

Declaration of Hector T. Flores

I, Hector Flores, hereby state and declare the following:

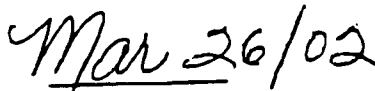
1. I am over 18 years of age, Hispanic and a U.S. Citizen. My date of birth is September 13, 1935. My mailing address is 7535 Adobe Road, El Paso, Texas, 79915.
2. I am a third generation farmer and have been farming for the past 35 years. Farming has run in my family, I learned farming from my father and grandfather and now I am in a partnership with my brothers Juan and Salvador.
3. Juan, Salvador and I own 131 acres of farmland and lease another 69 acres. We grow cotton, alfalfa and pecan trees.
4. Over the years, it has become increasing harder for the Hispanic farmers in my county to get Farm Service Agency (FSA) operating loans from the USDA. At one time, most of the farms in my county were owned by Hispanic farmers. Now, as a result of the Hispanic farmers inability to receive FSA loans, most of the farms are now owned by Caucasian farmers.
5. Between 1971 and 1991, I obtained farm-operating loans from the El Paso County Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) office. Although I would initially be awarded these loans, I would subsequently be told that they could not pay out the loan money because they had run out of operating loan money for the year. I felt like the FmHA was not consistent in their dealings with farm owners and when they did pay out operating loans, they would be late and past the planting season. Several times in 1993, I wrote to Congressman Ronald Coleman and complained about my treatment. I also filed a discrimination complaint with the USDA in November of 2000.
6. In 1991 there was a fungus that attacked the cotton in my county. The State declared the County a disaster area and made available low interests loans to all cotton farmers who had lost 30% of their cotton crop. Up until then on a normal year our farm produced 150 bails of cotton. In 1991, due to the fungus, our farm only produced 38 bails of cotton that year. I applied for a low interest loan in 1991 and the USDA rejected my loan application. I was told that I did not qualify for the loan because my farm did not produce enough cotton to merit a loan. I appealed this decision to the State USDA supervisor.
7. In March 2000, my brother, Juan Flores, applied for a FSA operating loan.

Juan was not approved for the operating loan until November, eight months after he had applied for it and after we had already harvested the crops that year. In our experiences the FSA uses delay tactics when dealing with the Hispanic Farmer. The FSA consistently uses stalling tactics and pays our operating loan money long after the crops need to be planted.

8. Water taxes are extremely high in my country. In order to get water, you must pay the water taxes and you need the FSA operating loan in order to pay these taxes on time.
9. When my brother Juan went to the El Paso county USDA office to apply for a FSA operating loan in March 2000, I accompanied him. Juan was dealing with Bill McAnally. In previously dealing with Mr. McAnally, I felt I had not been treated fairly by him in his denial of my FSA operating loan applications. Mr. McAnally was extremely rude to us and began yelling at us. He called us liars and told me that I was using Juan as a tool to get a loan.
10. I have been a farmer in El Paso County for 35 years. A large percent of Hispanic farmers in my county are denied loans by the USDA. When loans are awarded to Hispanic farmers the USDA uses delay tactics and the loan money almost always seems to be paid out late. In my experiences, White farmers always seem to get their loans paid out by the USDA on time.
11. Since we were not awarded our FSA operating loans on time we could not properly operate. We could not plant on time, buy fertilizer and pay our water taxes. The USDA and its agent Mr. Bill McAnally discriminated against me and my brothers, Juan and Salvador, because we are Hispanic.

I have reviewed the foregoing Declaration, consisting of (11) eleven numbered paragraphs, and declare, under penalty of perjury that it is true and correct and to the best of my personal knowledge.


Hector Flores


Date