

NUMBER: 267
FOLDER: 73-/241
SUBJECT: Discriminatory
signs in the town of Marked
Tree, Arkansas

MEMPHIS, Tennessee.,
November 19, 1949.

Secretary of Exterior Relations
General Office of Consular Services
Mexico City

I am writing to confirm the contents of my telegram, Number 17, dated November 13, 1949, in which I told the Superiority the following:

“COMPLYING WITH INSTRUCTIONS I VISTED THE TOWN MARKED TREE ARKANSAS HAVING FOUND ELEVEN ESTABLISHMENTS DISPLAYING LARGE DISCRIMINATORY SIGNS **STOP** THESE INCLUDE CAFES RESTAURANTS AND BARS STOP IN PHOTOGRAPHIC REPORTS SENT BY POST I WILL DOCUMENT THE SITUATION SENDING PHOTOGRAPHS AWAITING INSTRUCTIONS ABOUT HOW I SHOULD PROCEED CONCERNING CASE 62021.”

Commented [JW1]: The word “STOP” replaced a period in the conventions of telegrams, which were the quickest way for consular officials to communicate with Mexico City in this period.

On the afternoon of Saturday the 13th of the current month, I traveled to the town of Marked Tree, Ark., where there are currently 11 establishments displaying, in the primary or only door, signs marked “NO MEXICANS,” as can be seen in the photographs that I have attached to this notice.

In the small town of Harrisburg, Ark., located approximately 3 miles from Marked Tree, Ark., I also found two discriminatory signs.

The aforementioned signs can be found in every type of establishment, that is to say, nice places, middle and poor. In general it is the café-bars that have these notices.

The primary business in Marked Tree, Arkansas, is that of E. Ritter & Company, to whom a fair number of Mexican workers have been contracted. I was informed that the only movie theatre that exists in said locale, administrated by Mr. Louis Ritter Jr., son of the owner of the aforementioned firm, segregated the Mexicans, not permitting them to occupy the main seating areas, but rather they are advised to use the seats designated for black people. I was not able to visually confirm this situation in the theatre as it was not operating when I was in Marked Tree, Arkansas. Neither numbers nor names for the streets are given, since Marked Tree, Arkansas does not have street names and numbers.

Following is an itemized list of the cafes, restaurants, and bars that I have referred to in this report.

“WIKES DRIVE INN”. – (Restaurant). Attachment 1. –

“REYNOLDS CAFÉ”. – (Restaurant). Attachment 2. –

“CRACKER BOX CAFÉ”. – (Café-restaurant). Attachment 3. –
“RIVERSIDE POOL CAFÉ”. – (Café-bar). Attachment 4. –
“GOLDCREST BEER 51”. – (Café-bar). Attachment 5. –
“TEN HENDRIX GROCERY”. – (Store). Attachment 6 –
“COME IN CAFÉ”. – (Restaurant-bar). Attachment 7 –
“DAVIS PIG SANDWICH CAFÉ”. – (Restaurant). Attachment 8. –
“BAR-B-Q CAFÉ”. – (Restaurant-bar). Attachment 9. –
“ROWLAND’S CAFÉ”. – (Restaurant). Attachment 10. –
“RIVERSIDE POOL”. – (Bar-pool hall). – Attachment 11. –

Sincerely,

EFFECTIVE SUFFRAGE. NO REELECTION.

The consul.

Rubén M. Gaxiola

c.c. Embassy of Mexico, Washington, D.C.
c.c. Gen. Consulate of Mexico, San Antonio, Texas.
rml.

Commented [JW2]: This signoff appears on most Mexican government official correspondence in the decades following the Mexican Revolution. The signoff reaffirmed the new government’s commitment to single-term presidencies and rejection of its predecessor regime. Before the revolution, Porfirio Díaz had ruled Mexico for 30 straight years.

Source: Folder TM-26-2, Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City. Translation by Lauren Hedge and Julie Weise.