

November 28, 1965

Hon. Ernest C. Friesen, Jr.
Assistant Deputy Attorney General
U. S. Department of Justice
Washington, D. C. 20530

Dear Mr. Friesen:

Reference is made to your letter of October 23, 1965, and your most recent one of November 19, 1965 which I received just today.

As I read the fourth paragraph of your letter of October 23, I interpreted it as a nebulous and circumventing way of saying what could have been said very well and to the point in one word - No - to the application submitted for my employment in the Civil Rights Division of the U. S. Department of Justice. Your letter of November 19 arrives at the same conclusion.

Before I comment further on your letters, let me make one thing very clear to you and everybody else. I, personally, did not go out to positively seek the position for which I submitted a Form 57 in the Civil Rights Division of your Department. I went to Washington last September - at my own expense and on my own annual leave - ~~to~~ to attend the World Conference on World Peace Through Law. While I was there Mr. Rudy Ramos, the head of the office of the American G I Forum in Washington, D. C. approached me on the subject of the interest that President Johnson's Administration and the Democratic National Committee were displaying in the matter of implementing in fact the idea of equal employment opportunities for all Americans, and in the formulation and setting up of a talent bank of qualified Americans of Mexican extraction. Mr. Ramos was working in setting up this talent bank in cooperation and in conjunction with the Democratic National Committee.

At the suggestion of Mr. Ramos, I was invited to go to the Democratic National Committee office where I spoke with Mr. Louis Martin. Mr. Martin and Mr. Ramos agreed that the Department of Justice had no Mexican-American person employed at the policy-discussion level, and that with the large segment of Spanish-speaking Americans in Texas, California, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and all throughout the United States, it would be of great advantage to the Government of the United States to have a qualified person in the Civil Rights Division to help in the National Administration's sincere effort to better implement the provisions of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act in connection with the millions of Mexican-Americans who have also been victims of discrimination and disenfranchisement.

It was through the efforts of Mr. Martin and Mr. Ramos that I then accompanied Mr. Ramos to talk to Mr. Clifford Alexander at the White House. It was also through the efforts of the Democratic National Committee and Mr. Ramos that an appointment was made for me to meet with Mr. Katzenbach at the U. S. Attorney General's office. Our meeting with Mr. Katzenbach was very cordial and pleasant and at the same time we had the pleasure to meet Mr. Doar, the head of the Civil Rights Division.

I would like to say that at all of my meetings with the ^ementioned I never positively asked for the position, and advised each of the parties that I was presently employed by the Federal Government here in American Samoa. My interviews with the different individuals regarding a position with the Civil Rights Division was done in the spirit of service to one's country and to the American people.

While in Washington I also visited with my good friend Senator Yarborough of Texas for a strictly friendly visit. As I was about to leave Senator Yarborough asked me if there was anything he could do for me. At this point I mentioned to him that I had been approached by Mr. Ramos and Mr. Martin regarding a position with the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice. The Senator agreed with the idea and volunteered to write a letter to Attorney General Katzenbach. On September 23, 1965 Senator Yarborough wrote the following letter:

"Hon. Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, Attorney General
Department of Justice Washington, D.C. 20530

"Dear Mr. Attorney General:

"This is to strongly recommend Judge Virgilio G. Roel of Laredo, Texas for a responsible position with the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice.

"The Civil Rights Division deals with problems affecting many diversified groups of our citizens. It would, therefore, seem to be both wise and justifiable to have in the Division an outstanding attorney who is thoroughly acquainted with the problems of our citizens of Latin descent. Judge Roel, who presently serves as an Associate Justice in American Samoa, has had extensive experience in the field of human relations, particularly among the

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Spanish-speaking population of ~~the~~ Southwest Texas. I have personal knowledge of this gentleman's strenght of character and exceptional ability and I feel that he fully warrants every consideration for a position with the Justice Department.

"Thank you and with all good wishes, I am,

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Ralph W. Yarborough
Ralph W. Yarborough.

RYW:ccr

bcc: Mr. Cliff Carter

Mr. Louis Martin "

One thing appears to me certain, Mr. Friesen, and that is that the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice has no adequate representation from the spanish-speaking or Spanish-named minority of Americans. It is not a question of whether the Department of Justice is doing a good job. It is a question of whether a better job could be done for this segment of America.

