

November 16, 1976

The Honorable Lorenzo I. Guerrero
President
Northern Marianas Constitutional Convention
c/o Saipan Inter-Continental Inn
Saipan, Mariana Islands 96950

Dear Mr. President:

As a citizen of the Northern Marianas, I am most pleased that the Constitutional Convention, under your able leadership, appears to have overcome many if not all the problems with which it was initially confronted and is now headed towards successful completion of its historic task of drafting a constitution for our islands.

The Convention should especially be commended for recognizing and appreciating concerns of our fellow citizens in Rota and Tinian. By providing for their equal representation in the commonwealth legislature and permitting them adequate executive control over their internal affairs the convention has, I am confident, insured harmonious relationships among our people, but importantly has guaranteed that never again will our fellow brethren and sisters in these two islands be subject to neglect by the government in the future.

It is in this spirit of accommodation and recognition of special concerns and interests by the constitutional convention that I am writing to you and the honorable members of the convention to consider the unique situation of the Carolinian community. If I am not mistaken, there is no provision in the constitution, as tentatively approved, that insures fair representation of the Carolinian community in the legislature commensurate with its numerical proportion to the entire population; neither is there any provision that guarantees that the Carolinian share adequately in the executive power of the government.

While the proposed constitution prohibits, in the language itself and by implication, discrimination against any person on account of race, color and ancestry, discrimination against the Carolinian minority can continue, as today, to exist because there is no office in the executive branch that is charged with the function and responsibility of insuring that the Carolinian minority is accorded similar if not equal privileges and opportunities provided to the majority population by the government.

It may be argued that the Carolinian minority can find legal avenues in the U.S. Constitution, federal statutes and in the Bill of Rights in the proposed constitution with which to promote and protect its interests. This may be true in theory but in many instances the law is overlooked and in some cases is deliberately not enforced when it is not politically expedient or against the interest of those who are charged with enforcing it.

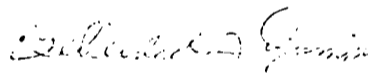
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It may be of interest to you to know that the US District in Alabama recently abolished the municipal government in Mobile, Alabama because it did not provide for adequate representation of the black minority in that community. The court further ordered the Mobile community to come up with a governmental system which gives the blacks equitable say in the government.

This is the first opportunity that we have in fashioning our system of government that can be fair and representative of our unique circumstances. If we recognized and accommodated some of these unique characteristics but ignored others in this basic document now, we would leave open the future to possible interference by the federal government to set things right, a prospect that I think none among us would like to see.

I am, therefore, respectfully requesting that the constitutional convention consider the special situation of the Carolinian community and insure that they are represented fairly in the legislature and that they have an office in the executive branch that promotes and protects their interests and insures that they are given a chance to equal opportunities in jobs and other programs provided by the government and the private sector.

Sincerely,



Felicidad T. Ogunoro

cc: United Carolinian Association, Saipan