



**For Immediate Release**

Contact: Robin Cavanaugh  
713-851-4478

**Museum to Honor Punkin and Walter Hecht  
at 2021 Guardian of the Human Spirit Luncheon**

-- Keynote speaker is ABC News Veteran John Quiñones--

**HOUSTON, TX (July 28, 2021)** – Holocaust Museum Houston (HMH) is set to honor Punkin and Walter Hecht, longtime patrons and one of the Museum’s founding supporters, with the 2021 Guardian of the Human Spirit Award for their commitment to service and building an open-minded society. The Museum’s annual Guardian of the Human Spirit Luncheon is scheduled for Tuesday, November 9, 2021 at Hilton Americas-Houston, 1600 Lamar Street. Established in 1997, the Guardian of the Human Spirit Award is a platform for acknowledging dedicated individuals and institutions who have worked to enhance the lives of others and to better humankind.

As a couple and independently, Punkin and Walter Hecht have championed many community causes. Walter Hecht served as Holocaust Museum Houston (HMH) Board Chair from 2007-2009 and Punkin Hecht has served on the Board of Trustees and is a current member of HMH’s Board of Advisors. Beyond HMH, their service extends to the broader community, where they have both served on the Board of Trustees at Seven Acres and as board members, executive officers or volunteers for a variety of organizations including Congregation Beth Israel, the Evelyn Rubenstein Jewish Community Center, Jewish Family Service, Jewish Federation of Greater Houston, Jewish Institute of Medical Research, the National Council of Jewish Women and Women’s American O.R.T.

The luncheon will feature special guest speaker, John Quiñones, an ABC news correspondent and creator and host of the hidden camera ethical dilemma newsmagazine *What Would You Do?*, now in its 14th season. A lifetime of “never taking no for an answer” took Quiñones from migrant farm work and poverty to ABC News and the anchor desk at *20/20* and *Primetime*. A pioneer with a news career spanning 35 years, his inspiring journey from a San Antonio barrio to network television delivers a powerful message of believing in one’s self, never giving up, and always, always doing the right thing. Quiñones is the author of two books, a recipient of seven Emmy Awards, and was recently honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Hispanic Media Coalition and the Guerra Lifetime Achievement Award from the San Antonio Association of Hispanic Journalists.

This year’s Honorary Chairs are Sofia Adrogué, Clyde Drexler, The Honorable Lina Hidalgo, Harris County Judge, Bruce Stein and The Honorable Sylvester Turner, Mayor of the City of Houston. Luncheon Chairs include prominent Houstonians Michele and Richard Deutsch,

Cheryl and Stephen Golub, B.J. and Buddy Herz and Gail and Milton Klein. The Host Committee is chaired by Eileen and Lenny Weisman. *PaperCity* magazine serves as media sponsor.

Previous recipients of the award have included Dr. Milton Boniuk; the Astros Foundation; Texas A&M Corps of Cadets and Aggie Liberators of World War II; UT President Gregory L. Fenves and The University of Texas at Austin; Ric Campo; Velva G. and H. Fred Levine; Edith and Josef Minberg, Bill Morgan and Murry Bowden; the Harry Mach family; KIPP founders Dave Levin and Mike Feinberg; former Mayor Annise Parker, Barbara and Gerald Hines; Marc J. Shapiro; Lester and Sue Smith; Sandra Weiner and Martin Fein; Naomi Warren and Fred Zeidman; Joan and Stanford Alexander; Ed Wulfe and the H-E-B grocery chain; Jack Blanton and The Houston Chronicle; the Rev. William A. Lawson and Julie and Ben Rogers; Linda P. Lay and Siegi Izakson; and Ron Stone.

For tickets and more information, visit [hmh.org/spiritluncheon](http://hmh.org/spiritluncheon), contact [spiritlunch@hmh.org](mailto:spiritlunch@hmh.org) or call 713-527-1622.

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### **About Holocaust Museum Houston**

Holocaust Museum Houston, Lester and Sue Smith Campus, a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization founded in 1996 by Houston-area Holocaust Survivors, their descendants and members of the community, is accredited by The American Alliance of Museums. Average annual attendance is 130,000 visitors, including more than 71,000 middle and high school students. The Museum is dedicated to educating people about the Holocaust, remembering the 6 million Jews and other innocent victims and honoring the survivors' legacy. Using the lessons of the Holocaust and other genocides, we teach the dangers of hatred, prejudice and apathy.