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60th Anniversary of Landmark *Mendez v. Westminster* Case To Be Commemorated Feb. 18

One of the most important civil rights cases in California history will be commemorated at Chapman University on Saturday, Feb. 18 from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the Bush Conference Center, 404 Beckman Hall. Marking the 60th anniversary of the 1946 *Mendez v. Westminster* case, the university will offer a morning program including the screening of an Emmy-winning KOCE-TV documentary and appearances by civil rights leaders and principals in the case, followed by a self-guided tour of Old Towne Orange to visit once-segregated sites. **The event is free, but reservations are required due to limited seating. Public please call (714) 532-7700 to reserve a seat.**

The event is co-sponsored by the Chapman University Committee on Diversity, the Chapman School of Education, the Chapman School of Law and KOCE-TV.

The 1946 *Mendez v. Westminster* case helped to lay the groundwork for 1954s famous U.S. Supreme Court *Brown v. Board of Education* decision by desegregating schools in Orange and Los Angeles Counties, and the following year, in all of California. In 1944, the children of Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez were denied entry to a white school in Westminster. The Mendez family joined with four other Mexican American families to file suit with the Ninth Federal District Court against the school district in 1945, arguing that their children and 5,000 other children of Mexican and Latin descent were victims of unconstitutional segregation by being forced to attend Mexican schools in the Westminster, Garden Grove, Santa Ana and El Modena (Orange) school districts. Judge Paul J. McCormick ruled in favor of Mendez and his co-plaintiffs on February 18, 1946, and more than a year later, on April 14, 1947, McCormick's ruling was upheld by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeal in San Francisco. On June 14 of the same year, Governor Earl Warren signed into law a repeal of the last remaining school segregation statutes in the California Education Code.

This event celebrates the efforts of Orange County citizens to attain an equal educational opportunity for children of diverse backgrounds in our local public schools, said Chapman education professor Dr. Anaida Colon-Muniz, one of the event organizers.

The program includes:

Screening of KOCE-TV's Emmy Award-winning PBS documentary about the *Mendez v. Westminster* case, presented by its producer, Sandra Robbie.

Meeting American civil rights leaders, including Minnijean Brown Trickey, one of the Little Rock Nine, and principals from the case, including Sylvia and Gonzalo Mendez (children of Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez).

A self-guided Civil Rights Tour of Old Town Orange, including Orange County's last remaining

Mexican school building and a formerly segregated movie theatre and swimming pool (KOCE will distribute a CD and map to guide tour-goers).

Viewing of the Shades of Orange photo exhibit in the Leatherby Libraries, documenting the historic Cypress Street Barrio.