, or at least neglected such as is evidenced by a report conducted in northern United States where a survey was made to see how northerners visualized the Mexican American. This survey indicated that to most northern people, a Mexican American automatically connotes sloven looking people who are chronic robbers, vandalizers, and thieves. This, replied most northerners, is what the mass media depicts to them, while members of other minority groups are repeatedly enhanced and exalted with any personal telecast appearance, whether on a one time basis or otherwise. The report went further to elaborate on a census report conducted on various population groups in the South West in 1970 upon which no mention at all was given to the Mexican Americans, only to other minority groups which included: Whites, Negroes, Indian Americans, Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Hawaiians, and Koreans, to be exact. Presumably Mexican Americans were entirely left out and so if they wanted to be tallied in on the census, they either had to fill in the "Other" column or else be left out completely in the decision making procedure. This 1970 census which reached over 80% of the population, contained no specific reference to the Mexican Americans even though their presence is outstanding. The report concluded in contending that Mexican Americans are proclaiming equality. The report also pointed out that the Mexican Americans are pledging that ill practices towards them and their culture not be continued, but rather, that new practices be administered to aid them in obtaining their status, for they do constitute the second largest minority group in the U.S.A.

Mr. Congressman, I think that with what I have herewith documented and endorsed in this letter of inquiry, I have conveyed only a minute portion of what is in store for the future. I do not claim to be a radical, a fomentor, or even an instigator, I would only want to see equality prevail for all, even on our television sets. Everyone has their, if you will, esoteric idols or heroes, so why shouldn't we or our generation to come. By this I mean the Whites have their Elvis Presley's, Blacks have their Muhammad Ali's, Italian's have their Fonzie's or Rocky's and Puerto Ricans have their Freddy Prinze's, but who do we have when our scanty Mexican American stars cannot even reveal their true identity while they are on filming status. This same type of deprivation is gathered by most Mexican Americans as an absolute token of defamation. In conjunction with Italian screen playing it seems the Italian national is the ultimate in casting as he dramatizes consummate omnipotent characteristics coupled with neplusultra dexterity. This is very evident as symbolized by the premiere of John Travolta (Saturday Night Fever), Sylvester Stalone (Rocky), and Al Pacino (The Godfather Part II). Saturday Night Fever rendered a perception that Italians are the utmost in dancing fashions, Rocky signified that Italians are acme in terms of boxing and Fonzy is just Mr. Charisma/Omniscient. Also, in Saturday Night Fever the dialogue went on to point out that Puerto Ricans are second, next to the Italians, in regards to dancing as they gained second victory. In contrast to Italian flamboyant performances Mexicans or Mexican Americans are not allowed to display any semblance with their native background e.g. Ricardo Montalban. Mr. Montalban, it appears, repeatedly portrays the parts of different races other than his own e.g. Indian, French etc. On June 2, 1978 I heard on radio station KTSA San Antonio that a movie is being contemplated of the notorious Fred Gomez Carrasco and that the star role will most probably be Charles Bronson. Also in the mill is a full length story of Freddy Prinze (Puerto Rican) and Tony Orlando (another Puerto Rican) is being considered to play lead role in this movie. It would appear that if Puerto Ricans are permitted to portray Puerto Rican roles, Mexican Americans should be allowed to perform their own roles as well.

Methodically, I am submitting for assistance on this affair, so I entreat for your dedicated aid. I am merely requesting what, if anything, can be done to ameliorate this situation, and if so who I may contact or reach to secure a current interpretation in regard to my plea of inquiry. If I cannot be succored in this circumstance I will, involuntarily seek other avenues such as subscribing to other parties or institutions. Any assistance and information rendered in this matter will be greatly appreciated by me and other fellow Mexican Americans. If there is anything I can serve you with to further promote this issue, please contact me at your convenience. I am also in receipt of a petition which contains names of several other individuals who are more than willing to support me in this request.

Sincerely yours,

Hilario M. Garcia
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