

October 2009

SENT VIA FACSIMILE 202-456-2461

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

RE: Please Settle the Garcia v. Vilsack Hispanic Farmer Lawsuit

Dear President Obama:

My name is Jennifer Polk. I am writing to you about my grandfather, Louis Contreras, who was discriminated against by the USDA. He lost his entire farming and cattle ranching operations due solely to the discrimination and despicable actions of board members of the FmHA and the USDA. My grandfather had been a farmer and rancher since 1940 and mastered his trade. He was very good at what he did. His business became one, if not the largest cattle operations in Hall County, TX.

I am very proud to say that he was my grandfather, and respected his hard work and dedication to his family and cattle business. He was a man of integrity, and I can tell you that he truly impacted my life as a child growing up on his ranch. I was just a child of 6-15 years of age at the time he owned and operated the ranch. I was always out with him and my uncles, Joe, Paul Alex, and Randy, working the cattle, and farming the land. I was learning all the daily tasks that made the ranch successful. Some of my fondest memories, were being with them in the cold winters, counting cattle at each water tank, making sure all the (babies, as I called them) calves were accounted for, and making sure they had not frozen during the night. I was small and very young, but one of my tasks was to break the ice so that the cattle could have water to drink, as well as help put out feed for them. I was constantly with them during their daily tasks of doctoring cattle or bottle feeding the babies. I would also drive the trucks and tractors during planting season.

President Obama, there are so many more stories and fond memories I could share with you, but, because, your time is valuable, I will be brief.

My purpose of this email is simply to express to you how devastating this injustice was to my grandfather, and the rest of our entire family. He was robbed of his cattle, his farm equipment, his land, his vehicles, and even his homestead home, and not to mention his pride and dignity.

My grandfather paid his loan payments for many years with no problems whatsoever, only to discover that the county FmHA director, Mr. Dale Burris had embezzled years of payments forcing him into bankruptcy, and gave him no other

options. After everything was seized and sold, it was later discovered, that my grandfather had enough cattle to sell and payoff any outstanding loans. Mr. Burris, and another FmHA director, Mr. Jay McKay of Dimmitt, TX., jointly conspired to take possession of my grandfather's land illegally, by selling it through an auction of Mr. Burris' choice, and conveniently allowing Mr. Jay McKay's son to purchase my grandfather's land. It is our belief that this type of sale to FmHA federal employees and their siblings is prohibited and it is a violation of FmHA rules and regulations.

Later some years thereafter, when the illegal activities committed by Mr. Dale Burris, began to surface, he murdered his wife and took his own life, rather than face the consequences for his crimes.

No American, regardless of their skin color should ever have to suffer this type of atrocities, after decades of hard work, and sweat shed to build a successful operation so it can be passed on to future generations, and only to have it stripped from you illegally and wrongfully.

My grandfather passed away 4 years ago waiting for justice. He died with nothing to his name, but only deep humiliation, and a broken heart of losing his entire livelihood and legacy.

I know that you are a sincere man of honor and integrity, and I am trusting that you will hold true to your words that you will rid USDA of discrimination. I am earnestly asking you to be a voice for me, and my grandfather. I am asking for justice not just for my grandfather, but for all the other hard working Hispanic farmers there were unjustly wronged. These are the American people, including us, that are victims to decades of discrimination, which left all our families with nothing.

Please hold these elected and appointed members of your political system to a new level of standards, by correcting this wrong, a wrong that has been acknowledged and admitted openly by Secretary of the USDA, Mr. Tom Vilsack. He has admitted time and time again, that this has been an ongoing problem. In 1997, then-Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman testified before Congress and conceded that there has been a long history of discrimination in the loan program. He talked about, "good people who lost their family land, not because of a bad crop, not because of a flood, but because of the color of their skin."

Agriculture Secretary, Tom Vilsack often talks about how the department is known in some quarters as "The Last Plantation." "That's a reputation that's unfortunate and one we intend to fix," says Justin Dejong, Vilsack's spokesman. "By empowering the Office of Civil Rights at the USDA, Secretary Vilsack is laying the foundation for people to be treated better in the future."

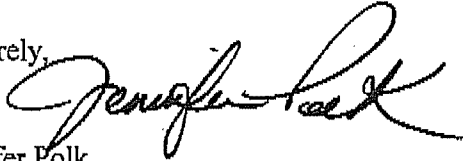
I agree that the future must be changed, but we can not ignore the past wrongs done, because there are families that are still struggling and hurting both financially and

emotionally as a result of these unjust acts committed by the people at the FmHA and USDA offices.

President Obama, I am pleading with you not to allow one more Hispanic farmer's family member be laid to rest with this huge injustice on their heart. That is the worst feeling in the world, to know that all of my grandfather's years of hard work and sacrifice were so easily erased and forgotten by the American government. It is a disgrace to know that they will not do the right thing, and resolve and settle this matter fairly.

I am trusting, and praying, that you will do everything within your power, to help us resolve this matter, and not just for my grandfather, but for all the Hispanic farmers involved, so that we can still believe and trust in the American government, and enjoy the American way of life.

Sincerely,



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