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*File Under
JAMES DE ANDA*

Editor, Corpus Christi Caller
Caller-Times Building
820 N. Broadway
Corpus Christi, Texas

Dear Sir:

Recently Mr. Tony Bonilla was quoted in your paper as stating to members of the American G. I. Forum that they were being brainwashed into considering "Anglos" enemies. This remark, absurd though it be, requires a reply.

The American G. I. Forum is a chartered veterans organization. It is unique in that it extends membership privileges to non-veterans (Mr. Bonilla is a member). It is also unique because the problems with which the Forum concerned itself extended beyond the Veterans Administration, veterans pensions and veterans benefits. Being composed primarily of American veterans of Mexican origin, the Forum grappled with the problems particular to this group in Texas -- unemployment, low wages, disease, discrimination (both social and economic) and segregation. Through the efforts of the Forum and other organizations and individuals, these conditions have been partially corrected. But all one need do is open the morning paper to know that the conditions remain. So long as they exist, the Forum will continue to oppose them. This has been the consistent position of the Forum and its founder, Dr. Hector P. Garcia. That the situation can be remedied by the united efforts of all citizens is obvious. Experience and common sense show this. During the late 40's and early 50's when the Forum was bitterly opposing the wetback and its successor, the bracero program, and condemning the deplorable living conditions of

the migrant farm worker, it received pitifully little support from other organizations; the only reaction then was opposition from individuals and organizations who reaped profit and political advantage from the sad state of affairs. But with time, more and more people recognized the dangers and harm inherent in these programs and, consequently, Congress has refused to extend the bracero program, at least for the present.

The American G. I. Forum and Dr. Garcia have advocated in strongest terms, unity of all Americans -- the Forum was organized by Dr. Garcia to fight prejudice and division among Americans.

Insofar as brainwashing our members to hate our fellow Americans is concerned, Mr. Bonilla, the Latin-American veteran is a very poor subject. Not a single one could be found among the turncoats in Korea and I don't think we have one in Corpus Christi.

And insofar as Dr. Garcia is concerned, his record is deserving of something better than your accusations. It appears, Mr. Bonilla, that you have joined with that small group of small politicians who find it politically expedient and advantageous to attack Dr. Garcia. This man served as an infantry officer and later as a medical officer in World War II. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal. He has contributed a tremendous amount of time and made great personal financial sacrifices in political campaigns to help candidates (practically all Anglo, if you please) whom he felt best qualified to solve the problems earlier mentioned. He has supported Latin-American candidates, not because he disliked Anglo candidates, but because he felt that by direct participation in government his ethnic group would more quickly achieve economic and social equality. He advocates speaking Spanish, not because he dislikes English, but because the bilingual citizen is better equipped to serve his community at home and his country abroad. (In San Diego, California, the Forum spearheaded a project, now in effect, to teach Spanish to all children in elementary school. It has the whole-hearted support of all of the community). He has been

designated a special representative of the President of the United States on a diplomatic mission; he has acted as an official host at a meeting of foreign ambassadors in the home of the Vice-President of the United States. He has done these things not because he aspires to political office, for he has never been a candidate; not because it improves his business, for he has more patients than he can see; not because of social prominence or prestige, for he has taken the abuse and weathered personal attacks that result from political activity. He has pursued this course because through it the Latin-American in Texas is more fully participating in the responsibilities and benefits of the American democratic way of life. This is not the record and these are not the actions of a hate-monger, but rather of a humanitarian.

And how does your record and actions stack up in comparison, Mr. Bonilla? What credentials do you bear?

If you really want to know what the Forum advocates, Mr. Bonilla, I suggest that you attend its National Convention in Chicago next week. There you hear addresses by the Governor of the State of Illinois, the Attorney General of the United States as well as Dr. Garcia and other distinguished Americans. I believe you will find the experience enlightening.

JAMES DE ANDA
National Chairman
American G.I. Forum