

Dear Oscar: The following message has been given to the Chicago, Kansas, and California conventions. I am making a few changes to fit the other conventions and the national convention.

Ten years have elapsed since the first GI Forum was organized in Corpus Christi Texas. Its Motto: "Education is our Freedom and Freedom should be everybody's business." With this motto and the philosophy of St. Francis of Assisi, "where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy" the American GI Forum was able to attract people into our organization who had never before been members of a civic and veterans charitable organization. Time and time again it was necessary to prove to many people including American people of Mexican descent that the GI Forum meant what it said in the constitution. Time and again it was necessary to prove to people that the principle of equal opportunity and the right and privilege to vote was an idea worth working for and worth every sacrifice necessary. Time and again it was necessary to prove that a first class education for the low income groups, especially the American of Mexican descent was a necessity and the GI Forum was ready to work for these ends. All these things were and are the principles and ideas of the American GI Forum.

Of course we know the mere act of writing these principles into our constitution or saying them does not make them so. Perhaps the one thing that has distinguished the American GI Forum is the fact we have acted on these principles. We believed what we wrote and said the Forum stood for. We sacrificed and worked and argued and defended our program before all people. Ours has been an organization without fear of speaking up for the truth. Ours has been an organization ready to defend the just rights of people irrespective of their race, color, or creed. Ours has been an organization with the courage to defend and espouse the cause of those less fortunate people who find themselves without economic resources. Ours has been an organization who stood against the practices of the "coyotes" to sell us out to the highest bidder while our children remain without a first class education, our streets remain unpaved, our rights unprotected, and some people go without medical attention.

We must hold fast and tenaciously to our principles. The growth of the GI Forum depends upon our ability to continue along the path of working for people who want so badly to find honest and intelligent leadership. The day will mark the turn of the trend toward the decline of an organization noted for its ability to produce and not just put up a bluff and a front.

I want to give my sincere thanks to all the national officers, State officers, local officers and members of the Forum, Auxiliary, and Juniors. I have served as your national chairman for two terms and have enjoyed every minute of it. I have always felt and always knew I was chairman of the finest group in the United States. I received the very best of cooperation from all Forum officers and members. I therefore ask that the same spirit of cooperation continue with the next National Chairman. I will not seek re-election.

Espero que nuestra convencion nacional tenga buen exito y Dios que nos vendiga.

Vicente T. Ximenez
National Chairman