



ORGANIZATION OF ETHNIC COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (ODECO)

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La Ceiba, Honduras, Central America

July 07, 2009

Lawyer

Luis Alberto Rubí Ávila

Attorney General of the Republic

Tegucigalpa, M. D. C.

Attorney General of the Republic:

I am writing to you in my capacity as President and Legal Representative of the Ethnic Community Development Organization (ODECO), a private non-profit, organized under the laws of Honduras and founded in the city of La Ceiba on January 25, 1992 (Legal Number/072-94). One of the objectives of ODECO is: “h) to fight for the respect of Human Rights and the dignity of men and women in its broadest sense, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Constitution of the Republic.”

On Monday, June 29, 2009, public opinion at the national and international level was shocked by the unpleasant statement expressed by Dr. Enrique Ortez Colindres, heard and seen on the program *Frente a Frente (Face to Face)*, which is broadcast by the Televisión Corporación and directed by journalist Renato Alvarez. When referring to Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, this well known citizen, now “Chancellor of Republic,” said: “the little black boy (negrito)¹ doesn’t even know where Tegucigalpa is located.” The unfortunate and untimely statement demonstrates the disrespectful and racist behavior by a senior official of a government coming out of the biggest political crisis that has hit Honduras in the last thirty years.

¹ The term “negrito” is a universally, degrading and racist term used to refer to people of African descent in Latin America and synonymous with the English equivalent “nigger.”

The unfortunate and disrespectful statements made by “Chancellor” Ortez Colindres are a real insult to humanity, especially to the Afro-descendant people he is calling “negritos.” If the “Chancellor” dares to call the President of the first world power a “negrito,” what treatment should be expected for the poor, Afro-Honduran on the ground?

As you know, the scourge of racism and discrimination has no territorial, ethnic, racial or religious boundaries. It is a flagrant violation of the Constitution of the Republic, which, in article 60, guarantees equal rights before the law and prohibits privileged classes and all forms of discrimination.

The crime of racism and racial discrimination is punishable under the Penal Code, Article 321, which states the following: “They will be punished with three to five years of imprisonment and a fine of 30 thousand to 50 thousand lempiras those who discriminate against another person because of sex, race, age, class, religion, or political party, including adolescents with disabilities and any other harm caused against human dignity. If the responsible is a foreigner, he will be deported from the country once the sentence is complete.”

The Honduran State, by legislative decree 61-2002, ratified the International Convention against All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Moreover, Honduras participated actively in the Regional Conference against Racism held in Santiago, Chile, in 2000, the Third World Conference against Racism held in Durban, South Africa in 2001, the Regional Conferences against Racism held in Brasilia during 2006 and 2008 and, finally, the Durban Review Conference, held in Geneva, Switzerland from April 20-24, 2009.

As a result of the inappropriate public statements already known, I formally present the charges against Mr. Enrique Ortez Colindres to the Attorney General of the Republic.

I demand the Attorney General's office take the required steps before the appropriate entity and proceed to punish the CRIME OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION that Mr. Ortez Colindres so publicly and consciously committed against humanity, and especially the Afro-descendant people. The statements of Mr. Ortez Colindres promote and incite racism, disrespect, and intolerance and are in clear violation of the Constitution, laws and conventions.

Finally, we call on the legally constituted political parties in our country to reflect on this subject and denouncement, and to include people in their ranks with high ethical and moral values and, in general, with a culture respectful of human rights.

Sincerely,

Celeo Alvarez Casildo
ODECO President

CC. Attorney Jorge Rivera. President of the CSJ.
Lawyer Jose Alfredo Saavedra. National Congress President.
Licenciada Jany del Cid, Office of Ethnic Affairs.
Dr. Ramón Custodio López. CONADEH.
Human Rights Organizations.
Civil Society Organizations.
Afro-descendant Organizations and Communities.
Indigenous Organizations and Communities.
IACHR.
Media.
Central Board of Directors of ODECO
ODECO Legal Team
Archive.

WE SEEK VOICES WHICH QUELL THE SILENCE...

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