



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### ***PIQE Mourns the Loss of its Founder, Vahac Mardirosian***

The Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) is saddened by the death of its distinguished founder and education activist, Reverend Vahac Mardirosian, who passed away at his home in San Diego on Friday, August 17th at the age of 93. Reverend Mardirosian was a major advocate of educational reforms in the Los Angeles and San Diego school districts and played a crucial role in the Latino civil rights movement.

Of Armenian descent, Mardirosian was born in Aleppo, Syria in 1925 but his family relocated to Mexico in order to escape the Turk persecution of Armenians. From the age of two, Mardirosian grew up in Mexico City and later in Tijuana. He was ordained as a Baptist minister in California in 1946 and went on to serve the Mexican-American communities of Topeka and Chicago before returning to California in the 1950s.

In 1952 Reverend Vahac Mardirosian became the Baptist director of Hispanic ministries of the American Baptist Churches of the Pacific Southwest. This role led to him becoming a leading advocate of educational reform in Southern California, especially in the Mexican American communities. In 1968 he was a leader of the historic walk-out protests at Garfield High School in the East Los Angeles School District where students were demanding a revamping of the education system they claimed was not responsive to the needs of the predominantly Mexican-American student body. He acted as a mediator between administrators and protestors, becoming a representative of parents and students in his role as chairman of the Educational Issues Coordinating Committee (EICC) created in response to the student protests.

He was founder and executive director of the Hispanic Urban Center in Los Angeles in 1970 which focused on in-service education for teachers, seeking to enhance their perceptions of Mexican American culture and improve teacher/student relations. He also founded the ABC Project Head Start Program through the American Baptist church. In 1987 Mardirosian started the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) along with Dr. Alberto Ochoa in an effort to address underperforming schools in the San Diego School District in response to parents concerned for their children's education. He created the model that PIQE still utilizes today, a nine-week program designed to improve education through collaboration of parents, students and teachers with emphasis on the role of parents as advocates for their children. Currently PIQE has expanded to ten regions in California and fourteen states in the nation.

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In 1988, Mardirosian received recognition from Phi Delta Kappa for his service and leadership in educational reform and in 1998 San Diego State University awarded him an honorary doctorate for his impact on the lives of parents and children of California. In 2010, Mardirosian received the "Remarkable Leader in Education" award from the University of San Diego.

Mardirosian is survived by his wife Eunice, their two daughters, Eunice Garcia and Grace Arbon, their five grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. The PIQE team joins them in mourning the passing of this inspirational man.

Services to honor his life and legacy will be announced soon.

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