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October 5, 2009

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Monica E. Lukoschek
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Re: Mendez Commemoration at Chapman University

Dear Monica:

You asked me to put something together for the event which is going to take place on October 14, 2009 at the Leatherby Library at Chapman University.

Two events are being commemorated that day, which I think is probably a first, for Chapman University in that they are both achievements by minority individuals.

The first commemorates the speech of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at Chapman University in 1961. That will be commemorated by a march across campus which begins at 6:30 p.m. The march will conclude at 7:00 p.m. at Leatherby library.

The second event is a commemoration of the seminal case of Mendez v. Westminster, which prior to Brown v. Board of Education which desegregated de jure all schools in the United States, Mendez v. Westminster desegregated "all Mexican schools" in the state of California in 1947, seven years before Brown v. Board of Education.

The following year segregated Asian school and segregated Native American schools were both struck down in California, pursuant to the precedent created by Mendez v. Westminster.

When the Japanese American were interned in concentration camps at the beginning of WWII, one of the greatest denials of civil rights in the history of the United States, the order was signed by the Attorney General of California, Earl Warren. When the Ninth Circuit Court of

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Appeals, upheld the ruling the of United States District Judge Patrick McCormack, that separate school are never equal and are not permissible under the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. An order was signed by Gov. Earl Warren that immediately desegregated all "Mexican schools" in the state of California.

George Bernard Shaw said that "the reasonable man adapts himself to society. The unreasonable man refuses to adapt himself to society and continues to war against it, therefore the progress of mankind depends upon the unreasonable man."

Gonzalo Mendez was an unreasonable man. He refused to let it be that his children had to attend Mexican only schools. He went to the school board of the city of Westminster. They told him that is the way it had always been and that was the way it had to be. He went to the school board for the county of Orange and they told him that that's the way it had always been and that's the way it had to be. He used money that he had made, through leasing and preserving the land of a Japanese family who had been sent to camps, to hire David Marcus a Los Angeles lawyer to file a law suit against the city of Westminster.

He tried to obtain financial assistance from a Mexican American organization in Santa Ana, but they refused to provide him with any assistance so he did it on his own. He talked to other neighbors and friends to go along with the lawsuit, but it was essentially financed by him. In the spirit of other unreasonable men, like Cesar Chavez and Dr. Martin Luther King, he refused to let it be the way it had always been.

In trial before Judge Patrick McCormack, attorney Marcus put on evidence from sociologists, that having children in segregated school was bad for their development and slowed their integration into society. After listening carefully to the first time such evidence had been put on in a court room of law, Judge McCormack decided for the first time in the history of the United States that separate can never be equal because even if it is equal, it is not permissible under the Fourteenth Amendment. The Ninth Circuit upheld the ruling. Gov. Warren, who seven years later would be the Chief Justice of the United States that decided Brown v. Board of Education in the same fashion, signed the order and desegregated Mexican schools in California. Gonzalo Mendez much like Cincinnatus went back to farm his field and history was created.

There will now be a group study room at one of the whitest and most Republican colleges in Orange County, Chapman University. In the library which has rooms dedicated to Milton Freidman and to the family that owns the Register, there will now be a room dedicated to Gonzalo and Felicita Mendez, who changed history in Orange County and perhaps the United States, because they refused to accept things the way they were.

The inaugural of this room and the depository of papers pertaining to the Mendez v. Westminster case will occur at 7:00 p.m. on October 14, 2009. All members of the Hispanic Bar Association are most cordially invited and urged to attend.

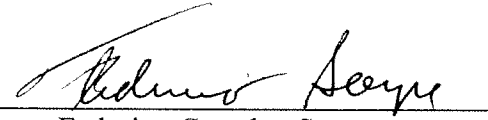
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Very truly yours,

LAW OFFICES OF FEDERICO C. SAYRE

By:



Federico Castelan Sayre
Attorney at Law

FCS/mf