

**For Immediate Release**

## **Vilcek Foundation Names Recipients of 2010 Annual Prizes Celebrating Immigrant Achievement in Biomedical Science and Arts**

*Biomedical Pioneer Alexander Varshavsky and Culinary Innovator José Andrés Honored for  
Lifetime Achievement; Harmit Malik and Varin Keokitvon Recognized for  
Demonstrating Creative Promise*

**New York, NY, March 4, 2010** – The Vilcek Foundation is pleased to announce the 2010 winners of its annual prizes for biomedical science and the arts. The Vilcek Prize for Biomedical Science is awarded to prominent Russian-born biochemist Dr. Alexander Varshavsky, whose research on the ubiquitin system has elevated the understanding of key cellular processes; he is currently the Howard and Glen Laurie Smits Professor of Cell Biology at the California Institute of Technology. The Vilcek Prize for the Arts, this year bestowed in the field of culinary arts, is awarded to celebrated Spanish-born chef and culinary pioneer José Andrés, credited with bringing Spanish culture to the forefront of American cuisine while pushing the boundaries of food as both a sensory experience and vital component of well-being. The prizes consist of \$50,000 and a unique award sculpture created by noted designer Stefan Sagmeister to reflect the winners' personal journeys as immigrants.

The Vilcek Prizes epitomize the mission of the Vilcek Foundation, which was formed by Jan and Marica Vilcek to honor the contributions of foreign-born individuals in the United States. "Immigration is central to the spirit of our country and has played a major role in securing America's leadership position in the world," said Dr. Jan T. Vilcek, President of the Foundation. "Our prizewinners are excellent examples of how immigrants continue to fuel innovation and enrich our society."

The accomplishments of Dr. Varshavsky and Chef Andrés reverberate beyond national and cultural boundaries. Dr. Varshavsky's research on the ubiquitin system led to the discovery of its fundamentally important biological functions in living cells, demonstrating that the regulated protein degradation underlies major physiological processes. Dr. Varshavsky's groundbreaking work has wide implications for research on the causes of birth defects, cancer, neurodegenerative syndromes, and immune disorders. Dr. Varshavsky's prize will be presented by Nobel Laureate Dr. David Baltimore, whose co-discovery, with Howard Temin, of the reverse transcriptase created the essential framework for understanding the nature of viruses such as HIV.

Deemed a "food philosopher" by NPR and dubbed "Mr. Spain" by the culinary vanguard, Chef Andrés's emphasis on the link between culture and cuisine reflects the Vilcek Foundation's values of enriching American society through the infusion of immigrant culture and talent. Chef Andrés is the founder of ThinkFoodGroup, which operates groundbreaking restaurants such as *Jaleo* and *minibar by José Andrés* in Washington D.C., and *The Bazaar* in Los Angeles. As the Host and Producer of *Made in Spain*, the PBS food and travel series, Chef Andrés brought the various regions of his beloved homeland to American culture. Chef Andrés has also championed the role of chefs in the national discussion on hunger and nutrition issues. Dana Cowin, Editor-in-Chief of *Food & Wine* magazine, will present his award.

The prizewinners were selected by panels of experts after months of research and deliberation. The biomedical jury includes noted scientists from prestigious institutions such as the New York University School of Medicine, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, and former Vilcek Prize winners such as Joan Massagué, Rudolf Jaenisch and Inder Verma. The culinary arts jury is comprised of prominent culinary experts including Ruth Reichl, former Editor-in-Chief of *Gourmet* magazine; Dan Barber, Executive Chef and co-owner of *Blue Hill* and *Blue Hill at Stone Barns*; and Susan Ungaro, President of the James Beard Foundation.

The Foundation also recognizes the accomplishments of younger immigrants who have achieved notable success with the Vilcek Prizes for Creative Promise. Dr. Harmit Malik, originally from India and currently an Associate Member at the Seattle-based Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, will receive the Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Biomedical Science for his research on the co-evolution of humans and diseases. The Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in the Arts is awarded to Laos-born pastry-chef Varin Keokitvon; a Chef Instructor for the Seattle-based FareStart, he trains homeless and struggling individuals for careers in the culinary arts. In addition, four finalists from each category will be honored. Dr. Malik and Chef Keokitvon will each receive a \$25,000 cash prize, and the finalists will each receive a cash award of \$5,000 each.

The Foundation's fifth annual awards presentation dinner will be held at the Mandarin Oriental in New York City on Wednesday, April 7, 2010.

## THE VILCEK FOUNDATION

The Vilcek Foundation aims to raise public awareness of the contributions of immigrants to the sciences, arts, and culture in the United States. The Foundation was established in 2000 by Jan and Marica Vilcek, immigrants from the former Czechoslovakia. The mission of the Foundation was inspired by the couple's respective careers in biomedical science and art history, as well as their personal experiences and appreciation for the opportunities offered them as newcomers to the United States. In addition to awarding annual prizes in the biomedical sciences and the arts, the Vilcek Foundation showcases the work of immigrant artists, filmmakers, and others, at its headquarters at 167 East 73rd Street, New York City.

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For more information about the Vilcek Foundation, the Vilcek Foundation Prizes, or the prizewinners, please see [www.vilcek.org](http://www.vilcek.org).

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