



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT AND OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT HONOR  
CHICAGO'S LATINX COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS**

*Virtual event highlights industry leaders who have gone above and beyond in  
supporting the Latinx community*

**CHICAGO** – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot will join the Office of Community Engagement and other City leaders for a celebratory virtual event to commemorate Latinx Heritage Month by honoring 19 “Campeones de la Comunidad Latina” (Latinx Community Champions) for their commitment to supporting and advocating for Chicago’s multiethnic and multicultural Latinx community.

"Chicago's vibrant heritage is defined in large part by brilliant, diverse communities such as our Latinx community," said Mayor Lightfoot. "Today's event not only celebrates this fact, but it also celebrates our very own Latinx Champions—individuals that have stepped up and made sure their communities were informed, protected, and provided for during these unparalleled times. I want to thank all of our honorees, members from my very own staff and City leaders for sharing their experiences today and continuing to work hard on behalf of our city."

Recipients were selected based on their leadership and contribution to the Latinx community through various industries, including art and culture, health and medicine, technology, business, community empowerment, civil rights, human services, education, youth outreach, and immigration rights. While the work of these individuals has always been important, their dedication has been vital in overcoming significant challenges facing minority communities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, rising racial injustice and calls for change, and Census engagement.

“I am excited to celebrate the many Chicagoans that make me proud to be a Latina,” said Rosa Escareno, Commissioner of the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection and emcee of the event. “These men and women embody the dedication and resilience of our community and contribute to the incredible diversity that makes our city great.”



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“As a proud Latino and Chairman of the City Council's Latino Caucus, we are excited to honor the contributions of these remarkable leaders of Chicago's Latino community,” said Alderman Roberto Maldonado. “We look forward to continue to work with the Mayor and our Latino leaders to advocate for the Latino community in our diverse and thriving city.”

“I am humbled to receive this honor from Mayor Lightfoot and the City of Chicago,” says Ric Estrada, President and CEO of Metropolitan Family Services. “It is a privilege to be included among this special group of leaders, whose passion, commitment and active support of Latinx and all communities work to advance our collective strength and city’s well-being.”

### **Health and Medicine Award**

Carmen Vergara, Chief Operations Officer at Esperanza Health Centers

### **Technology Award**

Fernando Espejel, Chief Technology Officer of FCB Chicago

### **Business Award**

Back of the Yards Coffee Co-owners, Jesse Iniguez and Mayra Hernandez

### **Arts and Culture Award**

Carlos Rolon, Carlos Matallana, Sam Kirk, Jonathan Castillo

### **Youth Award**

Brian Rivera and Yalinette Rivera, Youth Organizers from Northwest Side Housing Center

### **Education**

Cristina Pacione-Zayas, Erickson Institute

### **LGBTQ+**

Modesto Tico Valle, Executive Director of Center on Halsted

### **Community Empowerment Award**

Luis Gutierrez, Founder and CEO of Latinos Progresando

Katya Nuques, Executive Director of Enlace

### **Immigrant Rights**

Erendria Rendon, Vice President of Immigration Advocacy and Defense Project

Karina Ayala-Bermejo, Executive Director of Instituto del Progreso Latino



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**Civil Rights Award**

Griselda Vega-Samuel, Midwest for the Chicago Office of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)

**Human Services Award**

Evelyn Diaz, President of Heartland Alliance

**Legacy Award**

Ric Estrada, CEO of Metropolitan Family Services

The City of Chicago will provide a live-stream feed of the event on Mayor Lightfoot's social media channels including [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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