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Mayor Sylvester Turner

c/o Jackie Schuessler-Kimsey
Mayor's Hispanic Advisory Board
901 Bagby, Third Floor
Houston, TX 77002

Re: Nomination of Adan Medrano for Arts in the Community Award

Dear Mayor Turner:

It is my pleasure to nominate Adan Medrano for the 2021 Arts in the Community Award.

Adán Medrano is already well known to you and your Cultural Arts Department. He was an initial organizer and early supporter of the spectacularly successful Latino Art Now Project. His pioneering work in the arts has continued to this day. He is also a food author, chef and filmmaker whose artistic work in Houston continues to enrich the Hispanic community and the entire city. He has authored two award-winning cookbooks and also curated innovative Texas Mexican food exhibitions in the Museum of Fine Arts-Houston, MECA and other venues. His work as a filmmaker culminated this year with a full-length documentary feature film about the home cooking, "comida casera," of the Mexican American community of Texas.

Titled "Truly Texas Mexican" the documentary film was shot in Houston and throughout Texas and has won "Best Documentary" at the New York Cinema Awards and continues to garner additional awards at other film festivals, including London, Mallorca and the Sonoma International Film Festival. An Amazon Prime movie, it has achieved international distribution in both English and Spanish. This Fall, post-COVID in-person theatre screenings are scheduled at the MFAH, the University of Houston, and other locations nationally.

The film is based on his book, *Truly Texas Mexican: A Native Culinary Heritage In Recipes* which received the "Book Of The Year Finalist" award from Foreword Reviews. Considered a seminal work, it was reviewed with acclaim by the national magazine, *Spruce Eats*, and listed in "The 8 Best Mexican cookbooks to read in 2021."

In the opening chapter of his most recent history and cookbook, *Don't Count The Tortillas-The Art Of Texas Mexican Cooking*, Mr. Medrano features Houston's own, Doña Maria restaurant, shining a national spotlight on the home cooking of Houston's East End Mexican

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American community. Mr. Medrano focuses on the aesthetic aspects of cooking that universally impact identity and community. Both of his history/cookbooks are academically peer-reviewed and published by Texas Tech University Press.

Mr. Medrano spent 23 years working in the field of arts philanthropy as a grantmaker in the arts. He awarded and managed arts grants throughout Latin America, Europe and Asia, and during his travels came to recognize the cultural importance of food. That is why he places his focus on the richness of Texas Mexican cuisine and culture, which he champions.

In fact, because of his culinary arts work, he was invited to travel to Moscow by the US Ambassador to Russia, pre-Covid 2019, as the featured chef of American cuisine. The glittery, highly coveted, affair was the official July 4th celebration held on the grounds of the US ambassador's residence. Honoring local Houston and Texas cuisine, Medrano served traditional tacos that evoke Houston's rich culinary culture. His professional work in restaurant kitchens includes fine dining at "Restaurant Ten Bogaerde" in Belgium, and volunteering as the Chef of Houston's *Casa Juan Diego* shelter for homeless families.

A pioneer in the arts, Mr. Medrano is the founder of the nation's first and now longest-running (45 years) Latino film festival, the San Antonio CineFestival. He currently is the Secretary of the board of the Houston Arts Alliance, serves on the board of the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures, and in his early career was named by the governor of Texas to a 6-year term as a Commissioner on the Texas Commission for the Arts. He has lectured about food and culture at academic institutions, including the University of Houston, Harvard University Co-op, and the University of Leeds. He has showcased his recipes at the Museum of Fine Arts-Houston; at the Culinary Institute of America, as well as at the American Book Center in Amsterdam, and the Yorkshire Dales Food and Drink Festival in Great Britain.

Essentially, Mr. Medrano by his works has inspired generations of young Latino authors and artists and has served as an important role model and leader for the entire Latino community, as well as documenting such important Latino culture and life. He inspires us, and has placed Houston on the National stage. Please also see his attached bio and his websites at <https://adanmedrano.com> and <https://www.facebook.com/AdanHouston> for more information on Mr. Medrano and his important work in the community.

Thanks for your consideration.

Very truly yours,



Roland Garcia

Enclosures

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