

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MARCH 19, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF LETTERS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND
JOHN H. POWELL, JR., CHAIRMAN
EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

March 19, 1975

Dear John:

I have your letter dated March 18, and as you request, I accept your resignation as Chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, effective today, and your resignation as a Commissioner, effective April 30, 1975. I appreciate your willingness to stay on as a Member of the Commission during the next month to assist in the orderly transfer of authority to the Acting Chairman and to provide a period of time in which a well-qualified nominee to replace you can be selected.

I want to take this opportunity to express my personal appreciation for your dedicated service to our Nation. Under your Chairmanship, the Commission has broken new ground, expanding the economic and social horizons of all our citizens. I know that this has been a particularly challenging time for the Commission, but your devotion to the goals of the Commission and to the present and future well-being of every American has not faltered. You have earned their thanks as well as my own.

As you depart the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, I want you to know that you take with you my very best wishes for every future happiness and success.

Sincerely,

s/ GERALD R. FORD

The Honorable John H. Powell, Jr.
Chairman
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
1800 G Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20505

March 18, 1975

Honorable Gerald R. Ford
President
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

During the fifteen months that I have served as Chairman of this agency, it has been my privilege to participate in the ongoing effort to achieve equal employment opportunity for all Americans.

(MORE)

(OVER)

During this time substantial progress has been made in moving this Commission toward the efficiency, effectiveness and fairness that I know you want it to achieve. Unfortunately, this agency's problems have for too long been ignored. Despite this, recent commentary has focused upon superficialities. The underlying problems were addressed quite eloquently in a letter dated March 5, 1975, written by Clarence Mitchell to the Washington Post.

My interest in the problems falling within EEOC's mandate began long before December 28, 1973, the date upon which the commission designating me as Chairman was executed. During the 1960's, for example, I served as Special Counsel to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and in 1963 I was one of many lobbying here in Washington for what eventually became the first comprehensive Civil Rights Act enacted during the Twentieth Century (the 1964 Civil Rights Act, as amended) of which Title VII is an integral part.

My colleagues on this Commission and the EEOC staff, many of whom have given outstanding support, are justifiably proud of the many historic initiatives achieved during my Administration. These include the first industry-wide settlement obtained under Title VII.

As a result of these initiatives, there is a growing minority of thoughtful commentators who believe that EEOC has begun to show signs of becoming the effective law enforcement vehicle envisioned by Congress when Title VII was amended just a little less than three years ago.

Regrettably, this agency and particularly its present Chairman have become a focal point of controversy: controversy over the authority of this Office, controversy over whether progress such as that above-mentioned is, in fact, being made and controversy as to whether, in view of the continuing intense criticism, the public interest would be served by my continuing as the administrative head of this agency.

I recognize that the responsibility of this office entails creating an atmosphere in which effective enforcement of Title VII can be achieved -- a task involving striking a delicate balance between forcefulness and evenhandedness. I would like to continue to devote, in whatever way possible, my energies in the effort to strike that balance in an optimal fashion. I have, therefore, reluctantly decided to, and hereby tender my resignation as the Chairman of this Commission at your pleasure. In addition, I also hereby tender my resignation as a Member of this Commission, effective April 30, 1975.

I do this not because I agree with the intense criticism leveled against this Office and this agency. Rather, my resignation as Chairman is offered in the hope that the current controversy will cease. Attention must now be focused on the important job that remains before all of us.

As indicated above, I will in the few weeks remaining assist in providing the new head of this agency with whatever guidance I can to aid in giving this Commission the continuity of leadership it deserves. Moreover, you have my assurance that, as a Commissioner, I will continue to serve you, the Congress and the people to the best of my ability. You also have my commitment that the new Chairman will have my unqualified support in his or her effort to maintain the present momentum towards effective enforcement of Title VII.

(MORE)

Finally, Mr. President, I wish to again thank you for your many courtesies and for the generous support extended by you over the last several months. It has indeed been a pleasure to serve in your Administration. In this regard I am pleased that you share my concern that the efforts of this and other agencies at the Federal, State and local level, will soon give rise to employment systems compatible with Title VII's mandate -- that there be equal employment opportunity for all Americans.

Respectfully,

s/ John H. Powell, Jr.

John H. Powell, Jr.
Chairman

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