It is true that our minority has not been as dramatic as the Negro minority in asserting their rights as Americans. We applaud the great progress the Negro has made in the last few years, and as fellow Americans wish him the best of luck until he is fully assimilated into the American society..

Our minority has used other avenues in fighting to become better Americans. We have used the route of the courts and education in clarifying our rights as Americans. We have dedicated our lives - literally speaking - in trying to become an integral part of our Country. We have left more than our share of the dead in the battlefields where brave Americans have fought. Boys with Spanish names have won Congressional Medals of Honor way out of proportion to our population. And last, but not least, we are thankful that none of the American soldier turn-coats have carried a Spanish name.

And yet in Texas there are more Spanish-named Americans than Negroes who are disenfranchized from voting! Does anyone care? If so, why was the Spanish-named class in Texas not made a party to the action filed by the United States Attorney General to abolish the poll tax in Texas?

You only have to remind President Johnson of the Felix Longoria incident when he was a U. S. Senator where an American killed in battle was refused a commercial Christian funeral in the local cemetery at Three Rivers, Texas simply because he had a Spanish name. The then Senator Johnson won the affection of millions of our people when he personally arraged to have veteran Felix Longoria buried with honors in Arlington National Cemetery. And ask him, if you wish, of the discrimination our children long suffered in schools in Texas, and how we have solved that problem, not through riots or demonstrations, but by peaceful and legal means. But the inequities against the Spanish-named Americans have by no means fully disappeared, either in Texas or ~~throughout~~ throughout the United States.

Or ask the senior Senator from Texas, Honorable Ralph W. Yarborough about his remarks on the Senate floor during the debate of the Voting Rights Bill. Amongst other things, Senator Yarborough said:

"In my own state, the million and one-half Texan Americans with Spanish names have the lowest incomes of any ethnic group in Texas, and the poll tax to them, is a crown of thorns and a cross on the road to the voting place" This is but a small portion of his speech. The complete text of Senator Yarborough's speech in this regard whould be the subject of compulsory analysis for all who are sincerely interested in civil rights.

Or talk to Dr. Hector P. Garcia of Corpus Christi, Texas, founder of the American G I Forum, who for more than 18 years has incessantly and at his own expense battled the shameful discrimination and obstacles suffered by our minority not only in Texas but throughout the United States. Ask him about discrimination in schools, in jobs - from private to Federal - , in voting, in grand and petit juries, and other economic and social deprivations.

Now, perhaps we Americans with Spanish names are not as sophisticated or militantly organized as some people whuld have us. We are a noble, peaceful and patriotic people. But we have breathed the social and political atmosphere of the Southwest and the United States as a whole. We are no babes-in-the-woods when it comes to understanding the art of empty promise and the frustrating

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run around. We are not so naive as to believe that a certain aspect of the National Administration Civil Rights program must be frustrated simply because there is presently no "appropriate" vacancy available. One wonders how many assistant, deputy, and assistant deputy ~~assistant~~ Attorney General positions have been created or filled within the last year. But, all of a sudden, when the better service in the field of civil rights to several million Americans is involved, there is no "appropriate" position available.

As I said before, my agreement to make myself available for a position in the Civil Rights Division was motivated by a sense of service to my country, and not because I was looking for a job. If the opportunity ever arises that such a position is available I would give it my serious consideration.

But the problem is not a personal one. It is not just the matter of a job for me as an individual. It goes beyond that - to the millions of Americans that could be better served if someone at the policy-making level of the Department of Justice were thoroughly familiar or interested in the problems of these Americans.

I have perhaps gone beyond the limits of a courteous and appropriate answer to your letter of November 19, 1965 which I received today, but I hope you will take the remarks in the spirit in which they were written - the urge to serve my country in the best way possible.

Sincerely yours,

Virgilio G. Roel

cc: The Honorable Lyndon B. Johnson - President of the United States
~~The~~ Honorable Nicholas ~~DeB.~~ Katzenbach - Attorney General of the United States
Honorable Ralph W. Yarborough - United States Senator from Texas
Hon. Louis Martin - Democratic National Committee
Dr. Hector P. Garcia - Corpus Christi, Texas
Rudy L. Ramos, Esquire - Washington, D. C.